

2012 El Dorado County Self-Assessment (CSA)

Executive Summary

The County Self-Assessment (CSA) is a required component of the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System also known as the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). This system commenced operation in California in 2004 pursuant to State law (Assembly Bill 636), proceeds on an ongoing triennial cycle and focuses primarily on measuring outcomes in safety, permanence and child and family well-being. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) oversees the system. As a prerequisite to receiving child welfare services funding, local jurisdictions must participate in an evaluation and improvement process, which includes a Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR), County Self-Assessment (CSA) and System Improvement Plan (SIP).

The triennial review cycle for the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) programs has been integrated into the CSA process. Integrating these two cycles streamlines duplicative processes, maximizes resources, increases partnerships and improves communication. The CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) needs assessment component for the above mentioned programs have been integrated into the CSA.

This CSA represents a County-wide analysis of Child Welfare Services (CWS) in El Dorado County and was developed by the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) and the Probation Department in collaboration with local community partners specified by the CDSS. Community input was sought through the release of a comprehensive online survey, which received 94 responses, and stakeholder meetings conducted on both the east and west slopes of the County, which were well attended. An effort was made through these activities to identify unmet needs, service needs, barriers to provision of services and suggestions for service improvements.

The CSA incorporates County demographic data; local CWS outcomes as compared to federal and State program measures; public agency characteristics, such as the size and structure of public agencies that provide child welfare services in the County; systemic factors, such as case review systems; services available in the County; County-wide prevention activities and strategies; community responses to the community online survey; input from community stakeholder meetings, and results of the County's PQCR, which was conducted in May 2011.

El Dorado County Child Welfare Services						
Statistical Data (Rate: Incident per 1,000 Children)						
<small>Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., King, B., Henry, C., & Nuttbrock, A. (2012). <i>Child Welfare Services Reports for California</i>. Retrieved 1/18/2012, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare></small>						
Time Period	2008		2009		2010	
State vs. County	California	El Dorado	California	El Dorado	California	El Dorado
Children with CWS Referrals	48.7	65.2	47.2	61.1	51.6	64.7
Substantiated Referrals	9.8	17.7	9.3	14.6	9.6	11.1
First Entries (Foster Care)	2.6	5.0	2.5	3.7	2.6	3.3
In Foster Care (Point in Time: July 1)	6.5	7.1	5.9	7.0	5.9	6.2

The rate of children with CWS referrals has increased from the previous three-year period. During the 2005 to 2007 time period the rates were 57.4, 57.1 and 62.2. In 2008 substantiated referrals reached their highest rate since 1998. The rate of children with first entries to foster care was the highest during the above three-year period than any other three-year period since 1998. The rates of children in foster care during 2008 and 2009 were the highest since 1998.

Areas of Focus

Some of the key system focus areas that CSA identified include:

- Placement Stability (PQCR Focus Area)
- The need for additional quality assurance tools and procedures to better determine the effectiveness of CBCAP/CAPIT/PSSF funded programs and better meet State and Federal reporting requirements
- Further implementation of all Structure Decision Making (SDM) tools
- Promote and support the expanded use of the Home Visitation Program

Strategies will be developed through a collaborative partnership and these will be identified in the upcoming SIP, which will be presented for Board of Supervisors approval in May 2012. The strategies and measurements identified will be designed to improve outcomes to meet Federal and State goals.

Challenges

The current global economic decline and State budget cuts have impacted the County and created uncertainties relative to future funding availability. The need for services exceeds the available resources. Funding for services that support at-risk families are frequently in danger of being reduced or even eliminated. In this economic climate families face increased stress from loss of income and household stability which may lead to further increases in incidences of child neglect or abuse.

Placement stability of children in foster care was the focus area during the County's PQCR in May 2011. Challenges in this area include:

- The lack of a receiving home
- The need for more foster homes
- The limited training, preparation and support that foster parents receive
- The need for a Team Decision Making (TDM) or Family Decision Making process

While CWS social worker retention improved greatly during 2009 and 2010, it is felt that this was a temporary effect caused by the poor employment market and the fact that several local counties laid off many social workers during this time period. The County is again beginning to experience a higher turnover rate as CWS social workers leave to take other employment opportunities in their field. Ongoing factors contributing to social worker turnover include competing for social workers with other child welfare agencies, particularly in surrounding counties that offer higher salary and benefits and with the non-profit community where caseloads and requirements are not equivalent to those in the County CWS. Continuous staff turnover interferes with continuity in training procedure, process and effectiveness.

Strengths

While the HHSA recognizes the challenges identified and set forth in the CSA, system strengths were also recognized. Several key successes were identified:

- Increased community and public collaboration through the Children and Parent's Resource Team (CPRT) and the Linkages Program between CWS and CalWORKs.
- The implementation of the Differential Response (DR) program, which assists families before difficulties escalate to the point of requiring Child Welfare involvement.
- Implementation of more formal processes to support concurrent planning.
- Continued timely social worker visits outcomes with children, which exceed the national goal of 90%
- An Independent Living Program (ILP) that is highly successful and prepares youths who are "aging out" of foster care

Conclusion

Ongoing challenges continue to hamper the Agency's ability to fully implement and maintain successful strategies for improved outcomes. The HHSA will continue to look for innovative ways to improve the coordination of services, collaborate with community based organizations and maximize limited resources to ensure the best possible outcomes for at-risk children. The CSA is an important tool in helping to determine the El Dorado County's current Child Welfare needs. Along with the PQCR, this assessment will help the Agency develop a SIP which will document our strategies to improve Child Welfare outcomes.