

DEPARTMENT: Human Services/Social Services

BY: Jim Rydingsword, Director

PHONE: (209) 966-2000

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Developed in conjunction with our community partners, it is respectfully recommended that your Board: (1) review the state mandated Self Improvement Plan; and (2) authorize the Department to submit the plan to the State.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

Please see attachment.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Please see attachment.

| | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Financial Impact? () Yes (X) No | Current FY Cost: \$ | Annual Recurring Cost: \$ |
| Budgeted In Current FY? () Yes () No () Partially Funded | | |
| Amount in Budget: \$ | | List Attachments, number pages consecutively |
| Additional Funding Needed: \$ | | Board Memo, Pages 1-2 |
| Source: | | Agreement, Pages 3 - 33 |
| Internal Transfer | | |
| Unanticipated Revenue | 4/5's vote | |
| Transfer Between Funds | 4/5's vote | |
| Contingency | 4/5's vote | |
| () General () Other | | |

CLERK'S USE ONLY:

Res. No.: 07 499 Ord. No. _____
 Vote - Ayes: 5 Noes: _____
 Absent: _____
 Approved
 () Minute Order Attached () No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: _____
 Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
 County of Mariposa, State of California

By: _____
 Deputy

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

Requested Action Recommended
 No Opinion
 Comments:

CAO: [Signature]



**MARIPOSA COUNTY
HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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□ Behavioral Health & Recovery □ Community Action □ Housing Authority □ Public Guardian/Conservator □ Social Services
JAMES A. RYDINGSWORD, DIRECTOR

November 6, 2007

TO: Members, Board of Supervisors
Rick Benson, CAO
From: James A. Rydingsword
Re: Social Services Child Welfare Services / Review of System Improvement Plan
(SIP) to Be Sent to the California State Department of Social Services

Recommendation

Developed in conjunction with our community partners, it is respectfully recommended that your Board: (1) review the state mandated Self Improvement Plan; and (2) authorize the Department to submit the plan to the State.

Background

In July, 2001 your Board authorized the reorganization of The Department of Social Services. One of the major components was the redesign of our child welfare services unit. Said Program moved from an investigative approach to child abuse to a clinical model. Under this model, investigation was left to the Sheriff's Department and Child Welfare Services took responsibility for conducting systematic risk assessment and providing counseling to children and their families. The two agencies continue to work closely together toward safeguarding children.

Development of a single, integrated case plan was implemented for clients being served by two or more divisions of social services in order to avoid multiple conflicting case plans. Once the County assumed responsibility for Mental Health, joint case plans and coordinated services were expanded.

Subsequent to the above, the federal and state governments mandated that counties redesign their child welfare services programs. We have used the mandate as an evaluation tool that helps to determine the degree to which the previously "redesigned" child welfare services program is working.

Current Situation

What the Community Has Asked For

We have had group and individual meetings with department heads and the myriad agencies that interface with Child Welfare Services. To meet the requirements of the state, a formal meeting was held on August 1, 2007. Some of the stakeholders present asked for more involvement in the development of the County Self Assessments (CSA) and more frequent meetings of the participants. It was also suggested that CASA and the State Adoption unit take a more active role in implementing permanency plans for children regarding both adoption and legal guardianship.

The Variables in Back of the Statistics

The most important thing in child welfare and protection is child safety. We must prevent re-injury and death, even knowing that no system is fail safe. That is why there are case staffings and meetings with other entities on an ongoing basis.

The State has required that we use statistics from prior years rather than current statistics. In fact, we looked at both. To ignore current statistics when they are readily available would be to ignore indicators that might help us to strengthen the system.

There are statistics that help to determine just how safe our children are but numbers alone do not reflect community standards. The standards for child welfare in this County are very high. We receive more referrals than the statewide average. However referrals are for general neglect. This County responds to general neglect referrals of physical abuse and molest. Generally when counties screen out (not respond to) over 40% of their referrals, especially when there are indicators of physical abuse and/or sexual molest, they commence to have missing children, re-injury or worse

Risk Assessment

We continue to use systematic risk assessment at every critical decision point in child welfare services (when to remove a child, what to recommend to the Court in terms of continued foster care, adoption, or return to the caretaker/parent). We have replaced the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT) and social workers increasingly utilize the five tools therein with confidence and accuracy.

Staff

We endeavor to have all masters' level social workers in Child Welfare Services. However, it is quite an undertaking to attract, hire, and retain such high caliber staff. The Child Welfare Services Unit has also seen a high degree of turnover in fiscal years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. The fewer social workers we have, the higher caseloads are. This means less time for comprehensive services to children and families.

Financial

Submission of this plan does not have a financial impact. Failure to submit the same would have a cost impact in that our allocations could be reduced or delayed.