

2011 Peer Quality Case Review Executive Summary

The purpose of the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) is to learn, through intensive examination of county practice, how to improve child welfare and probation services in a specific focus area. To do so, the PQCR focuses on one specific outcome, analyzes specific practice areas, identifies key patterns of agency strengths and concerns and aligns the findings with research to guide practice improvement. The process uses peers from other counties to promote the exchange of best practice ideas between the host county and peer reviewers.

Focus Areas

The El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) chose the C-CFSR outcome measure C4.3 which attempts to measure the placement stability of all children served in foster care during the year that were in foster care for at least 24 months as the focus area for this PQCR. The El Dorado County Probation Department chose to focus on permanency, specifically how to help minors remain stable in placement and improve permanency options when reunification is not feasible.

Findings

The issue of foster parent training was one that was agreed upon almost unanimously throughout the PQCR, in that foster parents need, and want, more information about the realities of foster care. They are not adequately prepared for foster children and the myriad issues these children often display. PRIDE training was well regarded, but not considered to be adequate. Foster families themselves expressed the difficulties of not being able to provide a safe and successful placement for children with special needs.

One resource issue noted is that there are not enough foster homes within El Dorado County so social workers needed to make out of county placements for foster youth. Not only does this create significant stress on the foster youth in needing to adjust to a new community and new school, but further, their ability to visit family members can be hindered.

Additionally, El Dorado County regularly uses an emergency shelter when placements are disrupted. It was noted that this could become an easy avenue for placement instead of working to keep placements together.

Recommendations

For Child Welfare Services consider decreasing the reliance on the shelter for children who need to change placements. Enhance efforts to resolve the conflicts that cause seven-day notices. Implement formalized policy to utilize Team Decision Making or other family engagement model. Conduct relative searches throughout the entire life of the case. Consider training for foster parents to assist in setting realistic expectations for foster children. Continued work with SDM to show applicability and how it can be utilized to make informed critical decisions. The most significant recommendation for Probation is to increase efforts to collaborate with Child Welfare to obtain more information regarding minors with prior Child Welfare history. Additionally, consider implementing Functional Family Probation to enhance work with families and youth.