



The RBS Reform Coalition  
RECONNECTING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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# **A Plan for Evaluating California's Residentially Based Services Reform Project (RBS)**

**Revised: March 16, 2010.** Compiled by the RBS Evaluation team and Evaluation Advisory Sub-Committee. The RBS Evaluation Co-Leaders are Peter Pecora of Casey Family Programs and Fred Molitor of Walter R. McDonald & Associates.

For more information about the RBS reform initiative please see [www.RBSReform.org](http://www.RBSReform.org) or contact Karen Gunderson (Karen.Gunderson@dss.ca.gov) or Carroll Schroeder (cschroeder@cacfs.org). For more information about the RBS evaluation, please contact Dr. Fred Molitor (fmolitor@wrma.com) or Dr. Peter Pecora (Ppecora@casey.org).

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## I. Overview of the RBS Evaluation

### A. *Project Origins*

California's Residentially Based Services Reform Project (RBS) was approved by the state legislature and the Governor on October 11, 2007 with the enactment of Assembly Bill (AB) 1453 which requires the California Department of Social Services:

to convene a workgroup of designated public and private stakeholders that will develop a plan for transforming the current system of group care for foster children or youth, and for children with serious emotional disorders into a system of residentially based services.<sup>1</sup>

Included in the provisions of AB1453 are the following regarding how the plans developed pursuant to the act should be evaluated:

(3) Provide for an annual evaluation report, to be prepared jointly by the county and the private nonprofit agency. The evaluation report shall include analyses of the outcomes for children and youth, including achievement of permanency, average lengths of stay, and rates of entry and reentry into group care. The evaluation report shall also include analyses of the involvement of children or youth and their families, client satisfaction, the use of the program by the county, the operation of the program by the private nonprofit agency, payments made to the private nonprofit agency by the county, actual costs incurred by the nonprofit agency for the operation of the program, and the impact of the program on state and county AFDC-FC program costs. The county shall send a copy of each annual evaluation report to the director, and the director shall make these reports available to the Legislature upon request.<sup>2</sup>

### B. *RBS Description*

The framework of RBS was developed by a workgroup of stakeholders brought together to reassess the roles of group homes in the public systems of care for children and youth. The diverse stakeholder group included family members, emancipated foster care youth, child and family advocates, county and state public agency officials, representatives of the legislature, and care provider representatives. The overarching goals of the RBS framework are permanency, well-being, and safety for children and youth whose complex needs require intensive therapeutic interventions and comprehensive services to help them reunify or reconnect with family members.

RBS consists of short-term behavioral and therapeutic interventions delivered in residential settings where children or youth live with and are supervised by professional staff. The goal of the interventions is to facilitate the connection or reconnection with the home, school, and community settings by addressing critical unmet needs and helping children and youth find ways to understand, reduce, and replace the

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<sup>1</sup> California Assembly Bill 1453, Chapter 466 An act to add Chapter 12.87 (commencing with Section 18987.7) to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institution Code, relating to foster care, available at [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab\\_1451-1500/ab\\_1453\\_bill\\_20071011\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_1451-1500/ab_1453_bill_20071011_chaptered.pdf) (last checked on October 30, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

persistent and difficult behaviors that have been associated with those needs with positive and productive alternatives.

RBS includes a new payment system linked to performance that provides funding sufficient to cover reasonable costs associated with provision of necessary RBS services. The provider agencies of RBS ensure that services include:

- The necessary protection and structure to ensure that children and youth will be safe;
- A comprehensive up-front assessment that identifies the strengths of the children or youth and their families;
- Engaging children/youth and families in the process and introducing them to the program’s service environment in a way that helps them understand how the time spent in placement will be used to accomplish the goals that were the basis for the placement;
- A complete range of therapeutic, educational, behavioral, and social interventions to address the needs that have been identified;
- Involving children and families in treatment and placement decision-making;
- Developing a permanency plan to ensure that the placement process will include activities to help the child/youth reinforce, re-establish, or establish positive connections with the family or caring adult in a familial environment; and
- In cooperation with formal and informal sources of support in the community, assist in the child/youth’s transition from placement back to the family or to a more normal, family setting.

RBS also includes the following two new and critical categories of services which group homes are now not authorized or funded to provide:

- Family support services while the children or youth are in the program to prepare families to be able to successfully care for the children when they are discharged.
- Post-discharge follow-along services to assure that children or youth are able to remain and thrive with their families after they leave the group living arrangement.

Table 1.1 outlines the criteria from the RBS framework for determining whether RBS is the best option for a given child or youth.

**Table 1.1 Criteria for Selection of Children and Youth or RBS**

Decision	Criteria
<p><b>1. What are the situation, strengths and needs of the child or youth in the context of their family &amp; community?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Level of danger/risk presented to self, others &amp; community</li> <li>○ Presence and persistence of behaviors that prevent the child or youth from participating in or benefiting from services and supports provided in the home, school and community</li> <li>○ Educational strengths and needs</li> <li>○ Mental/emotional health</li> <li>○ Physical health</li> </ul>

Decision	Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Immediate and extended family connections</li> <li>○ Child or youth's other sources of social support</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. What intervention best meets the needs of this child or youth and family?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What natural and informal support and assistance is available to the child or youth through their family, school, social network and community?</li> <li>○ What has been helpful for this child and family in the past, and what has not been helpful?</li> <li>○ What service options have demonstrated the ability to meet the type of needs this child or youth presents?</li> <li>○ How might these service options enhance the family's ongoing capacity to meet their child or youth's needs?</li> <li>○ What level of service intensity is required to understand and address the child or youth and family's needs?</li> <li>○ Which service options are most likely to help the child or youth and family achieve the goals they have for themselves?</li> <li>○ Which service options are best matched with the family's culture, preferences and strengths?</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Where can this child or youth and family be most successful in receiving this intervention?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What environment is required to suspend and replace any barrier behaviors that the child or youth is currently using to express her or his needs?</li> <li>○ What about the nature or severity of those behaviors requires interventions in an environment other than the child or youth's existing home, school and community?</li> <li>○ Has an objective and informed inquiry into strategies for using community-based interventions to address the child or youth's behavioral challenges and other needs been conducted?</li> <li>○ Is the child or youth or family requesting a non-family treatment setting for safety or other reasons?</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Which residential program can best meet the needs of the child or youth and family?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the program offer an environment that is designed to safely manage the kind of behaviors that are the focus of concern for this child or youth?</li> <li>○ Does the program have intensive treatment options designed to understand and address the specific unmet needs of the child or youth that are driving those behaviors and to help the child or youth learn and acquire new ways of acting that are safer and more pro-social and effective?</li> <li>○ Does the program have the capacity to simultaneously assist those in the child or youth's home, school and community environments to prepare for and welcome the child or youth's return and to continue to support the child or youth's reconnection until it is stable and sustainable?</li> <li>○ Is <i>this</i> option the one most likely to produce desired results for the child or youth and family compared to other options?</li> <li>○ Can the necessary resources be found to cover the cost of treatment?</li> </ul>

### ***C. Who Will be Served?***

The target population for RBS is children and youth ages 6 to 19 years and their caregivers who are receiving group care and community-based services from county human service systems in four county areas:

- Bay Area Consortium (Specific counties to be determined.)
- Los Angeles County
- Sacramento County
- San Bernardino County

The population of children and youth targeted for enrollment in RBS varies by site, and is summarized in more detail on the RBS website: [www.RBSReform.org](http://www.RBSReform.org). Note that a youth may end the RBS program of services at age 18 or 19 because services began when they were age 17 and continued past their birthday. Note: youth in foster care remain eligible for AFDC-FC payments and case management up to age 19, depending upon high school graduation. RBS is a 24 month model. Thus a youth could enter at age 17 and remain enrolled in RBS for up to two years to age 19.

**Table 1.2 Description of Target Population and Number of Children and Youth Anticipated to Receive RBS by Site<sup>a</sup>**

Site	Target Population	Estimated Children to Receive RBS Across Two Years
<b>Bay Area Consortium</b>	Children ages 6-16 years currently placed in an RCL 12 or higher group home program, or are awaiting placement in an RCL 12 or higher group home program.	Up to 100
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Children 6-18 years old who are in, at imminent risk of placement in, or have been referred to an RCL level 12 or 14 group home.	160
<b>Sacramento</b>	Children ages 12-16 years in or referred to an RCL level 12 or 14 group home who have had no more than one group home placement and have a current connection to a family or non-related extended family member that is a viable resource as a permanency option.	71
<b>San Bernardino</b>	Children 13-18 years old with serious emotional disorders who have had multiple placement failures or psychiatric hospitalizations, who are currently in or at risk of an RCL level 14 group home in California, or are placed in an out of state group care facility and that placement is failing.	24
		<b>TOTAL ESTIMATE: 355</b>

<sup>a</sup>Note that the most current RBS sites, youth enrollment criteria, and numbers are on the RBS website: [www.RBSReform.org](http://www.RBSReform.org)

Each of the children, youth and caregivers enrolled in the RBS initiative will be provided with a continuum of group home and community-based services designed to assist them in achieving permanent placements either with their caregivers or in the most appropriate and least restrictive community based setting. The types and duration of RBS services will vary by site, and will be specialized to meet the needs of the individual child, youth and/or caregiver served. Placing and provider agencies for each demonstration site are listed in Table 1.3:

**Table 1.3 Placing and Service Provider Agencies for RBS by County**

Site	Placing Agency	Service Provider Agencies
Bay Area Consortium	Department of Child Welfare Department of Mental Health Department of Juvenile Justice	<i>Potential agencies:</i> Rebekahs Children’s Services St. Vincent’s School for Boys Edgewood Center for Children and Families Seneca
Los Angeles	Department of Children and Family Services	Five Acres Hathaway-Sycamores Hillsides
Sacramento	Probation Department Department of Health & Human Services Department of Behavior Health	Quality Group Homes, Inc. Children’s Receiving Home of Sacramento Martin’s Achievement Place
San Bernardino	Department of Probation Department of Behavior Health Children and Family Services	Victor Treatment Centers TBD: Foster Family Agencies

**D. Enrollment Procedures**

The specific selection and recruitment procedures for each site are discussed below, and include the following three common characteristics:

1. Children and youth meeting the eligibility criteria established by each site (see Table 1.1) will be selected for RBS based on identifying those who would benefit most from the services.
2. The decision to participate in RBS will be made by a consensus among participants in a team meeting that will include, but are not limited to, the child or youth, his or her family, mentors, non-related extended family, and staff from the placing and provider agencies.
3. Youth and family members who agree to RBS will be presented with the option of participating in the evaluation at this same meeting or whenever a caseworker can meet with the family.

More details about enrollment, care coordination, and transition or exit from RBS are included in the County RBS plans on the RBS website.

### ***E. Human Subjects Safeguards and RBS State Data Coordinator***

As of this date, the California Health and Human Services Agency Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (State IRB) has conditionally approved the RBS evaluation design as described in this document and we are now awaiting further consideration of the detailed assent and consent procedures to complete the approval process.

As approved by the California State IRB, children and parents will not be asked to conduct additional activities for the evaluation and no one outside of the community-based service provider, County child welfare staff and the state CDSS staff will have access to the child or family identifiers or HIPAA-protected information normally collected through the standard service delivery process.

For youth aged 18 years or older RBS provider agencies will follow the procedure for the assent. Otherwise, we would need to develop and use a new consent form just for 18 year olds. The consent form does allow for identification of 18 year olds by the parent. A signature on the parent consent should still be requested since the parent must agree to have the YSS-F forwarded to WRMA.

CDSS will identify someone to serve as the ***RBS State Data*** Coordinator who will retrieve the CWS/CMS data and receive the RBS paper instruments from the RBS County Data Coordinators, and then forward these data to WRMA for data merging, coding, entry and analysis after the child or family identifiers or HIPAA-protected information are removed. The RBS County Data Coordinators will remove the child and family identifiers from the paper instruments and replace those identifiers with the Foreign Client Key. The RBS State Data Coordinator will check each instrument to ensure that all identifying information has been removed before they are forwarded to WRMA. The CWS/CMS database will only include the Foreign Client Key to distinguish unique cases.

To summarize, the tracking and recruitment process for the RBS evaluation:

- Step 1: County Data Coordinators develop and maintain a master list of RBS clients (children/youth and parents/caregivers) by name with “family” identified by Foreign Client Key. A signed assent/consent must be recorded (Yes versus No) for each client on this master list. County master lists will serve as the primary source for determining the difference between clients enrolled in RBS versus clients participating in the evaluation.
- Step 2: WRMA develops a list of Foreign Client Keys by county from the CAN-CW forms received through CDSS. WRMA periodically checks in with each County Data Coordinator to determine which if any Foreign Client Keys are related to a parent/guardian who refused to sign the consent form. In such instances WRMA will know not to expect a YSS.
- Step 3: Every six months WRMA sends to CDSS the list of Foreign Client Keys. CDSS creates an Excel file with pertinent CWS/CMS data for these clients only.

## II. Evaluation Design and Research Questions

### A. Overview

Since March 2008, the RBS evaluation team and Evaluation Subcommittee has worked closely with the public and private stakeholders who are developing plans for a new statewide system of residentially-based services. In addition, using a consensus-based approach to creating a practical plan for evaluating the models, the team developed plans for addressing each of the evaluation mandates of AB1453 categorized as indicated in Table 2.1.

A multi-method evaluation approach will be implemented with a quasi-experimental design using retrospective comparison group data and focus groups with key parent, older youth, line worker, supervisor, and agency, and community stakeholders. Baseline data will be analyzed in late 2010, and preliminary summaries of child outcomes will begin to be produced late that year or in 2011.

Because the population of children and youth targeted for enrollment in RBS varies by site, the overall RBS evaluation in some respects will be county-specific, except where two or more counties are serving the same age range and RCL levels, are providing similar services, and are using identical data collection timetables. ***These are modest sample sizes; therefore, the data analyses will be constrained (e.g., most kinds of multivariate analyses will not be possible).***

### B. Evaluation Research Questions

The evaluation design will track the progress of each RBS-served youth and her/his family in terms of achievement of permanency and the ability of the youth to move to a less restrictive living situation that is classified as more permanent according to the Federal CFSR and other current child welfare outcome expectations. The RBS evaluation aims to answer these fundamental questions:

1. What are the demographic and other related characteristics of the children and families who are selected for RBS?
2. What impact has the local RBS project had on children enrolled in the RBS project with regard to their legal permanency status in two areas:
  - Legal permanency status (including moving to a less restrictive form of care or living arrangement)
  - The existence of a connection with a caring adult
3. What impact has the local RBS project had on rates of entry and reentry into group care and foster care of children enrolled in the RBS program?
4. What impact has the local RBS project had on the incidence and recurrence of substantiated maltreatment in foster care of RBS enrolled children?
5. What impact has the local RBS project had on the well being of children enrolled in the RBS project? This will be addressed by measuring the following:

- Amount and type of placement changes that occur while the child is served by RBS.<sup>3</sup>
  - The impact that the local RBS project has had on the educational progress of RBS enrolled children.
6. What impact has the local RBS project had on the involvement of children or youth and their families in treatment planning and treatment? Do children and their families have a sense of “voice and choice” in their treatment experience?
  7. Are children and families enrolled in the RBS project satisfied with the services received?

Note that while certain fiscal outcomes will be measured, they are not currently part of the RBS evaluation team’s responsibility and so research questions related to that work were not listed above.

**Table 2.1 AB1453 RBS Evaluation Mandates**

RBS Outcome	Mandated by AB1453 or Stakeholder Request
<b>OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH</b>	
1. Achievement of permanency	AB1453
2. Average lengths of stay	AB1453
3. Rates of entry and reentry into group care	AB1453
4. Analyses of the involvement of children or youth and their families in services planning and treatment	AB1453
5. Client satisfaction	AB1453
6. Child Safety [Substantiated maltreatment while (a) child is in placement and (b) while child is at home]	Stakeholder Request
7. Child Well-Being [Total number of placement changes, number of positive placement changes towards permanency, and number of negative placement changes]	Stakeholder Request
8. Child educational progress	Stakeholder Request
9. Child and family voice and choice	Stakeholder Request
10. The existence of a connection with a caring adult <sup>a</sup>	Stakeholder Request
<b>SYSTEMS OPERATIONS</b>	
11. Use of the program by the county.	AB1453
12. The operation of the program by the private nonprofit agency	AB1453
<b>FISCAL OUTCOMES</b>	
13. Payments made to the private nonprofit agency by the county	AB1453
14. Actual costs incurred by the nonprofit agency for the operation of the program	AB1453

<sup>3</sup> Note that short-term return stays in group care for crisis stabilization will not be considered as group care reentry.

RBS Outcome	Mandated by AB1453 or Stakeholder Request
15. The impact of the program on state and county AFDC-FC program costs.	AB1453
<p>16. The impact of the program on state and county Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program costs.</p> <p><i>Revised March 27, 2009 to read:</i> Changes in the average per child/youth per year expenditures of Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) funding for children and youth enrolled in the initiative.</p>	Stakeholder Request
<p>17. The impact of the program on state and county Mental Health Services Act (MHSA- Proposition 63).</p> <p><i>Revised March 27, 2009 to read:</i> Changes in the average per child/youth per year expenditures of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA – Proposition 63) funding for children and youth enrolled in the initiative.</p>	Stakeholder Request

<sup>a</sup> It will be too difficult for the RBS evaluation to determine whether or not an RBS enrolled child’s connection with a caring adult is a “lifelong” connection. The purpose of the non-legal permanency measure is not to assess the child’s ability to establish a connection with a caring adult but rather whether or not such a connection exists. Therefore the wording of the non-legal permanency measure was changed from the original wording: “A child’s ability to develop a lifelong connection with a caring adult” to an operational definition.

### C. Formation and Use of Comparison Groups

Ethical, logistical, and other considerations prohibit the randomization of eligible children and youth into treatment and control groups. An alternative approach is to identify suitable comparison groups of children, and in fact two possible comparison groups may be available for the evaluation:

1. **Retrospective comparison group:** This is a group of youth who were served before the RBS program was launched but who have similar characteristics to the RBS youth.
2. **Concurrent comparison group (case overflow design):** These are youth who come up for consideration in the larger group from which youth who will be enrolled in RBS will be selected. Thus this comparison group is comprised of youth being served at the same time (concurrently) as the RBS youth. Since we estimate that the target population in most RBS counties includes more youth than the initial RBS enrollment, it shouldn’t be difficult to have a comparison group with similar characteristics as the enrolled population and to track the outcomes achieved by both the comparison and experimental groups during the period of observation.

**Retrospective comparison group.** The RBS CWS/CMS work group recognized that a *retrospective* approach where youth served in the past are used as a comparison group may be a valid and feasible approach despite the fact that changes may have occurred in service approaches in most agencies and that the youth served currently may be different than those served in the past. The outcomes available through CWS/CMS for RBS youth will be compared with outcomes from a comparison group of youth receiving services using a 24 month time frame -- beginning sometime from July 1, 2007 to the start date of that County’s demonstration. For example, due to small target population, San Bernardino County will use the retrospective comparison group

**Concurrent comparison group (case overflow design).** A concurrent comparison group can be best used when there are few differences in the characteristics and needs of the two groups. Ideally, the groups are formed via a random assignment process. In cases where random assignment is not possible, the concurrent comparison group will consist of youth identified as eligible for RBS at the beginning of the project but who could not be served because of limits in capacity. Note that because of small sample sizes in some counties, this “case overflow” comparison group will quickly disappear as those children are served by RBS providers, and thus the retrospective comparison group will be used in that situation.

If a *retrospective or concurrent (case overflow) comparison group* is not feasible, the RBS evaluators will track the progress of RBS children and compare them with the typical patterns of placement change or achievement of permanency of other youth served in group care in California in recent years using previously published reports or special data runs that CDSS may be able to do. Thus, to the extent possible, each County will compare the RBS youth with a group of youth identified as eligible for RBS at the beginning of the project but who could not be served because of limits in capacity.<sup>4</sup>

Some methodological details and cautions are listed below:

- Note that the *RBS retrospective comparison group* is different from the historical baseline group that each of the sites used for their cost neutrality calculations.
- All group home LOS calculations will include all placement episodes that occurred during this 24 month period. Note that the maximum LOS for any youth would be 24 months as they may have been in out-of-home care for longer than that but the RBS start and end dates for comparison group purposes are set to span 24 months only. Note that to the extent possible, the overall lifetime LOS of RBS youth and youth who might potentially be part of the comparison group need to be considered. If the RBS group in a site had only a few months of placement prior to enrollment but the comparison group had years of LOS, or vice versa -- the data may not be comparable.
- The RBS concurrent comparison group of youth will be followed throughout the RBS implementation. Those that enroll in RBS will be in the RBS population -- those youth who are not enrolled in RBS will be the comparison group. (This will eliminate the need to continually identify the RBS-like children by RCL level.)
- Five of the RBS outcomes will be monitored for either comparison group using de-identified data currently collected routinely during the delivery of child welfare services via the CWS/CMS system: Achievement of permanency; Average lengths of stay in group care; Rates of re-entry into foster or group care; Child safety; and Child well being (consisting of two placement change measures). This will require that RBS providers and County Data Coordinator to provide the State CDSS with the foreign client key for those comparison group youth so that the correct CWS/CMS data can be analyzed.
- No comparison group data will be collected for the CANS-CW, YSS, and YSS-F.
- CDSS would create a second RBS special projects code to be used to code the children in the concurrent comparison group so that they can be followed throughout the RBS implementation period.
- Psychiatric hospitalizations present unique challenges for RBS: There is no standardized way to code psychiatric hospitalizations on CMS. We can record it in CMS in the non-foster care placement table but we do not select a non-foster care placement type – all we have is the name of the

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<sup>4</sup> This approach may or may not result in systematic biases in who is in one group versus another

placement. Therefore, psychiatric hospitalizations will not be counted as a unique placement type for either the comparison group or the RBS group.

Finally, another methodological consideration involves the length of time that the evaluation team will follow each youth in the RBS and comparison group beyond the 24 month official study period. Ideally, we will implement a period of observation longer than 24 months, and to include in the study any youth and families who complete 24 months of involvement during that time frame. But even this approach requires at least one point of clarification. Both comparison and RBS youth and families may graduate from services during a 24 months span and not re-enter care; in fact we hope that many can achieve this outcome. But the project should still monitor their progress at least to the extent of keeping track of whether they reappear in the system during the period of observation.

#### ***D. Use of Client Identifiers, Special Project Codes, and Tracking Youth Across Counties***

Each RBS County Data Coordinator will use the Foreign Client Key as the client identification coding mechanism for the instruments (CANS-CW, YSS, YSS-F). The Foreign Client Key identifier is found in the case table (at the back end of CWS/CMS) as the client ID. The RBS County Data Coordinator will label each instrument before sending to the RBS State Data Coordinator for eventual pick up by WRMA. This will enable WRMA to link data from different instruments and CWS/CMS files to the same child and family in a de-identified format.

All the children who participate in RBS shall be tracked from enrollment to disenrollment via a Special RBS Project Code in the CWS/CMS system. The "Start Date" and "End Date" fields for the Special Project code will need to be completed carefully. "Start Date" is defined as the date the foster child was enrolled in RBS per the voluntary agreement. "End Date" is defined as the date of disenrollment from RBS. Reasons for disenrollment will be tracked via CMS data and when not available, via a Special Project code for that disenrollment reason. While we have some specific disenrollment reason codes in Appendix B, we still need to code every special project code with an end date for disenrollment. If there is no subset code for a special disenrollment reason, then the end date for the generic special project code will be used to trigger the search in CMS for the reason for the disenrollment. Enrollment, disenrollment and reenrollment definitions and data collection production are defined in Appendix B.

One of the special situations that will be addressed is how to gather data and track youth who participate in RBS but who are not in the CWS/CMS system. One option is to exclude them from the study. But the preferred current option is to track basic information for them using the various systems available to the counties. For example, for youth served by RBS from the mental health system, we will collect the same measures as other RBS youth: CANS-CW, YSS and YSS-F, placement history, payment history, reasons for placement episode termination, and discharge reasons from RBS. These data will be in the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) that is used by the county welfare department to pay the AFDC-FC placement costs for children placed by the California Mental Health (with LA obtaining these data through CWS/CMS and Sacramento obtaining these data via CAL-WINS).

Note, for fiscal tracking, data from the SAWS may be needed for all children, including those in child welfare as AFDC-FC payments are made through SAWS, except for LA. Probation placements are entered into the back end of CWS/CMS via the SOC 158 process and DSS can extract data on this population. For RBS

youth from Juvenile Probation programs, by Summer of 2010 with the release of version 6.4, Probation should have access to data entry into CMS/CMS for its foster placements and the special project codes should be available to track these probation youth. If the CWS/CMS data 6.4 update does not happen, the same process will be used as was described for the mental health RBS youth.

Another special situation is how will the family be linked to the unique client ID when there may be multiple families associated with a youth over the course of their enrollment in RBS? From one perspective it may not matter much in that the key principle to follow is that the caregiver who knows the child the best should complete the YSS-F. In addition, WRMA staff will attempt to track and note in the RBS research data file when a new caregiver consent form has been completed – which may indicate that a new caregiver may be completing the next YSS-F form.

Two other special situations have been identified and addressed tentatively by the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee:

- 1. What happens when a child is inter-county transferred from one RBS pilot demonstration county to another pilot demonstration county (excluding BAC)? What will be the policy and coding that will be used for this specific case?** *Recommendation: If the service provider is the same, the child would continue in RBS and the same client identifier could possibly be used to track the child's progress.*
- 2. What happens when a child is inter-county transferred from one RBS pilot demonstration county to a non-pilot demonstration county? What will be the policy and coding that will be used for this specific case?** *Recommendation: If the new county of jurisdiction is not an RBS county, RBS services would end so the child would be disenrolled from the RBS project and RBS-related data collection would stop.*

*If the child moves out of county as part of a reunification process or to “step down” to a less restrictive placement option, these outcomes can be captured by the disenrollment reasons so that these kinds of successes can be included in the research findings.*

## III. Data Collection Instruments

### A. Overview of Data Collection Instruments

Following is a description of each of the proposed data collection instruments for use in the RBS evaluation, including the rationale and workload for the use of each instrument. Appendix A provides a detailed review of each of the evaluation mandates in the RBS Evaluation including the research question, instrumentation, estimated workload, and the roles and responsibilities associated with each. The RBS data collection instruments and a special summary of how CWS/CMS management information systems data will be used in the RBS evaluation are summarized in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

**B. Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS)**

**Rationale for its Use in the Residentially Based Services Initiative (RBS)**

RBS participating counties currently enter client-specific data into the CWS/CMS system independent of the RBS project. Use of this readily accessible pre-existing data represents little or no increase in cost or workload for RBS participating counties.

**Estimated Workload Associated with its Use**

Participation in the RBS evaluation may require county staff to enter data into additional fields in the CWS/CMS system including, but not limited to, the special projects code field and start and end date fields. This represents a negligible increase in county workload. Counties requested the inclusion of these additional fields and have agreed to absorb the workload for completing them.

The evaluation data outlined in this document will be retrieved by the RBS State Data Coordinator for children and youth with one or more of the Special Project Codes and without any names, addresses, phone numbers, or other identifying information. Table 3.1 lists the proposed data elements from the CWS/CMS that will be used to assess the key RBS outcomes as well as provide the demographic information to describe the characteristics of the children and youth who receive RBS. Please see Appendix B for more information about the CWS/CMS “methodology” that will be used to actually construct and analyze these data.

**Table 3.1. Proposed Evaluation Measures to be Addressed with CWS/CMS Data**

Variable	CWS/CMS Data	Measure
<b>Achievement of permanency</b>	Placement terminations representing legal permanency -- adoption, guardianship, and reunification.	Number of children at RBS exit with legal permanency / Number of children with any type of placement episode termination.
<b>Length of stay in group care</b>	Days in care for all group home placements.	Sum of days each child was placed in any group home for all placement episodes while in RBS / Number of children enrolled in RBS who have group home placement.
<b>Re-entry into group care and foster care<sup>a</sup></b>	Re-entry into group care from lower level of care. Rate of re-entry into Foster Care	Number of children with at least one group home exit to lower level care, then had subsequent group home placement / All children who had a group home placement. Number of children who re-entered foster care from a reunified parental home or trial home placement.
<b>Safety</b>	Substantiated maltreatment while at home or in group care during the RBS service delivery period.	Number of children with at least one subsequent substantiated maltreatment while in RBS/ All children enrolled in RBS.
<b>Well Being</b>	Positive placement changes and #	Number and percent of and direction of last

Variable	CWS/CMS Data	Measure
	of placement moves.	placement with positive direction indicating movement to lower levels of care / All children enrolled in RBS. Total number of placement moves.
<b>Demographics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Date of birth</li> <li>• Primary ethnicity</li> <li>• Primary language</li> </ul> <i>Data elements to be collected if feasible:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Order for psychotropic medications</li> <li>• Total number of placements prior to RBS enrollment</li> <li>• Date current placement episode began</li> <li>• Individual Education Plan (IEP) status</li> <li>• Teen parent of infant in care</li> <li>• Was child abuse or neglect the primary reason for removal?</li> </ul>		

<sup>a</sup> Note that short-term return stays in group care for crisis stabilization will not be considered as group care reentry.

### ***C. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment for Children with Child Welfare Involvement (CANS-CW)***

#### ***Rationale for its Use in the Residentially Based Services Initiative (RBS)***

The CANS-CW is a nationally recognized and validated assessment instrument currently in use in jurisdictions and locations throughout the United States. The instrument is available for use free of charge and is designed to be tailored specifically to local needs. Two counties participating in the RBS project – Los Angeles County and San Francisco County – had initiated use of the CANS prior to the implementation of the RBS project. All RBS sites have had the opportunity to participate in a workshop with Dr. John Lyons – the developer of the CANS – which included a detailed review of the use of the CANS and examples of report templates currently in use at other sites using the instrument. Moreover, all RBS sites participated in a comprehensive item-by-item review of the instrument and contributed to deciding which items to include and which to exclude.

Four sites have endorsed the use of the sixty-five item CANS-CW in the RBS project. Use of the CANS-CW in RBS will permit the RBS evaluation to create specialized indices of “Child Well Being” that are produced by the CANS-CW scoring system that would not be possible with pre-existing data available from other sources. Furthermore, use of the CANS-CW in the RBS evaluation will permit studies comparing the outcomes of RBS enrolled children with outcomes of children at other American sites where the CANS is currently in use should such a comparison study be required by the California State Legislature.

***Estimated Workload Associated with its Use***

The CANS-CW was designed by users and is highly “user-friendly.” The instrument can be administered by a trained, certified and experienced assessor familiar with the child and family being assessed in fifteen to thirty minutes. A prerequisite for the use of the CANS-CW is training and certification of trainee achievement of an acceptable inter-rater reliability score. CANS training is provided differently in different locations and can be delivered via a web-based training program. Live training can be provided by local trainers who have completed and been certified as CANS trainers.

The amount of time needed for CANS training varies by individual based on her or his capacity to achieve the required inter-rater reliability score. The use of the CANS-CW represents an increase in workload for individuals who will be trained in its use and will be conducting CANS assessments of RBS enrolled children. RBS participating counties that will be using the CANS have expressed willingness to absorb the additional workload associated with training in and use of the CANS-CW in their RBS projects.

In addition, the cumulative workload associated with the administration of the CANS-CW will vary greatly depending on the administration intervals at which RBS participating sites choose to employ in the RBS evaluation. The administration timeframes for these instruments are summarized in Table 3.4. However, RBS participating sites may choose to increase or decrease the frequency of the data collection interval in their local programs. The minimal data collection interval required for participation in the RBS evaluation is intake and discharge. The maximum interval at which data will be collected and analyzed by the RBS evaluation is every 90 days. CANS-CW data collected by RBS sites at intervals more frequent than 90 days will not be collected in the RBS evaluation.

The CANS-CW will address the outcomes related to well-being, educational progress, and safety. Counties have opted to use the instrument they currently use and are familiar with for these outcomes.

The CANS-CW is an assessment tool completed by service provider staff to record children and youth’s needs and strength on a number of dimensions in support of individual case planning. The assessor notes each item on the CANS-CW with one of the following four scores: “0” = no need for action; “1” = need for watchful waiting to see whether action is warranted; “2” = a need for action; and “3” = the need for immediate or intensive action. Table 3.3 displays the items from the CANS-CW for these outcomes.

**Table 3.2. Evaluation Outcomes Addressed with CANS-CW data**

Variable	CANS-CW item	Measure
<b>Well Being Outcomes</b>	Functional Status	Motor Sensory Communication Developmental Physical Family Functioning Sexual Development
	Mental Health	Psychotic Symptoms Attention Deficit/Impulse Control Depression/Anxiety Anger Control Oppositional Behavior
	Risk Behaviors	Suicide Risk Fire Setting Runaway Social Behavior
	Substance Abuse Complications	Severity of Use Duration of Use Stage of Recovery Peer Influences Parental Influences
	Criminal and Delinquency	Seriousness History Violence Sexually Abusive Behaviors
	Family/Caregiver Needs and Strengths	Physical Supervision Involvement Knowledge Organization Resources Residential Stability
<b>Educational Progress</b>	School Behavior	Behavior in school.
	School Achievement	Performance in school.
	School Attendance	Frequency of school attendance.
<b>Child Safety</b>	Child Safety	Abuse Neglect Permanency Exploitation

Note that detailed information about which instrument items are used to measure the above outcomes is available in Appendix A.

Selection of when the instruments will be administered varies by county (Table 3.3) and is again dependent upon each county’s current data collection protocol.

**Table 3.3. Frequency of Administration of the CANS-CW**

Site	Intake	Every 90 Days	Every 6 Months	Discharge
Bay Area Consortium	X	X		X
Los Angeles	X		X	X
Sacramento	X	X		X
San Bernardino	X		X	X

**D. YSS and YSS-F Measures**

The YSS and YSS-F will assess satisfaction with services, the child and family “voice and choice,” well being, and educational progress (Table 3.4). These instruments include the same items, with the YSS designed for completion by the child or youth receiving services (e.g., “I helped to choose my services”) and the YSS-F for self-administration by the parent or caregiver (e.g., “I helped to choose my child’s services”). Both instruments are completed when the child is 13 years and older; the YSS is not given to children 12 years or younger. Thus, RBS children ages six through 12 will not be asked to complete the YSS and thus data from this instrument will not be used for the evaluation.

**Table 3.4. Evaluation Outcomes Addressed with YSS & YSS-F Data**

Variable	YSS & YSS-F items	Concepts Measured
Satisfaction with Services	Page 1 items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, & 15.	Overall perception of services and staff.
Child and family voice and choice	Page 1 items 2, 3, & 6.	Reported involvement in services and treatment goals.
Well Being	Pages 1 and 2 items 16 – 26.	Progress in dealing with life circumstances and interactions with others including family.
Educational Progress	Page 3 items 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, & 16.	History of being expelled or suspended in school and changes in school attendance during previous year.

Both the YSS and YSS-F include items that will not be entered into the analytic database by WRMA staff and thus not included in the evaluation of RBS. Specifically, the following items will be excluded from the

analytic database: living situation in the last six months (item 1, page 2); recent medical care (item 2, page 2); medications (item 3, page 2); time receiving services (item 4, page 2); arrests or encounters with the police (Page 3 items 5, 6 7, 11, 12, 13); and demographics (Page 4 items 17 through 21); and items 21 through 24. Data collection will occur for the YSS and YSS-F in a way that complements the CANS-CW data collection schedule, .

## ***E. The Youth Services Survey for Youth (YSS)***

### ***Rationale for its Use in the Residentially Based Services Initiative (RBS)***

The Youth Services Survey for Youth (YSS) has been promulgated by the California Department of Mental Health and is currently in use in all RBS participating sites. All RBS sites have had the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive item-by-item review of the YSS and have endorsed the use of a subset of items from it for the RBS project. Use of the YSS items would permit studies comparing the outcomes of RBS enrolled children and youth with the outcomes of non-RBS children and youth should such a comparison study be required by the California State Legislature and should the YSS data on non-RBS enrolled children and youth be available from the California Department of Mental Health.

### ***Estimated Workload Associated with its Use***

The YSS is a self-administered satisfaction survey currently in use in the RBS participating counties and stakeholders report that staff and youth in those counties are familiar with it. This use of a YSS instrument specialized to the needs of RBS represents an increase in staff and youth workload. RBS participating counties have expressed willingness to absorb the additional workload. Youth can choose not to accept the additional workload by choosing not to complete the survey.

The cumulative workload associated with the administration of the YSS will vary greatly depending on the administration intervals RBS participating sites choose to employ in the RBS evaluation. All four counties have expressed that they plan to administer this measure in a way that complements the CANS-CW data collection schedule. *Note that the YSS and the YSS-F data will not be collected at intake as the service provider may not have worked with the youth before.*

## ***F. The Youth Services Survey for Families (YSS-F)***

### ***Rationale for its Use in the Residentially Based Services Initiative (RBS)***

The Youth Services Survey for Families (YSS-F) has been promulgated by the California Department of Mental Health and is currently in use in all RBS participating sites. All RBS sites have had the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive item-by-item review of the YSS-F and have endorsed the use of an abbreviated version of it in the RBS project. Use of the YSS-F items would permit studies comparing the outcomes of RBS enrolled children and youth with the outcomes of non-RBS children and youth should such a comparison study be required by the California State Legislature and should the YSS-F data on non-RBS enrolled children and youth be available from the California Department of Mental Health.

### ***Estimated Workload Associated with its Use***

The YSS-F is a self-administered satisfaction survey currently in use in the RBS participating counties, and stakeholders report that staff and primary caregivers in those counties are familiar with it. This use of a YSS-F instrument specialized to the needs of RBS represents an increase in staff and primary caregiver workload. RBS participating counties have expressed willingness to absorb the additional workload. Primary caregivers can choose not to accept the additional workload by choosing not to complete the

survey. The YSS-F will also be administered in a way that complements the CANS-CW data collection schedule except it will not be collected at intake.

## **G. Fiscal Data**

State CDSS staff are currently building a *Manual Invoice Claims* form to collect some of the fiscal data.<sup>5</sup> While the CDSS *Audit and Rates Section* will be responsible for some of the cost analyses, CDSS and the RBS Coalition have not yet specified how the fiscal data will be analyzed or who will summarize that information.

# **IV. RBS Evaluation Activities, Roles and Responsibilities**

Table 4.1 summarizes the activities, roles and responsibilities associated with the RBS Evaluation phase-in schedule to be undertaken by each of the RBS stakeholder groups. Note that year three of the RBS reform process will be the year when more definitive outcome data from tracking the RBS youth are analyzed. The RBS stakeholder groups will help shape the data collection process as well as help interpret the early and later evaluation data. These stakeholder groups are defined as follows:

- a. **RBS Participating County Staff:** This stakeholder group is composed of staff representing the counties participating in the RBS demonstration. At a minimum, this will include county staff responsible for entering data into and managing the CWS/CMS system and SAWS, county fiscal staff responsible for developing cost finding methodologies and reporting costs, and leadership staff responsible for directing the implementation of the local RBS project and participating in the RBS evaluation focus groups.
- b. **Staff Designated by RBS Participating Counties:** This stakeholder group is composed of the staff designated by RBS participating counties to collect data from the children, youth and primary caregivers/providers served by the local RBS project. It is anticipated that this group will be composed of representatives of the providers under contract with participating counties to deliver RBS services.
- c. **Local RBS Data Coordinator:** This stakeholder group is composed of staff designated by RBS participating counties to function as the Local RBS Data Coordinators. Local RBS Data Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring the collection, quality and delivery in cleaned format of all data required by the RBS Evaluation.
- d. **California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Data Coordinator:** This stakeholder group is composed of staff representing CDSS. At a minimum this will include staff responsible for ensuring the collection, quality and delivery of cleaned CWS/CMS data as required by the RBS Evaluation and fiscal staff responsible for participating in the development and implementation of valid and reliable RBS cost finding methodologies.
- e. **The RBS Evaluation Team:** This stakeholder group is composed of staff designated by the RBS Consortium to implement the RBS Evaluation including representatives of the Consortium,

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<sup>5</sup> The *Manual Invoice Claims* form will be one way to record how providers claim costs incurred for a RBS child.

Casey Family Programs research staff, WRMA research staff, and county and provider staff who participate in the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee.

The evaluation design closes with Table 4.1 that outlines what kinds of major evaluation activities will be carried out by each RBS stakeholder group. More methodological details are included in Appendices A-C.

**Table 4.1. RBS Evaluation Roles and Responsibilities by Project Year\***

Year One: 2009	Year Two: 2010	Year Three: 2011
<b>RBS COUNTY STAFF</b>		
Participate in RBS led activities to develop RBS approved valid and reliable cost finding methods for the Fiscal Outcomes evaluation mandates 12-16 (see above)	Enter a “special project” code and start and end dates into CWS/CMS for each child/youth enrolled in RBS	Continues in this year.
	Implement the RBS approved valid and reliable cost finding methods to calculate year 1 measures for the Fiscal Outcomes evaluation mandates	Report baseline Fiscal Outcomes costs calculated using the RBS approved cost finding and obtain consent and assents and possibly year one costs.
	Participate in a 90 minute qualitative data collection focus group to collect year 1 information on Systems Operation evaluation mandate	May be repeated in this year.
Participate in the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee	Continues in this year.	Continues in this year.
<b>STAFF DESIGNATED BY RBS PARTICIPATING COUNTIES, INCLUDING PROVIDERS</b>		
Participate in the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee		
	Periodically administer the following three instruments:	
	a. The 65-item Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths Assessment for Children with Child Welfare Involvement (CANS-CW) administered with the involvement of children/youth and their primary caregiver in 15-30 minutes.	Continues in this year.
	b. Youth Services Survey for Youth (YSS) administered to RBS enrolled youth > 12 years old with an estimated completion time of ≤ 15 minutes.	Continues in this year.
	c. Youth Services Survey for Families (YSS-F) administered to the primary caregiver of RBS enrolled youth with an estimated completion time of ≤ 15 minutes.	Continues in this year.
Participate in CDSS-led activities to develop RBS approved valid and reliable cost finding methods for the Fiscal Outcomes evaluation	Implement the RBS approved valid and reliable cost finding methods for the 24 month model to calculate year 1 costs for the Fiscal Outcomes evaluation mandates	Continues in this year.
	Report baseline Fiscal Outcomes costs calculated using the RBS approved cost finding methodology and the for the 24 month model	Continues in this year.

Year One: 2009	Year Two: 2010	Year Three: 2011
	Participate in a 90 minute qualitative data collection focus group to collect year 1 information on Systems Operations evaluation mandate.	May be repeated in this year.
<b>LOCAL RBS DATA COORDINATOR</b>		
Participate in the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee	Continues in this year.	Continues in this year.
	Coordinate, monitor and track local data collection activities to ensure that accurate and complete data on all RBS enrolled children is collected according to the specified intervals	Continues in this year.
	Compile completed instruments and consent/assent forms, conduct quality assurance review, return incomplete/poor quality instruments or unsigned forms to local providers and track process to ensure completion	Continues in this year.
	"Clean" reviewed instruments of personal identifying information and code for tracking between the CWS/CMS system and the statewide RBS database	Continues in this year.
	Submit reviewed "cleaned" and coded instruments and consent/assent forms to CDSS for transmission to WRMA for compilation of the statewide database.	Continues in this year.
<b>CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (CDSS) DATA COORDINATOR AND OTHER STAFF</b>		
Participate in the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee	Continues in this year.	Continues in this year.
Lead activities to develop RBS approved valid and reliable cost finding methods. Review and approve RBS cost finding methods with help from participating counties and providers	Continues in this year.	Continues in this year.
	<p>Compile, clean, and send to WRMA the CWS/CMS data and comparison populations entered by counties on RBS enrolled children relative to evaluation mandates 1, 2, 3 and 6 after it has been de-identified (see above) Continues in future years, pending funding.</p> <p>[Note tables and text for the evaluation data part of the County annual reports are produced for the Counties to add to every year.]</p>	[Note table and text for the evaluation data part of the County annual reports are produced for the Counties to add to every year.]
	Verify that instruments do not include personal identifying information. Transmit instruments and consent/assent forms to WRMA.	

Year One: 2009	Year Two: 2010	Year Three: 2011
<b>RBS EVALUATION TEAM</b>		
Fred Molitor of WRMA will co-Chair the RBS Evaluation Subcommittee with Peter Pecora of Casey Family Programs	Continues in this year.	Continues in this year.
	Receive the de-identified baseline data provided by CDSS to determine baselines for Outcomes for Children and Youth and Systems Operations	Continues in this year.
	WRMA and Casey Family Programs will work with CDSS and the counties to help them use the RBS data and tables to create County Annual Reports.	Continues in this year.
	WRMA will analyze the de-identified data provided by CDSS to write a year 2 progress report. This includes observations about the data collection process for baseline data for all mandated outcomes. (Casey Family Programs Research staff members, with review of draft report by WRMA and RBS evaluation Advisory Committee members before review by the RBS ILT and Steering Committee)	Continues in this year with a year 3 progress report.
	Develop county specific qualitative data collection focus group protocols based on the requirements of AB 1453 and county-specific RBS plans detailed in approved Voluntary Agreement. (Casey Family Programs research staff will lead this planning and conduct the focus groups.)	Possibly repeat focus groups in 2011.

## Appendix A: Overview of Measures Included in the RBS Evaluation

Note that the CANS-CW will be completed at minimum at Intake and Exit from RBS, as well as every 90 days for Sacramento, and every 6 months for Los Angeles and San Bernardino. The YSS and YSS-F surveys will be completed at 6 month intervals and at Exit for all participating counties. The time table will be determined for other counties as they confirm their participation in RBS. These instruments are first collected from the RBS service providers by the RBS Local Data Coordinator who is responsible for local data collection. The RBS Local Data Coordinator compiles, reviews and cleans completed instruments, and then sends them to the state RBS data coordinator who will send them to WRMA for entry into the RBS database for compilation and analysis. Note that the completion time for the CANS-CW can be up to 30 minutes for trained and certified CANS-CW user familiar with the child and family.

Note that with the exception of the financial data indicators which are still being outlined, virtually all of the data elements in the Appendix A table below will be analyzed and tabled on a individual county basis so that County staff can use these county-specific tables for their annual RBS report.

The program operations and financial data will be collected and analyzed at the end of year 2 and at annual intervals thereafter. Each voluntary agreement defines enrollment and disenrollment for that county's population.

Evaluation Mandate	Research Question	Data Source/ Instrument	Data Collection Completed By	Data Collection Workload	Data Collection Coordinated by
<b>1. Achievement of permanency.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on children enrolled in the RBS project with regard to their legal permanency status.	Selected items in the CWS/CMS.	County staff.	Routine case plan update in CWS/CMS and special projects codes to be completed in the CWS/CMS system once for all RBS mandates for each RBS enrolled child and comparison population: (i) Special projects code and(ii) start date at intake and (iii) end date at disenrollment with reason as applicable..	CDSS staff interfaces with the RBS Local Data Coordinator and county staff to compile, clean, and analyze data entered into CWS/CMS by county staff, to calculate measures and to report them to WRMA
		Selected items on the CANS-CW: 15.	County designated staff such as the RBS agency providers.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15-30 minutes to	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected items on the YSS: 13, 21, 25.	RBS enrolled youth ages 13 to 18.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected items on the YSS-F: 17, 21, 25.	Primary caregiver of RBS enrolled children and youth.	Varies by interval. YSS-F survey completion time 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider

<b>Evaluation Mandate</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data Source/ Instrument</b>	<b>Data Collection Completed By</b>	<b>Data Collection Workload</b>	<b>Data Collection Coordinated by</b>
<b>2. Average lengths of group care stay.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the mean, median and range of average lengths of stay in residential treatment facilities of children enrolled in the RBS program?	Selected items in the CWS/CMS.	County staff at exit	None.	CDSS staff interfaces with the RBS Local Data Coordinator and county staff to compile, clean, and analyze data entered into CWS/CMS by county staff, to calculate measures and to report them to WRMA
<b>3. Rates of reentry into group care.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on rates of re-entry into group care and foster care of children enrolled in the RBS program?	Selected items in the CWS/CMS.	County staff at exit.	None.	CDSS staff interfaces with the RBS Local Data Coordinator and county staff to compile, clean, and analyze data entered into CWS/CMS by county staff, to calculate measures and to report them to WRMA.
<b>4. Involvement of youth and their families/Voice and choice in case planning/services.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the involvement of children or youth and their families in treatment planning and treatment?	Selected YSS items: 2, 3, & 6.	RBS enrolled youth ages 13 to 18.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected YSS-F items: 2, 3 & 6.	Primary caregiver of RBS enrolled children and youth.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
<b>5. Client satisfaction</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the satisfaction of the children or youth and families enrolled in RBS?	Selected YSS items: Total scale score and item 1.	RBS enrolled Youth ages 13 to 18.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected YSS-F items: Total scale score and item 1.	Primary caregiver of RBS enrolled children and youth.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
<b>6. Child safety.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the incidence and recurrence of substantiated maltreatment in foster care of RBS enrolled children?	Selected items in the CWS/CMS at exit: CANS CW: Items 13, 14 and 16.	County staff.	None.	CDSS staff interfaces with the RBS Local Data Coordinator and county staff to compile, clean, and analyze data entered into CWS/CMS by county staff, to calculate measures and to report them to WRMA
<b>7. Child well being.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the well being of children enrolled in the RBS project?	Selected YSS items at exit: Results sub scale total and items 16-26.	RBS enrolled youth ages 13 to 18.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider

Evaluation Mandate	Research Question	Data Source/ Instrument	Data Collection Completed By	Data Collection Workload	Data Collection Coordinated by
		Selected YSS-F items at exit: Results sub scale total and items 16-26.	Primary caregiver of RBS enrolled children and youth.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		CWS/CMS data	What impact has the local RBS project had on the well being of children enrolled in the RBS project?	We added 2 child well-being measures from CWS CMS data on number and direction of placement moves.	
		Selected CANS-CW items: Total scale and 1-12, 17-24, 29-42.	County designated staff such as the RBS agency providers.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 30 minutes for the entire CANS-CW	RBS Local Services Provider
<b>8. Child educational progress.</b>	What impact has the local RBS project had on the educational progress of RBS enrolled children?  (Note that YSS & YSS-F item combines “school and /or work”.)	Selected YSS items: 19.	RBS enrolled Youth ages 13 to 18.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected YSS-F items.	Primary caregiver of RBS enrolled children and youth.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 15 minutes.	RBS Local Services Provider
		Selected CANS-CW items: 4, 9-11.	County designated staff such as the RBS agency providers.	Varies by interval. Completion time: 30 minutes for the entire CANS-CW	RBS Local Services Provider

Evaluation Mandate	Research Question	Data Source/ Instrument	Data Collection Completed By	Data Collection Workload	Data Collection Coordinated by
9. The existence of a connection with a caring adult.	Does the child have a relationship with a caring adult?	CANS-CW item on relational permanence (no. 59) . “This rating refers to the stability of significant relationships in the child or youth’s life. This likely includes family members but may also include other individuals.”	County designated staff such as the RBS agency providers.	Completion time: 30 minutes for the entire CANS-CW	RBS Local Services Provider
10. The use of the program by the county.	What significant changes is the county making as part of its implementation of the RBS project in order to achieve its goals?	90-minute focus groups with local RBS stakeholders	Casey Family Programs	Up to 2 hours for scheduling and participating in a 90-minute focus group.	RBS Local Data Coordinator and Casey Family Programs staff.
11. The operation of the program by the private nonprofit agency.	What significant changes has the provider made to transform its traditional group home program into an RBS program in order to achieve its goals?	90-minute focus groups with local RBS stakeholders	Casey Family Programs	Up to 2 hours for scheduling and participating in a 90-minute focus group.	RBS Local Data Coordinator and Casey Family Programs staff.
<b>Financial Analysis: Data Collection Methods TBD</b>					
12. Payments made to the private nonprofit agency by the county.	What impact has the local RBS project had on payments made to the nonprofit agency by the county?	County-developed and RBS approved standard methodology for validly and reliably documenting the average cumulative per child per annum cost to the county of providing RBS services.	County staff.	To be determined.	CDSS and RBS Local Data Coordinator.

Evaluation Mandate	Research Question	Data Source/ Instrument	Data Collection Completed By	Data Collection Workload	Data Collection Coordinated by
<p><b>13. Actual costs incurred by the nonprofit agency for the operation of the program.</b></p>	<p>What impact has the local RBS project had on the actual costs incurred by the nonprofit agency for the operation of the program?</p>	<p>County-developed and RBS approved standard methodology for validly and reliably documenting the average cumulative per child per annum cost to the provider of providing RBS services.</p>	<p>RBS providers. County staff.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>	<p>CDSS and RBS Local Data Coordinator</p>
<p><b>14. The impact of the program on state and county AFDC-FC program costs.</b></p>	<p>What impact has the local RBS project had on state and county AFDC-FC program costs?</p>	<p>County-developed and RBS approved standard methodology for validly and reliably documenting the average cumulative per child per annum state and county AFDC-FC program costs of providing RBS services.</p>	<p>County staff. CDSS staff.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>	<p>CDSS and RBS Local Data Coordinator</p>
<p><b>15. The impact of the program on state and county Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program costs.</b></p>	<p>What impact has the local RBS project had on state and county EPSDT program costs?</p>	<p>County-developed and RBS approved standard methodology for validly and reliably documenting the average cumulative per child per annum state and county EPSDT program costs of providing RBS services.</p>	<p>County staff. CDSS staff.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>	<p>CDSS and RBS Local Data Coordinator.</p>

Evaluation Mandate	Research Question	Data Source/ Instrument	Data Collection Completed By	Data Collection Workload	Data Collection Coordinated by
<p><b>16. The impact of the program on state and county Mental Health Services Act (MHSA- Proposition 63) program costs.</b></p>	<p>What impact has the local RBS project had on state and county MHSA - Proposition 63 program costs?</p>	<p>County-developed and RBS approved standard methodology for validly and reliably documenting the average cumulative per child per annum state and county MHSA- Proposition 63 program costs of providing RBS services.</p>	<p>County staff. CDSS staff.</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>	<p>CDSS and RBS Local Data Coordinator</p>

# Appendix B: CWS/CMS Methodology Used to Construct Variables and Data Analyses

Revised: 12-23-09

## RBS CWS/CMS Proposed Outcome Methodology, Disenrollment Types and Comparison Group Design Options

### **Overall Outstanding Issues and Proposed Answers**

Note: The definition of the *career length of stay* has been modified to be “career length of stay for all placement episodes that fall within the 24 month RBS and comparison group time frame. Therefore the “lifetime” career length of stay measure will be dropped from the RBS evaluation because CMS data only go back to 1998, and these data were not reliable until somewhere between 2002-2003. Bridge intervals are those that are less than 14 days.

- A. *Who will run the outcomes?* Answer: County RBS Data coordinators will provide the state CDSS RBS Data coordinators with the *Foreign Client Keys* of all the RBS youth served who are tracked in CWS/CMS using the special project codes-is to track basic information for them using the various systems available to the counties. For example, for youth served by RBS from the mental health system, we will collect the same measures as other RBS youth: CANS-CW, YSS and YSS-F, placement history, payment history, reasons for placement episode termination, and discharge reasons from RBS. These data will be in the Statewide Automated Welfare System (SAWS) that is used by the county welfare department to pay the AFDC-FC placement costs for children placed by the California Mental Health (with LA obtaining these data through CWS/CMS and Sacramento obtaining these data via CAL-WINS).

Note, for fiscal tracking, data from the SAWS may be needed for all children, including those in child welfare as AFDC-FC payments are made through SAWS, except for LA. Probation placements are entered into the back end of CWS/CMS via the SOC 158 process and DSS can extract data on this population. For RBS youth from Juvenile Probation programs, by Summer of 2010 with the release of version 6.4, Probation should have access to data entry into CMS/CMS for its foster placements and the special project codes should be available to track these probation youth. If the CWS/CMS data 6.4 update does not happen, the same process will be used as was described for the mental health RBS youth.

- B. *What will be the time lines for the outcomes (quarterly, bi-annually, yearly, etc)?*

DSS will query the CMS data biannually for the evaluation by WRMA, during the first week of May and November of each year, with the first anticipated initial query being November of 2010.

### **Achievement of Permanency**

1. Identify all youth who are enrolled in the RBS program via the Special Project Code.
2. Identify all such youth who had a placement episode termination

3. Select all youth whose placement episode termination reason (TERM\_TY\_C) are for: Adoption (5426,5505, 5438, 5519). Guardianship (5516, 5434), Reunification (5513, 5439 ,5440)
4. Select all youth with an open placement episode but are currently in a pre-adoptive placement with a signed placed for adoption agreement (ADAGSGN\_DT>=RBS special project code start date) and all youth who were placed in a guardian home with a SCP relationship type of (SCP\_RLTC=1636 or 1638 subsequent to the RBS special project code start date.
5. Identify all youth who have had a case closure reason and select all youth whose case closure is Kin GAP, (CLS\_RSNC=5950) and whose latest placement termination episode did not end in any of the reasons in #3 above.

**Statistical Calculations:**

- Numerator: the number of children who achieved permanency (see codes above, placement episode termination and case closure reasons) or have an open case but are placed with guardians or in a pre-adoptive home.
- Denominator: the number of children who exited RBS (Exit Cohort), who may or may not be in foster care.

Note: We will report the number of children who achieved permanency during the RBS defined time period and the number of children who exited due other non-permanency reasons (e.g., AWOL, transfer to probation, incarceration, emancipation) using the special project disenrollment codes or CMS data for the non-permanency placement termination codes as described below.

**Average Length of Stay While Active in RBS**

Need: median, mean and range of average length of stay of youths enrolled in RBS program:

- 1) Identify all youth who are enrolled in the RBS program via Special Project Code.
- 2) Identify all youths who had a group home placement during their RBS enrollment period (e.g., special project start and end date).
  - Numerator: the sum of all days each child was placed in a group home for all placements episodes **while active in RBS** (Note use placement type: Group home, Out of home placement start and end dates, and truncate any start dates prior to/after the RBS special project code start and end dates respectively.)
  - Denominator: the number of children enrolled in RBS who had a group home placement during the time period.

**Some Calculation Parameters:**

- A. Whenever possible, the RBS evaluation will follow the CDSS approach to defining and measuring these kinds of CWS/CMS data to help maximize consistency across the RBS sites and to minimize the workload for the state and WRMA for data analysis. RBS will follow the CDSS approach to bridging an interval of absence from placement and returning to the same placement as is used for the federal and AB636 outcome measures. DSS uses 14 days.
- B. If a child is in one group home and “temporarily” leaves that placement for 14 days or less and lives somewhere else for crisis stabilization, a special educational experience, juvenile justice detention, receiving home, or is on the run, but then returns to that original group home placement:
  - No “placement change” has occurred.
  - For calculation of length of stay stats, the original placement is “bridged” so that the 14 or fewer days that the child was away are included with the other placement days.

- If the child is away from the group home placement for more than 14 days, then the day he or she left is the last day of that placement and the days away are not counted for length of stay. If the child is re-placed in another group home placement setting, than the days away are not counted for length of stay for that original group home.
  - For those children not considered to have been in that group care placement for the days they are away from that placement in terms of payment. (If the county has agreed to pay for a “bed hold” during the absence, they will track that financial data.)
- C. If a child has more than one placement episode during RBS, all the group home placements and those days in group care will be counted.

Note the average length of stay may not tell us anything the first year of implementation. The proposed time frames from the counties are:

County	Proposed RBS Services while in group home
Los Angeles	10 months
Sacramento	9 months
Bay Area Consortium	6 months
San Bernardino	12months

**Rate of Re-entry into Group Care and Foster Care:**

- 1) Identify all youth who are enrolled in the RBS program via Special Project Code
- 2) Identify all youths who had a group home placement during their RBS enrollment period (e.g. special project start and end date).
- 3) Look for the first group home placement in RBS (may have occurred prior to RBS), then look for any subsequent group home placement where there was a non-group home foster placement in between the group home placements. Note to account for Respite care – we would exclude any group home placement made between the same foster home placement (e.g., RBS group home, exit to kin home, respite RBS group home and to back to the same kinship care home). In order to identify if this child is exiting/entering to the same non-group foster placement home, we should look at the placement home identifier and if they are the same, that group home would be excluded. The time limit for respite care will be 14 days.

**Re-entry Rate for Group Home Placement:**

- Numerator: Will be any child who had at least one group home exit (from current RBS group home) to a lower level of foster care placement (non-group home) and then had a later group home placement – however we are excluding respite group home stays, see #3 for how to address these situations.
- Denominator: will be any child enrolled in RBS who had a group home placement.

**Rate of Re-entry into Foster Care:**

- 1) Identify all youth who are enrolled in the RBS program via Special Project Code
- 2) Identify all youths who return to parent/reunified during their RBS enrollment period (e.g., special project start and end date).
- 3) Look for additional placement episodes or cases opened for the child after the returned home (e.g., looking for re-entry into foster care from FM or reunified status).

#### *Re-entry Rate for Foster Care:*

- Numerator: Will be any child who re-entered out-of-home care from either a reunified case or from a trial home visit/FM- Family Maintenance case.
- Denominator: Any child in RBS who exited foster care to reunification or left their foster care placement for a trial home visit.

Note: it will not be possible to identify respite care for this group – because they are not exiting/entering and then exiting back to the same foster home, we will not have a placement identifier. One possible way to control for respite care would be to use an exclusion for any reentry to a group home that is less than 2-3 weeks. We agreed to use the CDSS bridging definition of 14 days to exclude a reentry for less than this time interval.

#### ***Child Safety (includes both in care abuse and out of care abuse):***

Data analysis steps:

- 1) Identify all youths who are enrolled in the RBS program via a Special Project Code.
- 2) Look for any additional substantiated allegations that occurred while the child was enrolled in RBS. This will be stratified by youths who are at home and youths who are in placement.
  - Numerator: Will be any child who had at least one substantiated allegation while enrolled in RBS. Stratify by first allegation received and the most severe allegation out of the first allegation. Stratify by in and out of home care. For out of home care use same CDSS definition that the abuse perpetrator had to be the Substitute Care Provider (SCP)/caregiver.
  - Denominator: will be any child enrolled in RBS during the time period

#### ***Child Well-Being (Two Measures on Placement Stability)***

**Concern:** Among several complications noted is defining the methodology for determining how to assess the “positivity” of positive ultimate outcomes (defined as permanency or placement in the lowest level of care) based on the number of placement changes required to achieve them, assuming that multiple placement changes negatively impact a child’s well being. I.e.:

1. Number of placement changes
2. Positive placement changes (lower level of care)
3. Negative placement changes (return to higher level of care)
4. How to balance the positive and negative to come up with an overall measure of the positivity or negativity of the placement changes.

**Solutions:** Calculate total number of placement changes; nature and direction of all placement changes while enrolled(); by using start/end date of placement special code.

Another strategy is to view the placement change placement from the perspective of the final goal placement and see how many placements – positive and negative – it took to get to the ultimate desired placement.

**How many placement changes are too much?** Another issue centers on what is the “threshold of tolerance” for placement changes after which no more changes are viewed as positive, even if the ultimate outcome is positive and desirable?

Note this is an *exit cohort analysis* of the group of children who exited RBS that relies on information from the child's last placement.

**Well-being Measure # 1 - Nature and Direction of Placement Changes**

- 1) Identify all youths who are enrolled in the RBS program via Special Project Code
- 2) After identifying the initial RBS placement home, track any additional placement home changes while enrolled in RBS. We will determine if the overall placement trajectory was positive, negative, or lateral based on the last placement per the Table on Placement Changes Hierarchy. A child should fall into only one category (i.e., they are in terms of whether it discretely counted).
- 3) Rate of Positive Placement Changes:
  - Numerator: Number of children who exited RBS. We will look at their last placement to determine if a positive trajectory has occurred during the RBS services period. (i.e. has there been a positive, lateral or negative trajectory?)
  - Denominator: will be any child who had been enrolled in RBS and exited during the time period.
- 4) Rate of Negative Placement Changes:
  - Numerator: Number of children who exited RBS with negative trajectory based on the last placement during RBS period.
  - Denominator: will be any child who had been enrolled in RBS and exited during the time period with a placement change.
- 5) Rate of No Placement Changes:
  - Numerator: Number of children who exited RBS with no placement moves during RBS period.
  - Denominator: will be any child who had been enrolled in RBS and exited during the time period.
- 6) *Rate of Lateral Changes:*
  - Numerator: Number of children who exited RBS, noting the type of their last placement. A lateral trajectory is when a child begins and ends RBS in the same placement type.
  - Denominator: will be any child who had been enrolled in RBS and exited during the time period

For example a youth going from group home to any other type is considered a positive change, a youth moving from FFA to a foster home is a positive change, a youth moving from relative to group home is a negative change. We will determine the trajectory of the moves by the last placement at exit. Example: 4 moves, 3 to lower level of care, last placement move at exit, child back in group care equals negative.

Identification of Placement Changes Rate Hierarchy (1=highest level, 5=lowest level)<sup>a</sup>

Level	Placement Home Types	Grouping (if applicable)
1	Group Home	Group these together as "Group Care"
1	County Shelter/Receiving Home	Group these together as "Group Care"
2	Foster Family Agency	
3	Court Specified	Group these together as a "Foster Home category"
3	Small Family Home	Group these together as a "Foster Home category"
3	Foster Family Home	Group these together as a "Foster Home category"
3	Tribe Specified Home	Group these together as a "Foster Home category"
4	Relative/NREFM Home	
5	Guardian Home	

<sup>a</sup> Note that some children may exit RBS to a psychiatric hospital placement but that placement type is not coded in CWS/CMS but will need to be identified through the disenrollment code data.

**Well-being Measure # 2 - No of placement changes:**

This is calculated on a "rolling basis" every year. More specifically, a count of all placement moves the youth experienced while in RBS is made to provide the median, average and range.

Numerator: Number of total placement moves per child after RBS enrollment.

Denominator: the number of children enrolled in RBS.

**Disenrollment Reasons**

These disenrollment reasons will be tracked for all enrolled RBS children upon exit. All exits will be displayed by disenrollment reason, grouping number and percent who graduated compared to all other grouped disenrollment reasons by number and percent and then number and percent for each non graduation reason.

DISENROLLMENT REASONS	DEFINITIONS	DATA SOURCE
Change of jurisdiction	Original RBS county no longer has legal responsibility	CWS/CMS
Decision to end services before graduation	1. Better served with other services 2. safety concerns	Special Project Code
Child AWOL	Self explanatory/ Local county practice	CWS/CMS
Aged out of system	Self explanatory/ Not made sufficient progress	CWS/CMS
Incarcerated / hospitalized / non-foster care	Local county practice	CWS/CMS
600 Court case dismissed / No longer Ward	Court order	CWS/CMS

DISENROLLMENT REASONS	DEFINITIONS	DATA SOURCE
300 Court case dismissed/No longer dependent	Court order	CWS/CMS
Voluntary closure	Family/Youth not interested in RBS	Special Project Code
AB 3632 eligibility ends	No longer eligible	Special Project Code
Graduation	Completed RBS program/CFT determined RBS no longer needed, substantial progress	Special Project Code
Child moves out of county	RBS not available in new location	CWS/CMS
Non RBS Group Home placement	Local county practice	CWS/CMS