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Human Services Agency
and Probation Department

System Improvement Plan Update

March 26, 2012

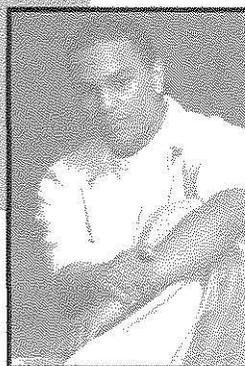


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B. Child Welfare Services (CWS)/Probation Narrative

1. Child Welfare Services

The Merced County System Improvement Plan (SIP) was approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 28, 2011. The CWS plan drew on the knowledge and expertise of the community, findings of the Peer Quality Care Review (PQCR), the County Self-Assessment (CSA), and guidance from the California Department of Social Services, and evidence based practice models to identify a plan to increase the capacity of Merced County to provide safety, permanency, and well-being to children. The planning process activities covered a 13-month time period that began with the PQCR in March 2010, included the CSA, and concluded with the development of the SIP in March through June, 2011. Community partners were included in each step of the process and information gathered in each step was carried forward into the planning and execution of the next.

After reviewing the information and conclusions from the PQCR and the CSA, CWS leadership, in consultation with community partners, identified three measures for focus in the SIP. Those measures are:

- C2.1 Adoption within 24 Months, Exit Cohort
- C2.2 Median Time to Adoption (more than 24 months), Exit Cohort
- 4.B Foster Care in Least Restrictive Settings

The following sections describe the interventions planned and the status of implementation of those interventions, and the changes in the results since the date of the SIP.

a. C2.1 Adoption within 24 Months, Exit Cohort and C2.2 Median Time to Adoption, Exit Cohort

These two measures are discussed together because they are so closely related. At the time of the SIP, April 2011 quarterly report, Data Extract Q3 2010, Merced's rate of adoption within 24 months fell relative to the baseline, however, it was above the California average and the national goal. The SIP Team attributed this performance to changes in the configuration of the Adoption Team made prior to the SIP. However, given a history of inconsistent performance and the dramatic drop from the baseline period July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003, the SIP Team felt it important to continue the focus begun in the PQCR and ensure that the improvements represent a permanent change to practice and are not merely the result of a "Hawthorne effect" in which improvements are generated for no reason other than the attention focused on the process and the people.

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At the time of the SIP, the data available on measure C2.1 and C2.2 was:

Goal	Baseline Merced July 1, 2002 to July 30, 2003	October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010 Merced	October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010 California	Nation Standard or Goal
C2.1	69.0%	37.2%	32.0%	36.6%
C2.2	18.0 months	27.4 months	30.7 months	27.3 months

¹Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Excl, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved April, 14, 2011], from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

The goal set for performance on measure C2.1 is to continue to meet or exceed the national goal of 36.6% for each of the three years of the SIP plan. The goal set for performance on measure C2.2 is to continue to be at or near the national goal of 27.3 months.

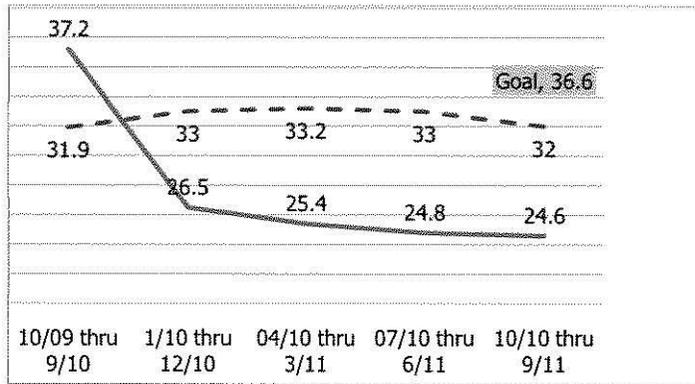
Four quarterly data reports have been released since the SIP was approved. The chart below shows Merced's performance on those quarterly reports.

Goal	January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010	April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011	July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011	October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011
C2.1	26.50%	25.4%	24.8%	24.6%
C2.2	31.0 months	35.3 months	32.2 months	32.2 months

¹Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Excl, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved April, 14, 2011], from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

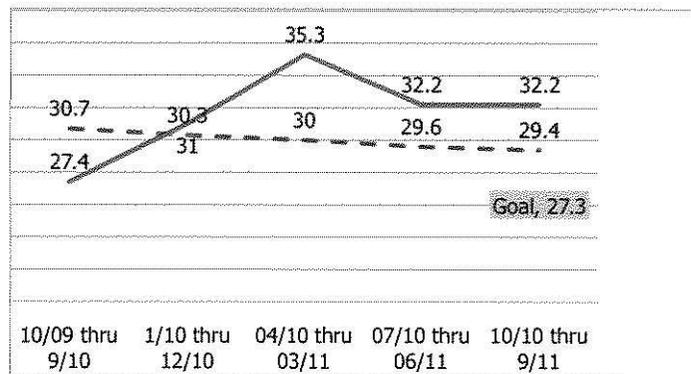
The tables below illustrate Merced County's performance in relation to the California average. Merced is the solid line, California is the dotted line.

C2.1 Adoption within 24 months (Exit Cohort) in Percent



¹ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved December 28, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

C2.2 Median Time to Adoption (Exit Cohort) in months



¹ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved December 28, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

As predicted and anticipated the four quarters since the SIP show an undesirable turn in the data for both measures. In the SIP, Merced County acknowledged that the initial numbers during the first year would represent a number of cases that had been open for many months moving to finalized adoption. In effect, a “clean up” has been underway to work with long term cases on the caseload as well as more current cases. However, data from SafeMeasures indicates the total number of adoptions has increased, indicating the effect of the increased staffing and changing philosophy and supervisory guidance is impacting the adoptions practice in the county. The table below shows the increase in total number of adoptions over previous years.

SafeMeasures	October 1, 2008, to September 30, 2009	October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010	October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011
C2.1	16.4%	37.2%	24.6%
C2.2	35.6 months	27.3 months	32.1 months
Total Adoptions	67	43	118

²Children’s Research Center SafeMeasures® Data. Merced County, Full List, 1/01/10 to 12/31/10. Retrieved December 27, 2011 from Children’s Research Center website. URL: <https://www.safemeasures.org/ca/safemeasures.aspx>. (Note: data varies slightly between Berkeley data and SafeMeasures for the same time period.)

As of December 2011, there are 183 cases assigned to the Adoptions Team. Eighty one of those have been open for 23 months or fewer. The remaining 102 cases have been open 24 months or longer. The unit supervisor and program administrator monitor the status of cases to determine if the case is not moving to adoption finalization because of issues beyond the control of the agency or if the delay is due to lack of staff time, delays in completing or processing required paper work, or other issues under agency control. As of December 2011, the Adoptions Team of five workers has two vacancies. The newly hired social workers to fill these positions were released from training mid-March but will require additional time on a reduced caseload before becoming fully functioning members of the team. These vacancies can be expected to have an impact on workload and productivity.

Progress on implementing strategies:

Improvement Goal 1.0–Maintain the percentage of children adopted within 24 months to 36.6 each year of the three year plan.

- Strategy 1.1–Restructure the Adoptions Team to lower case loads.
 - Milestone 1.1.1–Restructure the work process for the Adoptions Team. The Adoptions Team was reconfigured to raise the total number of social workers from two to five. The location of the unit was moved from another section of the HSA building to a location within the Social Services Branch. Although not a part of the original plan, a new supervisor over the Adoptions Team has brought a new focus and energy to the team. Prior to reorganization, several people were involved in each case, leading to a lack of clear responsibility.

- One social worker is now responsible for the management of the case, resulting in greater accountability.
- Milestone 1.1.2–Identify changes to policy and procedure for revision and review. Changes to policy and procedure have been implemented in practice but not formalized in policy. Change due date on this milestone to October 2012.
 - Milestone 1.1.3–Provide training to staff on policy changes and best practices. Changes in practice have been implemented through supervisor’s direction and coaching, but no formal training has been conducted for social workers not assigned to the Adoptions Team. Change due date on this measure to October 2012.
 - Strategy 1.2–At the time of termination of family reunification, assign one adoptions social worker to meet needs of entire case.
 - Milestone 1.2.1–Review and revise policy and practice. Practice has been implemented without formal written policy change. Change date to October 2012
 - Milestone 1.2.2–Restructure work process to allow for assignment of adoptions social worker at termination of family reunification. Practice has been implemented without formal policy change. Change date to October 2012
 - Milestone 1.2.3–Implement policy. Change date to October 2012
 - Strategy 1.3–Focus on permanency for all children entering care. One social worker and an office assistant have been assigned the family finding duties for CWS. Their focus is on each child that enters the CWS system. Social work staff continue to search for relatives using the limited tools available.
 - Milestone 1.3.1–Identify training topics and a trainer appropriate for both technical and motivational aspects of professional development. This milestone will be delayed until calendar year 2012. The number of vacancies in social services has been steadily climbing and reached a peak of approximately 30% in December 2011. A new cohort was hired and trained during January through March 2012, but the increased caseloads for the existing staff make it unwise to allocate staff time to training on the schedule originally identified in the SIP. Training on best practices for permanency will be better received by staff when the newly hired social workers have completed training and are released to the floor, providing relief from higher than normal caseloads. “Signs of Safety” training is planned for the summer of 2012. Family Finding training was provided for the social workers,

supervisors, and managers by Administrative Office of the Court in conjunction with the Seneca Center. Three sessions for social workers were provided on July 27 to July 29, and 61 attended. Fourteen people attended the management session on July 26. Classes were taught by attorney Kelly Beck. This training focused on the positive benefits of developing family ties for children in the child welfare system and provided specific tools for identifying family members. In addition to HSA staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) staff and volunteers attending this training as a first step in engaging CASA in supporting the family finding initiative.

- Milestone 1.3.2–Schedule training for identified staff. Family Finding training was provided in July 2011. “Signs of Safety” will be scheduled in summer 2012.
- Milestone 1.3.3–Conduct training and follow up on transfer of learning activities. In regard to Family Finding training, feedback from social workers who attended the training was positive. While they support the concepts and appreciated the tools provided in the training, many commented that they need specific guidelines about how to implement this practice. Providing specific guidelines and policy is identified as an area of need.

Improvement Goal 2.0–Maintain the median length of time for adoption at 27.3 months for each year of the three year plan.

- Strategy 2.1–Review all foster care cases for adoption possibility and concurrent planning.
 - Milestone 2.1.1–Include placement review in Case Conference Group (CCG) meetings and case conference reviews. CCG form has been revised. In practice, many cases are reviewed for concurrent placement during CCG. This practice will be formalized by changing the form in the summer of 2012.
 - Milestone 2.1.2–All court reports will address permanency and concurrent planning. Will be implemented in summer 2012.
 - Milestone 2.1.3–Train staff on new procedures and implement. Will be implemented in summer 2012.
- Strategy 2.2–Increase the number of concurrent homes.
 - Milestone 2.2.1–ER staff will identify relatives as soon as case is opened and record in Relative Tracking Form in Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). Social workers will update form as needed. Supervisors will monitor. Designated family finding social worker attends the detention hearing and meets with available family members to

gather information about other family members. She and two part-time office assistants conduct research to locate family members. At this time, given the number of vacancies, designating individual positions to conduct family finding is a better business process than assigning the task to all ER staff. When staff vacancies have been filled, the deputy and the program administrators will evaluate the effectiveness of the current arrangement and consider whether the family finding responsibilities should be extended to additional positions.

- Milestone 2.2.2–Refer county foster homes for adoption study as soon as they are licensed. County foster homes are referred to Promesa Foster Family Agency (FFA) as soon as licensed. The need for adoptive homes is emphasized in county foster home recruitment.
- Milestone 2.2.3–Identify FFA homes with a current adoption home study. This milestone is currently due for completion in September 2012.
- Strategy 2.3–Increase the number of children in concurrent homes.
 - Milestone 2.3.1–Ensure that each child under age 5 is in a concurrent home by disposition hearing. The due date for this milestone will be extended from August 2011 to December 2012. Management needs to identify all the steps necessary to identify a relative or concurrent home and document the process.
 - Milestone 2.3.2–Review permanence for each child in care during Performance Management Conference (PMC). Due date for this milestone will be extended to December 2012.
 - Milestone 2.3.3–Review permanence for each child in care at case review and in court reports. CCG form has been revised. Instruction for court reports are currently being revised to address permanence. Case reviews now include reviewing current placement, concurrent planning, and relative searches.

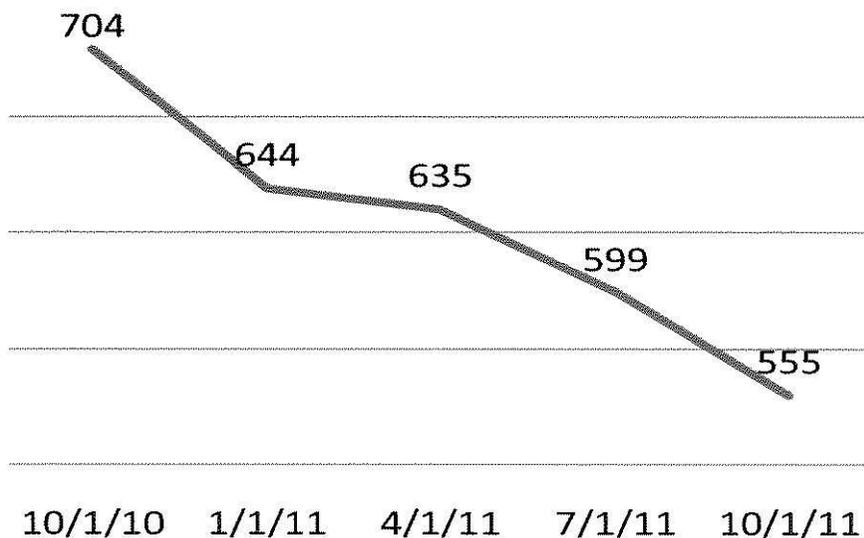
Improvement Goal 3.0–Support adoptive families in completing requirements for adoption finalization to occur.

- Strategy 3.1–Partner with home study providers to support families.
 - Milestone 3.1.1–Articulate to staff and community partners, including home study providers, HSA’s vision for supporting families through the adoption process. The adoptions supervisor holds regular monthly meetings with FFAs to maintain open communication and review the status of pending home studies. HSA’s vision has been discussed but not put into writing.

- Milestone 3.1.2–Develop MOU with home study providers to articulate a shared vision. Scheduled for April to June 2012.
- Milestone 3.1.3–Evaluate progress and effectiveness in monthly meetings with home study providers. Scheduled for November 2012.

The remaining strategies are scheduled for future years of the SIP.

In summary, the management team is pleased with the increase in the number of adoptions, the improved relationships with home study providers, the changes to foster care recruitment emphasis, and the move to providing adoption home studies as soon as foster homes are licensed. The increase in the number of adoptions is largely attributable to the increase in staffing which resulted in a dropping of individual social worker caseloads from numbers in the 90s to numbers in the 30s. Additionally, hiring a new adoptions supervisor added energy and enthusiasm for the mission to the team. Work remains to be done with implementing the culture of permanency planning throughout the life of the case. In addition to the milestones accomplished towards this goal, additional work has been done with helping the adoptions supervisor access data from SafeMeasures to better manage the status of her team’s case load. The county’s SafeMeasures specialist has worked with the supervisor to establish routines for filtering data and customized her dashboard to make relevant data more easily accessible. The increase in the total number of adoptions is the strongest evidence that attention to the process is resulting in improved outcomes for children. Additionally, during the last year, Merced County has experienced a 21% drop in the total number of children in foster care. The chart below illustrates this drop. Although many unidentified factors may contribute to this drop, it is the opinion of Merced management that some of the drop is attributable to the increase in the number of adoptions.



²Children’s Research Center SafeMeasures® Data. Merced County, Full List, 1/01/10 to 12/31/10. Retrieved December 30, 2011 from Children’s Research Center website. URL: <https://www.safemeasures.org/ca/safemeasures.aspx>

b. Measure 4B: Foster Care in Least Restrictive Setting

This measure reflects the percent of children placed in each type of foster care setting. It is measured at two points, entry and point in time. Merced County has historically had lower rates of family/relative placements at both measures than the average for the state of California. While there may be many environmental issues such as high rates of poverty, high rates of illegal drug use, and a large percentage of undocumented residents, Merced County desires to maintain the connections with their families for children and increase the percentage of initial and point in time placements with relatives. The tables below describe the initial placement data at the time of the SIP.

Initial Placement	Baseline Merced	October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010	October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010 California
Relative	8.4%	7.4%	24.6%
Foster Home	32.0%	10.0%	18.9%
FFA	53.7%	77.2%	45.2%
Group/Shelter	2.2%	1.3%	11.0%
Other	3.7%	4.1%	3.3%

¹Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved May 16, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

Point in Time (PIT) Placement	Baseline Merced	October 1, 2009, to September 30, 2010	October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010 California
Relative	23.5%	20.5%	32.8%
Foster Home	14.0%	5.0%	9.8%
FFA	35.0%	52.0%	29.6%
Group/Shelter	4.8%	4.5%	6.8%
Other	22.8%	18.0%	21.0%

¹Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved May 16, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

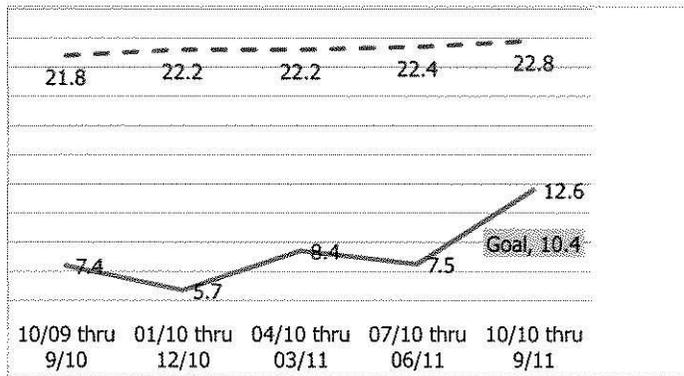
Merced County's percentage of initial relative placements (7.4% at the time of the SIP) is substantially lower than the California performance of 21.6%. In order to achieve an initial relative placement that equals the point in time placement and approaches the state average of 21.6, Merced County must increase the percentage by a factor of .4 in each of the three years of the SIP cycle. The annual goals are expressed in the tables below.

Year	Relative Placements Initial
1	10.4%
2	14.5%
3	20.5%

Year	Relative Placements PIT
1	23.6%
2	27.1%
3	30.2%

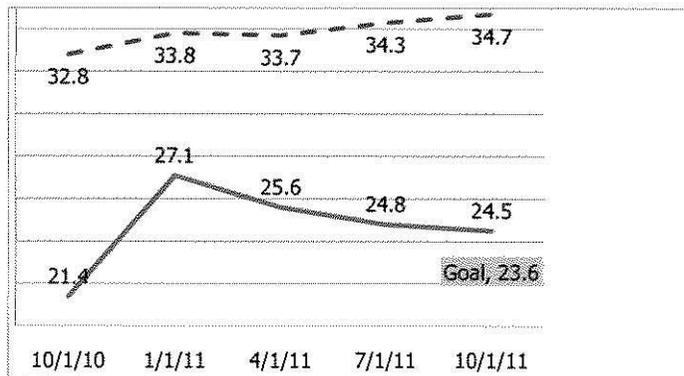
The charts below display Merced County’s performance on relative placements in the most recent and four previous quarterly data reports. The dotted line is the California average, and the solid line is Merced County. As of the most recent data report, Merced County is exceeding the goal in both measures.

4B First Placement Relative



¹Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved December 28, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

4B Point in Time Placement Relative



¹ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lec, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved December 28, 2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

Merced County’s performance on both of these measures is on target for the first year goal. The first year goal for initial placements was 10.4%, and the achievement as of October 1, 2011 was 12.6%. The first year goal for PIT placements was 23.6% and the achievement was 24.5%. Although both measures are under the California average, the change is moving in the desired direction.

Progress on implementing strategies:

- Strategy 1.1–Assign Social Worker positions to assist primary worker with emergency relatives by locating relatives.
 - Milestone 1.1.1–Identify staff positions to assist with locating relatives. One social worker and two office assistants (part-time) have been assigned to family finding and locating relatives. The social worker goes to the detention hearings to contact the family and ask about extended family members. The Social Worker and the OAs use internet searches and other tools to locate and contact relatives for possible placement. Although these contacts cannot always be made prior to placement, they are still useful and can be engaged if the child remains in placement. The case carrying social worker engages the child in conversation about potential relatives at detention and throughout the life of the case.
 - Milestone 1.1.2–Train identified social workers and other staff on locating relatives using family finding methods. Family Finding training was provided for the social workers, supervisors, and managers by Administrative

Office of the Court in conjunction with the Seneca Center. Three sessions for social workers on July 27 to July 29 and 61 attended. Fourteen people attended the management session on July 26. Classes were taught by attorney Kelly Beck. This training focused on the positive benefits of developing family ties for children in the child welfare system and provided specific tools for identifying family members. In addition to HSA staff, CASA staff and volunteers attending this training as a first step in engaging CASA in supporting the family finding initiative. Additional training is planned for summer 2012. Merced County currently has no children placed in a Seneca foster home however, this could occur in the future. Merced is one of three pilot counties identified by the Administrative Office of the Court for developing family finding, and the AOC contracted with Seneca Center for implementation of the pilot. Child welfare leadership does not see a potential conflict of interest in working with this group.

- Milestone 1.1.3–Develop schedule and implement assignments. While the county plans to assign additional social workers to assist with family finding and approving relative homes at the time of detention, the high vacancy rate over the last six months make completing this milestone impractical. This due date is moved forward to June 2012.
- Strategy 1.2–Implement early identification of relatives by ER workers
 - Milestone 1.2.1–Develop policy. Emergency Response (ER) workers have been instructed in early identification of relatives in staff meetings. No formal policy has been developed. This due date is moved to December 2012.
 - Milestone 1.2.2–Train workers on policy. ER workers have received training on family finding and have implemented as best practice. No formal policy training has been provided. See above. This due date is moved to March 2013.
 - Milestone 1.2.3–Implement policy. See above. This due date is moved to April 2013.
- Strategy 1.3–Include family members in initial case conference.

The milestones in this strategy are not yet due. However, this is a high priority task for Merced county. The leadership is working to change some attitudes that may be preventing social workers from placing with families. In addition to the “apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” belief, which was addressed in Family Finding training, other values have mitigated against placement with families. For example, Merced County has a good history of placing sibling groups together. If a relative cannot take the entire sibling group, the social worker will generally place the children in a foster home where they can remain together.

Social workers will be encouraged to look at the goal of keeping siblings together which is to maintain their relationship on a case by case basis. For example, if a relative can take some siblings but not all and another relative can take the others, and frequent visits among siblings can be arranged, the social worker can weigh the two competing values (siblings together versus placement with relatives) and make the best decision for the family rather than defaulting to one value over another.

- Strategy 2.1–Increase ability to certify relative homes for emergency placement.

The milestones in this strategy are not yet due. A step-by-step list of requirements for certifying home for emergency placement has been developed and provided to social workers. If a social worker is recommending denying certification to a relative home, the denial must be approved at the Program Administrator level. The Home Assessment Team (HAT) has provided training for staff on this process, and new workers will be trained also.

- Strategy 2.2–Review foster care placement for appropriateness to move to relative placement and/or concurrent placement.

The milestones in this strategy are not yet due.

- Strategy 2.3–Evaluate effectiveness of strategies.
 - Milestone 2.3.1–Review quarterly reports. A format has been developed and quarterly reports are reviewed regularly in Program Administrator meetings. Reports are reviewed in supervisor’s meetings when appropriate, and reports relating to their units are shared with individual supervisors.
 - Milestone 2.3.2–Review initial and PIT placements in social worker/supervisor conferences. Supervisors are asking social workers about relative placement during case conferences.
 - Milestone 2.3.3–Revise the procedures, provide training, or offer other interventions as required if relative placements are not increasing. The case conferencing group form has been updated to include a question about relative placement, concurrent planning, and family finding. A need has been identified to document the steps necessary to identify relative or concurrent home by the disposition hearing, including the clerical steps.

In summary, the data shows that progress is being made in placing children with relatives, both initially and at point-in-time. While Merced County’s performance on these measures is still below California, it is trending in the desired direction and both measures are exceeding the goals set for the first year. Additional management strategies are on hold pending the filling of currently vacant positions. On the positive side of turnover, the introduction of a new cohort of social workers into the workforce provides

an opportunity to inculcate them in Merced's attitude toward relative placement. Merced's demographics will continue to be a factor in relative placement. Wide spread poverty, drug abuse, gang membership and domestic violence means that finding a safe home among relatives can be challenging. The high percentage of undocumented residents means that some families cannot be certified because some members of the household have no identification to provide for required background checks. Although some environmental obstacles will always be present, Merced County will continue to work on the identified strategies, adjust as needed, and work towards continuing progress on achieving the goals.

The ability to find and engage relatives and to implement strategies related to this goal is impacted by staffing levels. Merced County hired twelve master's level social workers and three bachelor's level social workers. These new staff will be deployed to all teams as they complete training. However, budget may not allow for additional hiring to replace staff that leave in the future. Child welfare management will continue to monitor the impact of staffing on family engagement, while recognizing that family engagement early in the case can save time as the case progresses.

Finally, Merced County has a limited voluntary family maintenance program. Cases are opened using the structured decision making tool only if the family is high or very high risk and is determined to need more than home visitor services.

2. Probation Narrative

After reviewing the findings of the PQCR and CSA and consulting with agency partners, Probation identified the following measure to target: Improving Permanency Outcomes and Identifying and developing life-long connections. This measure will reflect the number of children who age out of foster care with an established life-long connection. Outcome data are not available on this measure; however, probation data will soon be entered into CWS/CMS which may allow for extraction and analysis of specific information regarding this measure.

As a result of recommendations from the PQCR, the Probation Department has implemented a process for notifying potential relatives of minors suitable for and/or ordered into out of home placement. In addition, Deputy Probation Officers are now encouraged to ask about potential family members and/or caring adults in these minors' lives at every level of contact (intake to supervision). It is anticipated that increased family engagement at every level of probation may increase the number of potential life-long connections for minors in out of home placement.

It is anticipated that with the implementation of the listed strategies the Probation Department can increase the number of life-long connections for each minor exiting foster care and reach or surpass the targeted improvement goal.

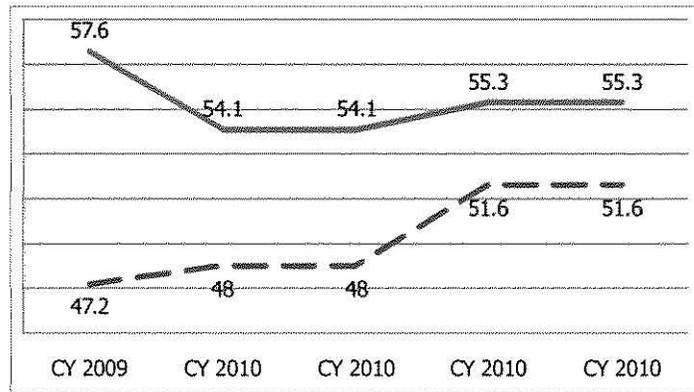
Child Welfare Discussion of Measures **NOT** Targeted for the SIP.

Note: All measures in this section are taken from the website cited in the charts in the earlier sections of this report. The red line is Merced performance, the dashed blue line is California average, the dotted blue line is national standard or goal, and the green line is California goal.

Participation Rates: Referral Rates

Referral rates continue to be higher than the California average but are trending down. No actions are planned to address this measure.

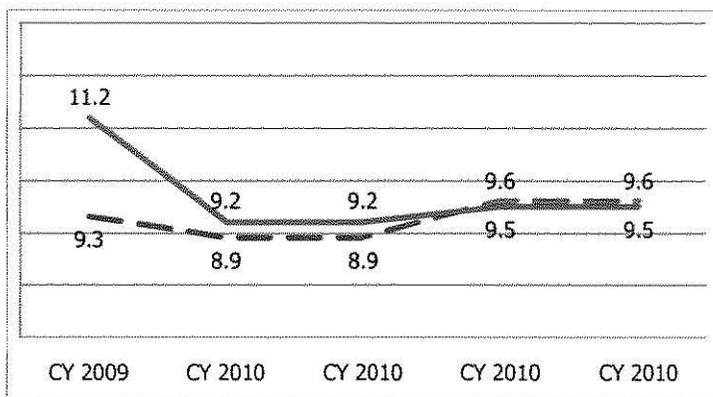
PR: Referral Rates



Participation Rates: Substantiation Rates

Merced's substantiation rates have been slightly below the California average for the last two quarters. No actions are planned to address this measure.

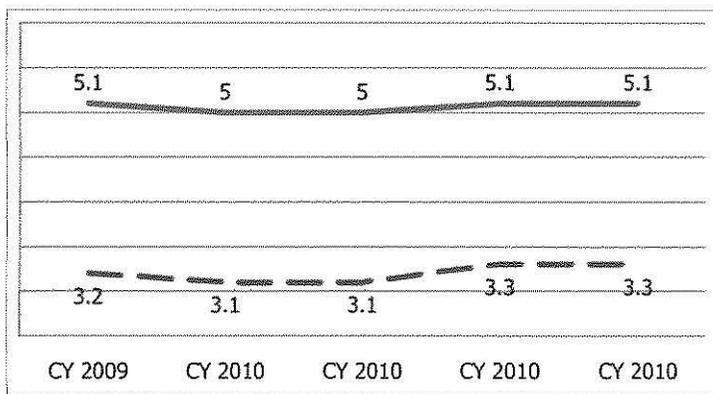
PR: Substantiation Rates



Participation Rates: Entry Rates

Merced's entry rates continue to be above the California average but are trending flat. Although the entry rates are high, the percentage of children in foster care is trending down. No actions are planned to address this measure.

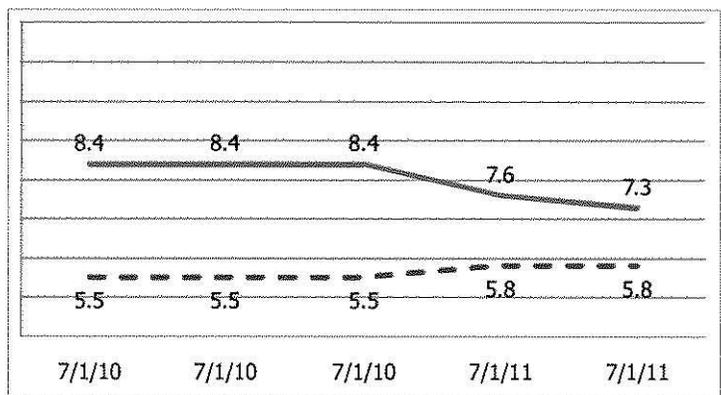
PR: Entry Rates



Participation Rates: In-Care Rates

Merced's In-Care rates continue to be above the California average but are trending down. No actions are planned to address this measure.

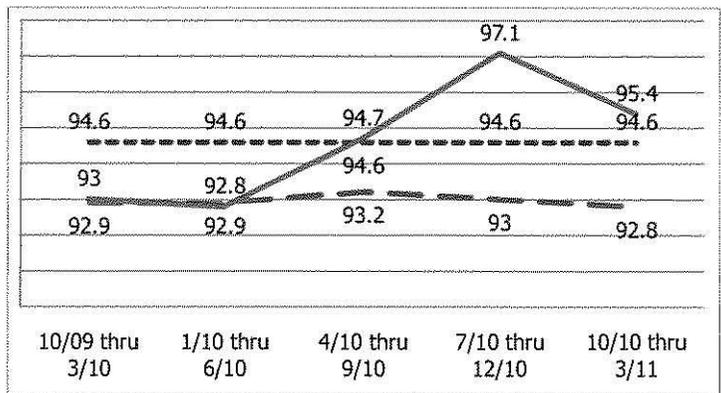
PR: In-Care Rates



Measure S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment

This measure remains above both the California average and the national standard. It is trending up. No actions are planned to address this measure.

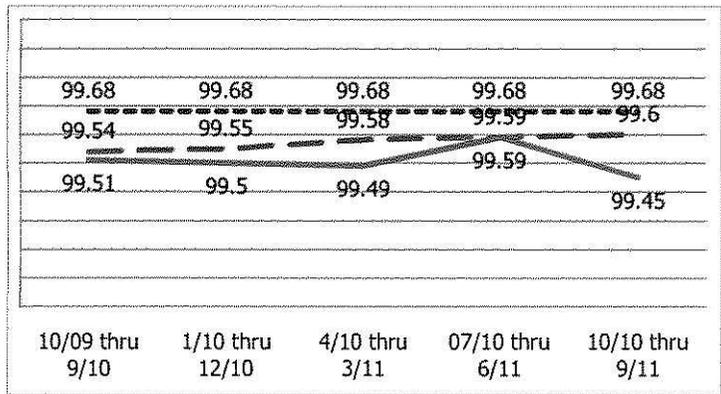
S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment



S2.1 No Maltreatment in Foster Care

This measure is very close to the California average and the national standard. The percentage in the most recent report represents five cases of maltreatment in foster care during the 12 months ending September 2011. These cases were investigated and appropriate action taken. No further action is planned to address this measure.

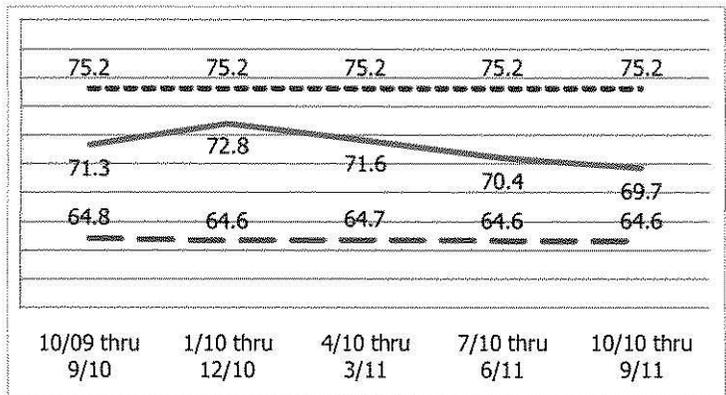
S2.1 No Maltreatment in Foster Care



C1.1 Reunification within 12 Months (Exit Cohort)

This measure is below the national standard but above the California average. It is trending down. No actions are planned to address this measure, but social services management will continue to closely monitor future reports for any further deterioration in the performance.

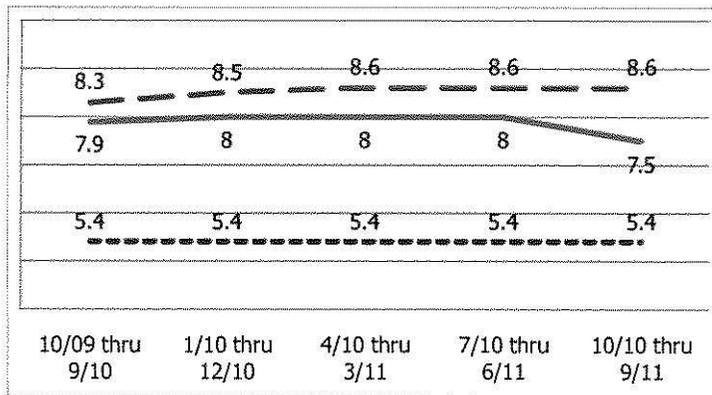
C1.1 Reunification within 12 months (Exit cohort)



C1.2 Median Time to Reunification (Exit Cohort)

Merced's performance is below (better than) the California average but above (not as good as) the national standard. It is trending in the desired direction. No actions are planned to address this measure.

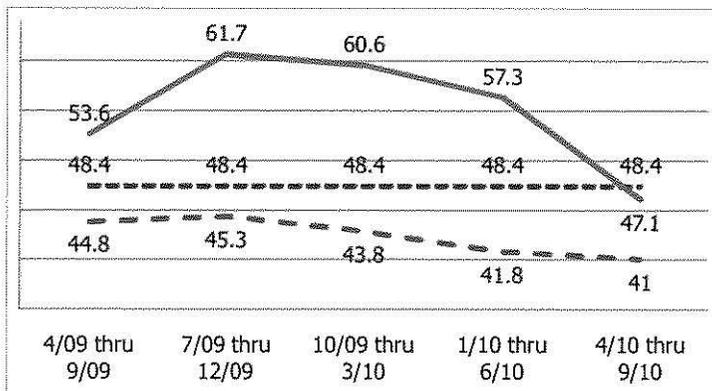
C1.2 Median Time to Reunification (Exit Cohort)



C1.3 Reunification within 12 Months (Entry Cohort)

Although still slightly above the California average, Merced's performance on this standard has dipped below the national standard and is trending down. We will continue to monitor this trend.

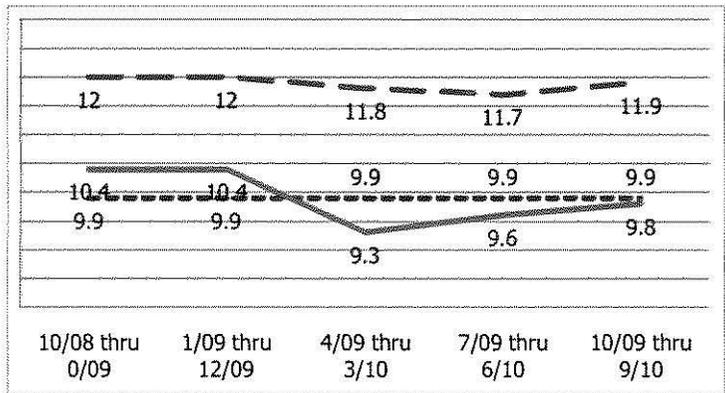
C1.3 Reunification within 12 months (Entry cohort)



C1.4 Re-entry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort)

Although Merced’s performance on this measure has been trending up on the last three reports (the wrong direction), it remains below the national standard and the California average. While we are trending in an undesired direction, drilling down in SafeMeasures shows that large families were redetained resulting in a greater increase in numbers. We are focusing more on completing the risk assessment and safety assessment in Structured Decision Making (SDM) prior to reunifying families. A new case review process should help as well.

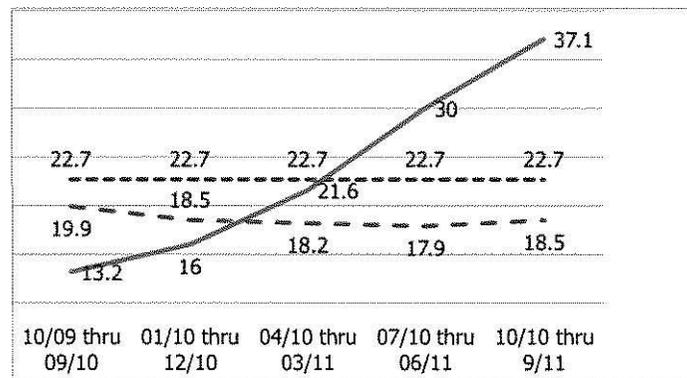
C1.4 Re-entry following reunification (Exit cohort)



C2.1 and C2.2 Adoption within 24 months and median time to adoption are discussed as part of the strategies.

C2.3 Adoption within 12 months is rising. No action is planned to address this measure separately from the first two measures in the adoption composite.

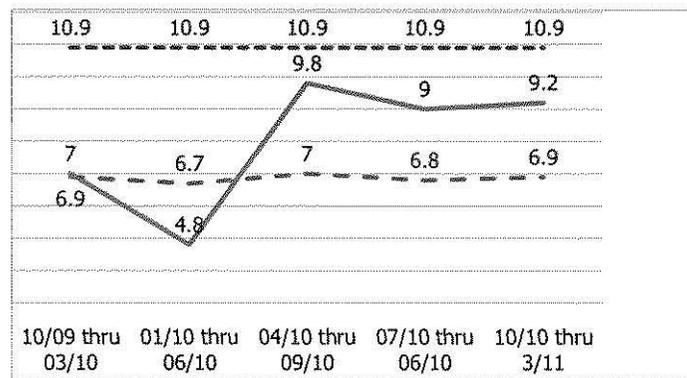
C2.3 Adoption within 12 months (Percent)



C2.4 Legally free within 6 months

This measure is up from the date of the SIP and above the California average. No action is planned to address this measure separately from the first two measures in the adoption composite.

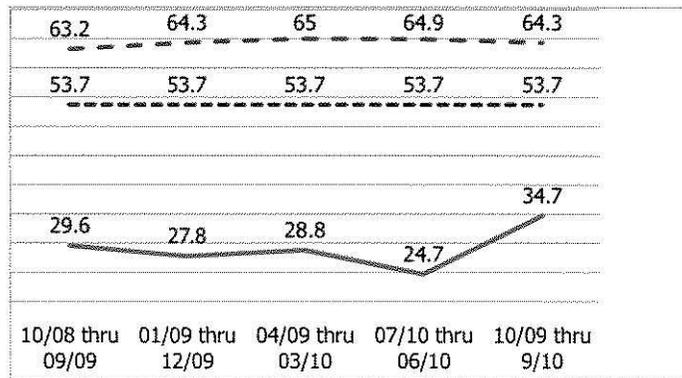
C2.4 Legally free within 6 Months (Percent)



C2.5 Adoption within 12 months (legally free)

This measure has taken a turn in the desired direction as of the most recent report. No action is planned to address this measure separately from the first two measures in the adoption composite.

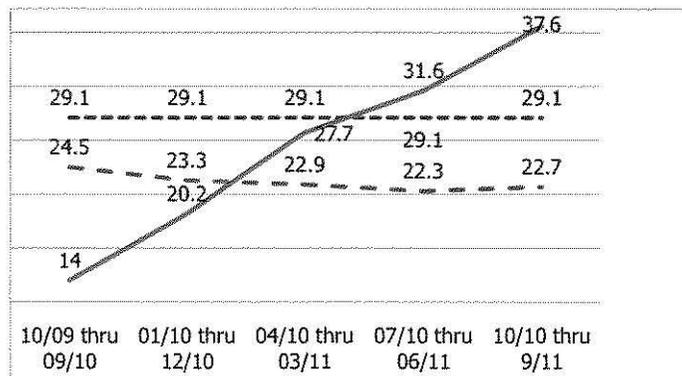
C2.5 Adoption within 12 Months Legally Free (Percent)



C3.1 Exits to Permanency (24 months in care)

This measure is trending up and exceeds California average and national goal. No action is planned for this measure.

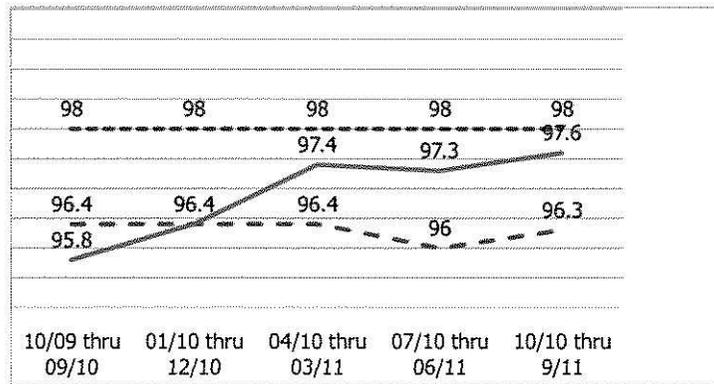
C3.1 Exits to Permanency (24 months in care)



C3.2 Exits to Permanency (Legally Free at Exit)

This measure is trending up and exceeds the California average. No action is planned for this measure.

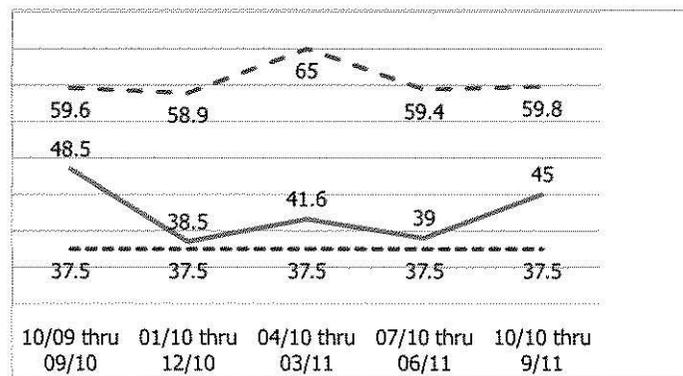
**C3.2 Exits to Permanency
(Legally free at exit)**



C3.3 In Care Three Years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18)

This measure is trending up (wrong direction) in the most recent report, but it remains below the California average. No action is planned for this measure.

**C3.3 In Care 3 years or longer,
emancipated /age 18**



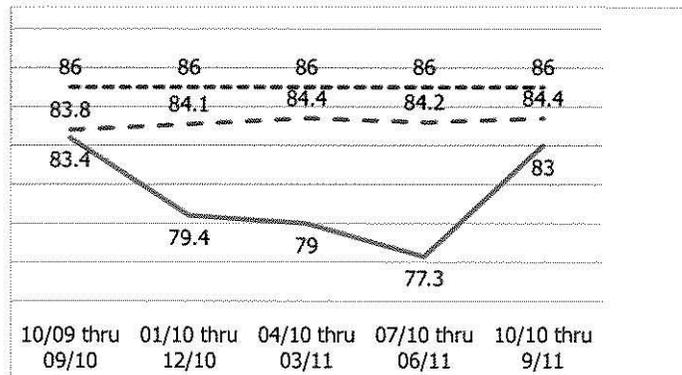
C4.1 Placement Stability (8 Days to 24 Months in Care)

C4.2 Placement Stability (12 to 24 Months in Care)

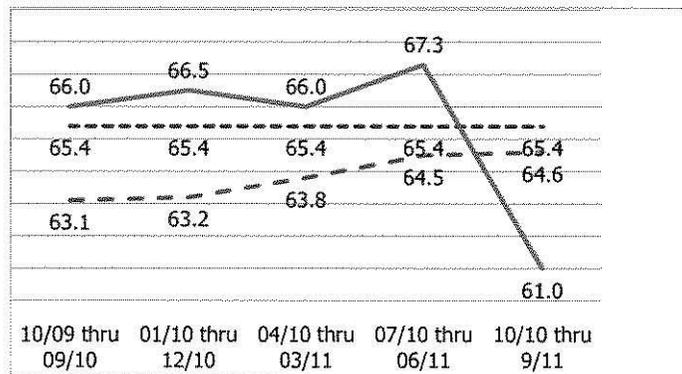
C4.3 Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months in Care)

Performance on these three measures has been erratic. After trending down for three quarters, C4.1 has taken an upward turn. Measures C4.2 and C4.3 after trending up have taken a downward turn in the most recent report. If these measures continue to trend in the undesired direction, we will do further research to determine if the decrease in stability is, at least partially, a result of the campaign to move children to family and/or concurrent homes.

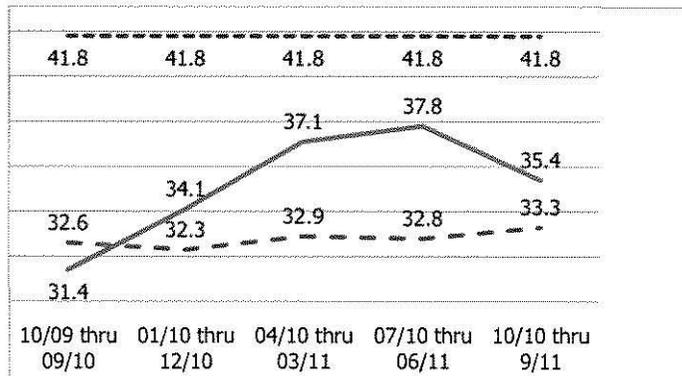
**C4.1 Placement Stability
(8 days to 12 months in care)**



**C4.2 Placement Stability
(12 to 24 months in care)**



C4.3 Placement Stability (At least 24 months in care)

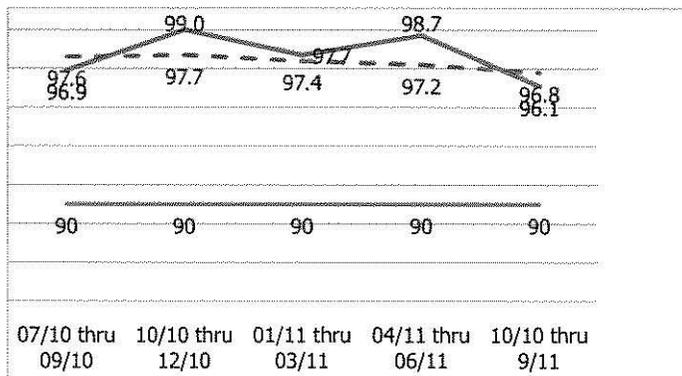


2B Timely Response Immediate

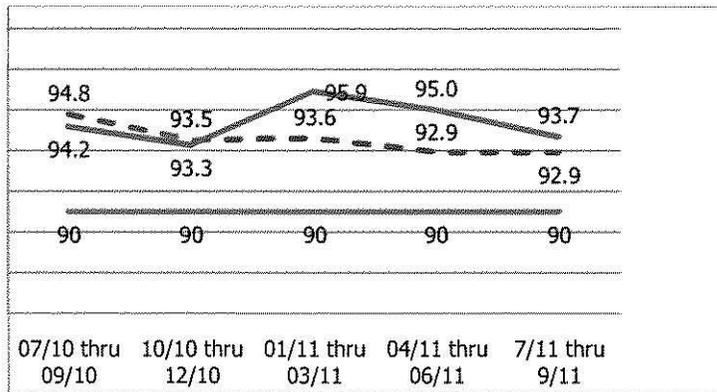
2B Timely Response 10 day

Although both of these measures are trending in the wrong direction, both of these measures are close to the California average and exceed the California goal of 90%.

2B Timely Response (Immediate)



2B Timely Response (10 Day)



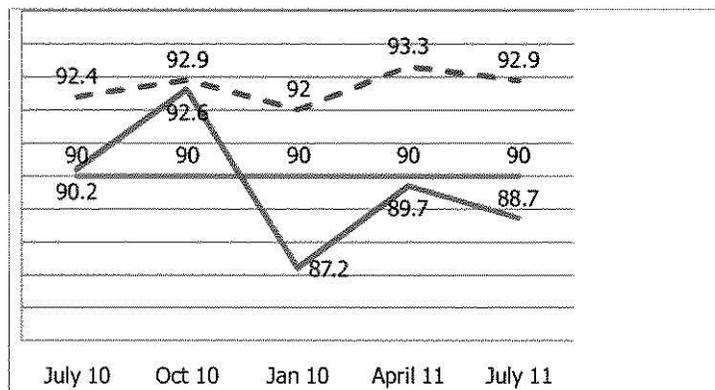
2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child (Month 1)

2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child (Month 2)

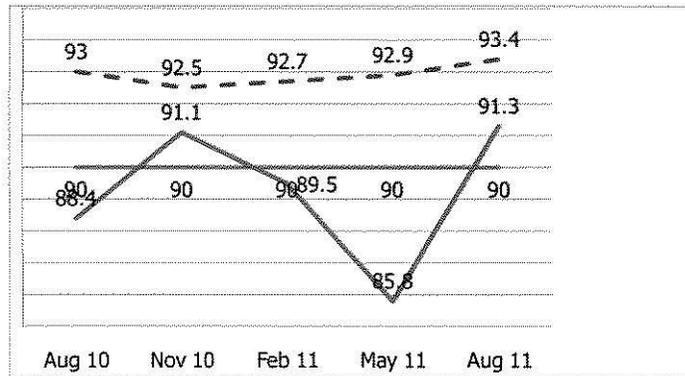
2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child (Month 3)

The erratic performance in these measures is attributable to the 30% loss of staff and improper documentation in CWS/CMS. We expect improvement now that steps have been taken to correct the documentation problems.

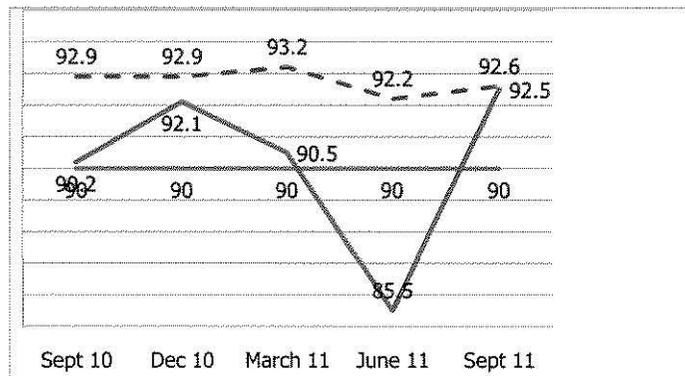
2C Timely Social Worker Visits (Month 1)



2C Timely Social Worker Visits (Month 2)



2C Timely Social Worker Visits (Month 3)

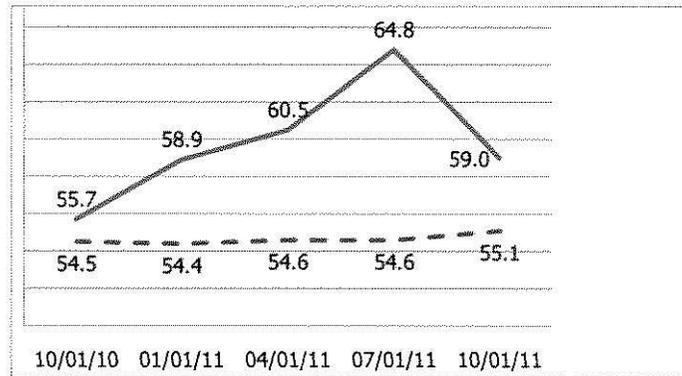


4A Siblings (All)

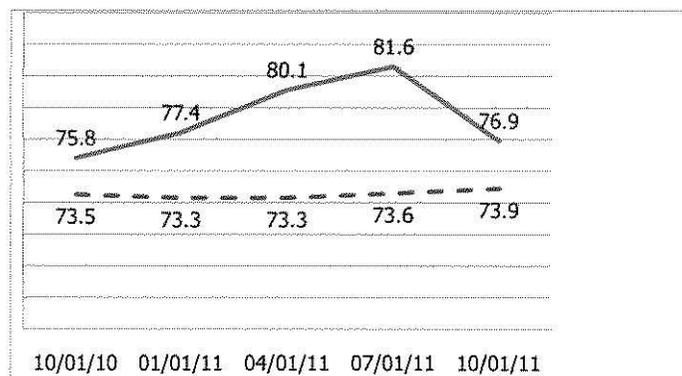
4B Siblings (Some)

Merced’s performance on these measures has historically been above the California average. However, we anticipate that we may see a decline in these measures in the future as we move towards more placements with families. As social workers weight the value of family placement, even if it means placing siblings in two different family households, we may see performance on these two measures decline.

4A Siblings All



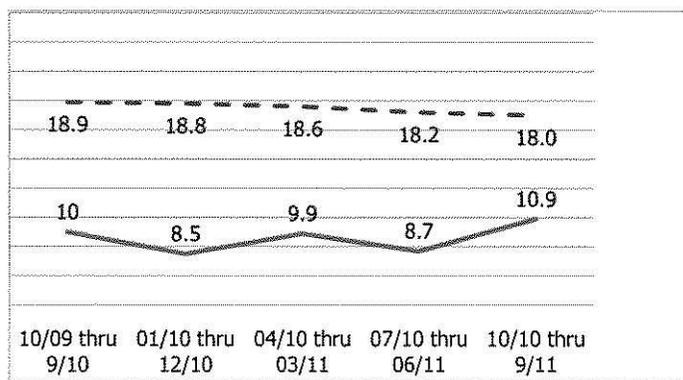
4A Siblings Some



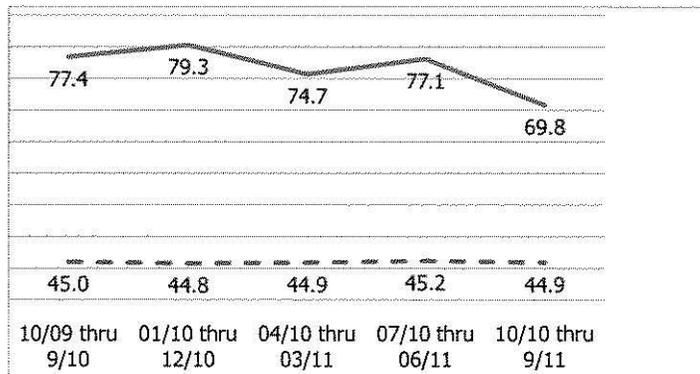
4B Least Restrictive Placement

Because increasing relative placements in both initial and point-in-time placements, no specific actions are planned to address placements in other settings on the assumption that as relative placements increase, other placements will decrease.

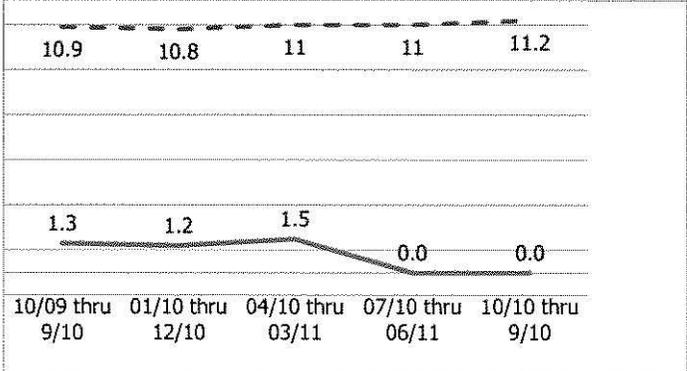
4B First Placement Foster Home



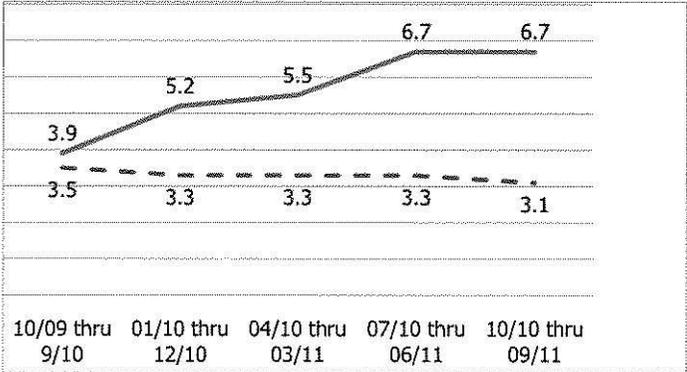
4A First Placement FFA



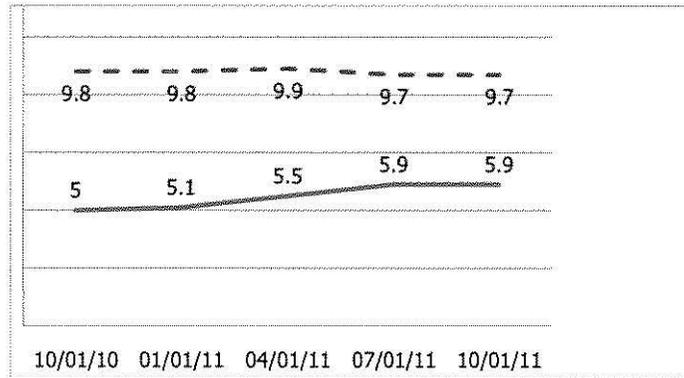
4B First Placement Group/Shelter



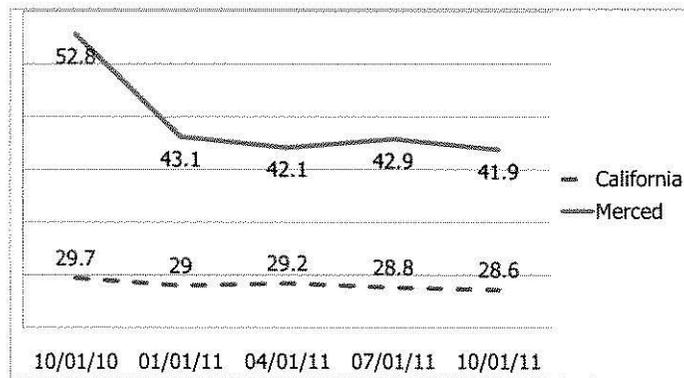
4A First Placement Other



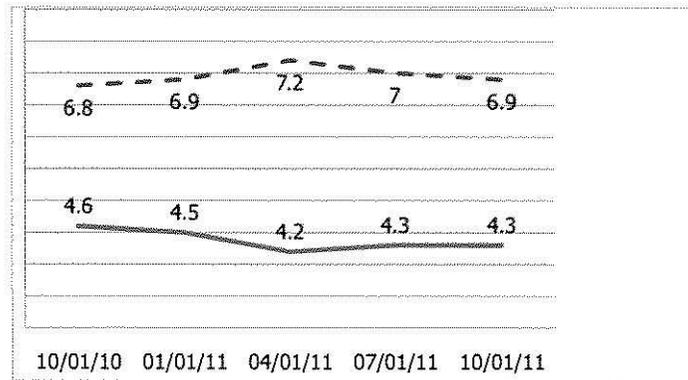
4B Point in Time Placement Foster Home



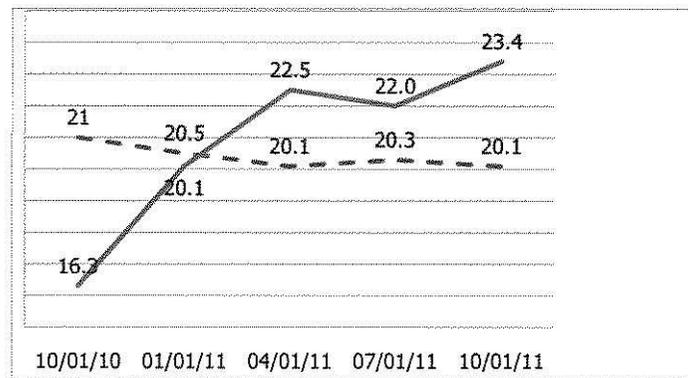
4B Point in Time Placement FFA



4B Point in Time Placement Group/Shelter



4B Point in Time Placement Other



4E (1) ICWA Eligible Placement Status

As of the most recent report, Merced County has six ICWA eligible youth in foster care, of whom three are placed with relatives. No action is planned for this measure.

4E (2) Multi Ethnic Placement Status

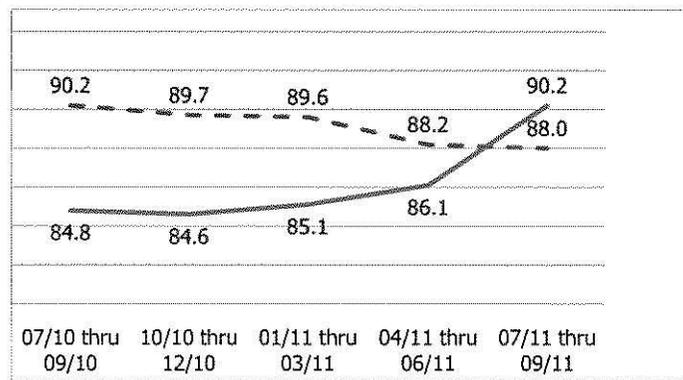
Ten multi-ethnic youth are in placement. Five are in non-relative, non-Indian placements, two in group homes, two in other, and one in non-relative missing SCP identity.

No actions are planned in relation to these measures.

5B (1) Rate of Timely Health Exams

This measure is trending up and exceeds the California average. No action is planned.

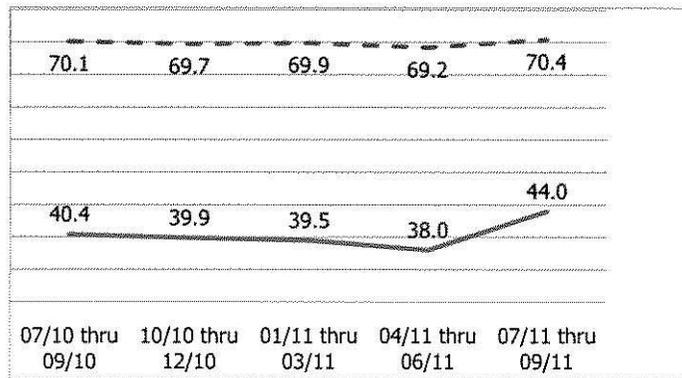
5B (1) Timely Rate of Health Exams



5B (2) Rate of Timely Dental Exams

The underperformance on this measure will be addressed as a documentation issue. Court reports document that children are receiving dental exams.

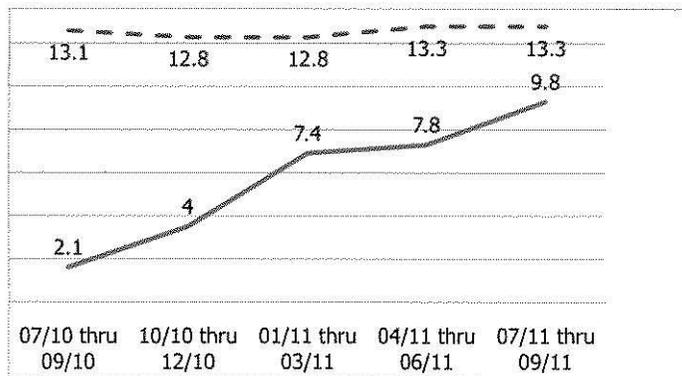
5B (2) Timely Rate of Dental Exams



5F Authorized for Psychotropic Medication

The rise in this measure may represent an increase in documentation accuracy rather than an actual increase in the percentage of children with psychotropic drugs.

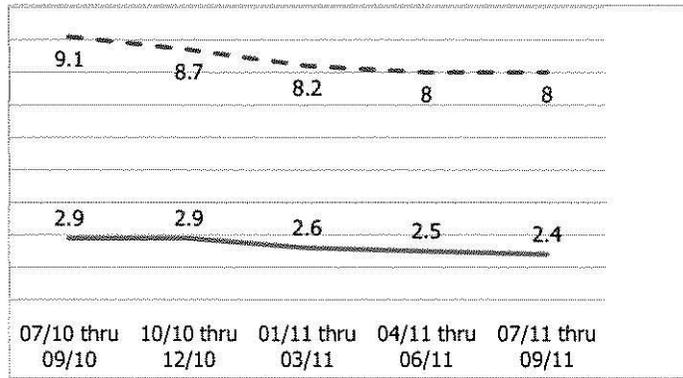
5F Authorized for Psychotropic Medication



6B Individualized Education Plan

Performance on this measure is an issue of documentation and will be addressed as such.

6B Individualized Education Plan



8A Completed High School or Equivalency

8A Obtained employment

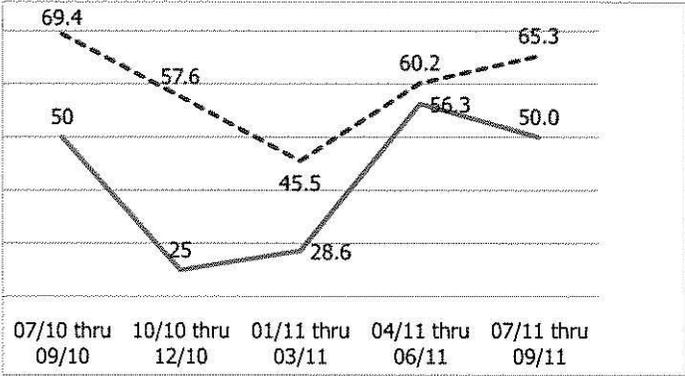
8A Have Housing Arrangements

8A Received ILP Services

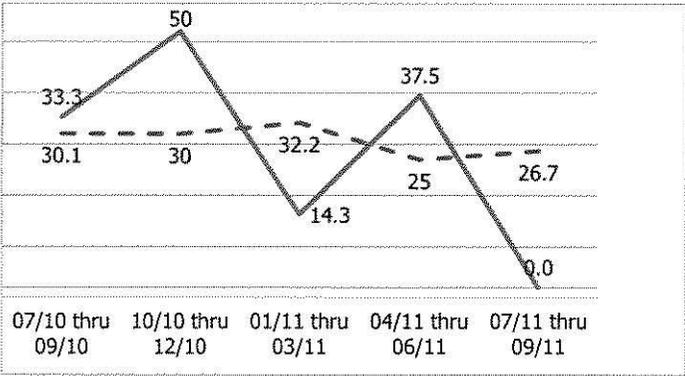
8A Permanency Connection with an Adult

While Merced County needs improvement in the percentage of youth completing high school or equivalency, generally Merced performs well in the measures of services to older youth. Former foster youth working as Youth Assistance Workers outreach to youth in care, write Transitional Independent Living Plans, and encourage participation in available services. Permanent Placement social workers are very familiar with the services for older youth and help to promote participation. In regard to the obtained employment measure, the 0% represents two youth. One of the two was emancipated as AWOL. Upon turning 18 she was entitled to a large lump sum survivor benefit which she secured. The second youth was emancipated from a group home out of county. He refused mental health services and returned to his family. He has since moved out of the family home and is receiving SSI. Neither of these youth was appropriate for employment immediately after emancipation.

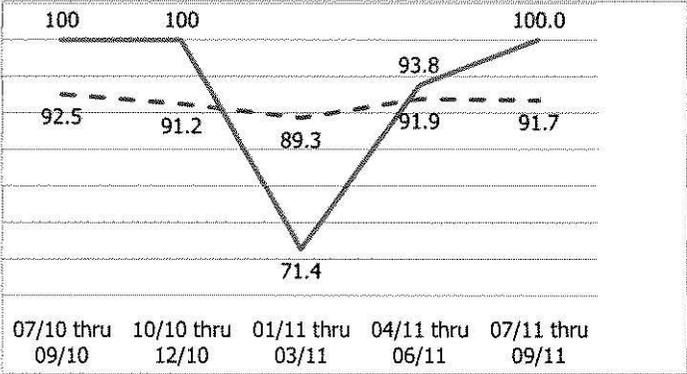
8A Completed High School or Equivalency



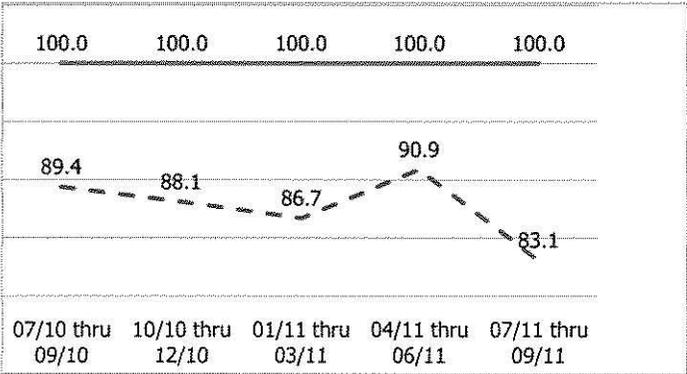
8A Obtained Employment



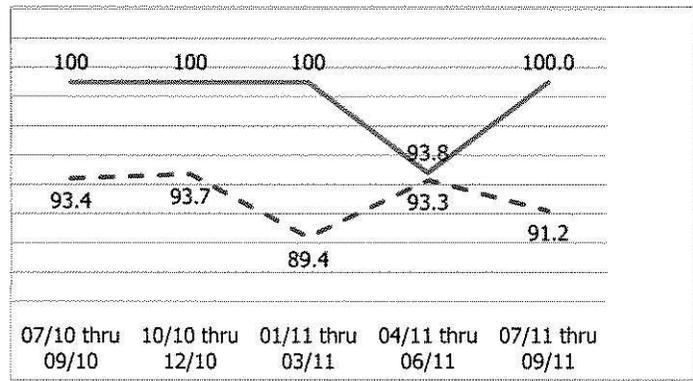
8A Have Housing Arrangements



8A Received ILP Services



8A Permanency Connection with an Adult



C. CWS/Probation SIP Matrices

1. CWS SIP Matrix

<p>Outcome/Systemic Factor: Measure C2.1 and C2.2 Adoption less than 24 months and median time to adoption County's Current Performance: C2.1 currently at 24.6%. C2.2 currently at 32.2 months, Jan 2012 Quarterly Report, Data Extract Q3 2011. Improvement Goal 1.0– Maintain the percentage of children adopted with 24 months to 36.6% each year of the three-year plan</p>		
<p>Strategy 1.1–Restructure Adoptions Team to lower caseloads. Strategy Rationale: Recommendation from PQCR. Current structure identified as a barrier to timely adoptions.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
1.1.1–Restructure the work process for the Adoptions Team.	April to October 2011 (complete)	Program Administrator for Adoptions
1.1.2–Identified changes to policy and procedure for revision and revise.	October 2012	Program Administrator for Adoptions
1.1.3–Provide training to staff on policy changes and best practices.	October 2012	Program Administrator for Adoptions and Staff Development
<p>Strategy 1.2–At the termination of parental rights, assign one Adoptions Social Worker to meet the needs of the entire case. Strategy Rationale: Merced will eliminate the assignment of FR social worker and case managing social worker simultaneously with the Adoption social worker (accomplished). This allows a more focused approach in working with the adoptive family and the child.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
1.2.1–Review and revise policy and practice.	October 2012	Program Administrators and Deputy Director
1.2.2–Restructure work process to allow for assignment of case to Adoptions worker at termination of parental rights.	October 2012. Practice has been implemented,	Program Administrators and Deputy Director
1.2.3–Implement policy.	October 2012	Program Administrators, Deputy Director, and CWS Supervisor

March 2012 Update

**System Improvement Plan
Merced County**

<p>Strategy 1.3–Focus on permanency for all children entering care. Strategy Rationale: Permanency needs to be considered at every step of the case.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To	
1.3.1–Identify training topics and a trainer appropriate for both technical and motivational aspects of professional development. Family Finding training provided to CWS staff and CASA volunteers in summer 2011. Signs of Safety training will be provided in spring/summer of 2012.	April 2011 to October 2012	Program Administrators, Deputy, and Staff Development	
1.3.2–Schedule training for identified staff.	February 2012	Program Administrators, Deputy, and Staff Development	
1.3.3–Conduct training and follow-up on transfer of learning activities.	Spring/summer 2012 for Signs of Safety	Program Administrators and Deputy	

<p>Improvement Goal 2.0–Maintain the median length of time for adoption at 27.3 months for each year of the three-year plan.</p>			
<p>Strategy 2.1–Review all foster care cases for adoption possibility and concurrent planning. Strategy Rationale: Ongoing attention to the option for adoption will decrease the length of time children spend in foster care.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To	
2.1.1–Include placement review in Case Conferencing Group (CCG) meetings and case conference reviews. Completed in practice. Form will be revised in summer 2012	August 2012 and forward	Program Administrators and CWS Supervisors	
2.1.2–All court reports will address permanency and concurrent planning.	August 2012	Program Administrators and CWS Supervisor	
2.1.3–Train staff on new procedures and implement.	August 2012	Program Administrators, Staff Development, and CWS Supervisors	
<p>Strategy 2.2–Increase the number of concurrent homes. Strategy Rationale: Placing children for whom adoption is the permanency plan in a concurrent home will reduce the time to adopt.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

March 2012 Update
System Improvement Plan
Merced County

Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
2.2.1–ER staff will identify relatives as soon as case is opened and record in Relative Tracking Form in CWS. Social Workers will update form as needed. Supervisors will monitor. Designated family finding SW attends detention hearing and gather family information. Will evaluate possible changes to this procedure in fall 2012	September 2012	Program Administrators, CWS Supervisors, ER Social Workers
2.2.2–Refer foster homes for adoption study as soon as they are certified.	September 2011 and forward. Implemented	Program Administrators and Licensing Analyst for County homes
2.2.3–Identify FFA homes with a current adoption home study.	September 2012	Program Administrator and Licensing Analyst

Strategy 2.3–Increase the number of children in concurrent homes.
 Strategy Rationale: Children in concurrent homes are building bonds with their potential adoptive family and may be adopted sooner.

CAPIT
 CBCAP
 PSSF
 N/A

Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
2.3.1–Ensure that each child under age 5 is in a concurrent home by disposition hearing. Identify the steps required.	December 2012 and ongoing	Program Administrators, Court Team Supervisor, and Home Visitors
2.3.2–Review permanence for each child in care during staff performance conferences.	December 2012 and ongoing	Program Administrators and CWS Supervisors
2.3.3–Review permanence for each child in care as case review and in court reports.	December 2012 and ongoing	Program Administrators, CWS Supervisor, CWS Social Workers, and Home Visitors

Improvement Goal 3.0–Support Adoptive families in completing requirements for adoption finalization to occur.

Strategy 3.1–Partner with home study providers to support families.
 Strategy Rationale: In the PQCR relatives identified a problem with being uninformed about the adoption process and what it entails. Communication issues were identified. Comprehensive plan to improve customer service to potential adoptive families needs to include home study providers and Social Workers.

CAPIT
 CBCAP
 PSSF
 N/A

Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
3.1.1–Articulate to staff and community partners, including home study providers HSA’s vision for supporting families through the adoption process. Vision has been discussed but not put into writing.	January to March 2012	Program Administrators and Deputy Director
3.1.2–Develop MOU with home study providers to articulate a shared vision.	April to June 2012	Program Administrator for the Adoptions Team
3.1.3–Evaluate progress and effectiveness in monthly meetings with home study providers.	November 2012	Program Administrator, Placement Specialist

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

Caseloads may impact the ability to implement this plan. However, using cross training and rotating scheduling encourages equalization of work. If the strategies are successful in locating relative placements for initial placements, the workload related to moving children from foster care to relative care would be eliminated.

Software and automation support may be needed to facilitate locating relatives.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

Family finding training through Seneca Center and Administrative Office of the Court will be needed.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

CASAs, judges, and FFAs need to be aware of the emphasis on relative placements.

Community agencies need to be prepared to respond to referrals of relative families with whom children are placed.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified at this time.

<p>Outcome/Systemic Factor: Measure 4B Initial Placement and 4B Point in Time (PIT) Placement. County's Current Performance: Initial placement with relatives = 12.6%; PIT placement with relatives = 24.5%. Jan 2012 Quarterly Report, Data Extract Q3 2011. Improvement Goal 1.0--Increase the percentage of children initially placed with relatives to 10.4% in the first year, 14.5% in the second year, and 20.5% in the third year.</p>		
<p>Strategy 1.1--Assign Social Worker positions to assist primary worker with emergency placements by locating relatives. Strategy Rationale: Identification of appropriate relative placements must be concurrent with removal in order to avoid placing children in a foster home while a relative is located.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
1.1.1--Identify staff positions to assist with locating relatives. One SW and two part time office assistants have been assigned to family finding.	August to December 2011	Program Administrator for ER and Deputy Director
1.1.2--Train identified Social Workers and other staff on locating relatives using family finding methods.	January to February 2012 Family finding training provided in summer, 2011	Deputy Director, Program Administrators, Courts, and Seneca Center
1.1.3--Develop schedule and implement assignments.	June 2012	Program Administrator for ER
<p>Strategy 1.2--Implement early identification of relative information by ER workers. Strategy Rationale: ER workers can capture information regarding potential relative placements at the initial interview.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
1.2.1--Develop policy	December 2012	Program Administrator for ER
1.2.2--Train ER workers on policy.	March 2013	Program Administrator for ER
1.2.3--Implement policy.	April 2013	Program Administrator for ER
<p>Strategy 1.3--Include families in initial case conference. Strategy Rationale: Including family members early in the process may identify a willing family for initial placement.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
1.3.1--Identify any needed policy changes and revise if needed.	January to April 2012	Program Administrator for ER and Deputy Director
1.3.2--Train Social Workers on policy and best practices.	April to August 2012	Program Administrator for ER, Seneca Center, and Staff Development
1.3.3--Implement policy.	September 2012	Program Administrator for ER

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Improvement Goal 2.0–Measure 4B PIT Placement Increase the percentage of children placed with relatives at PIT to 26% in the first year, 29% in the second year, and 34% in the third year.		
Strategy 2.1–Increase ability to certify relative homes for emergency placement. Strategy Rationale: In order to facilitate timely home assessments for relatives, cross train Social Workers on knowledge and skills required. Cross training eliminates dependency on only a few specialized workers.		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
2.1.1–Train all staff on licensing rules and regulations for relative home approval. HAT Team provided training for SWs on this process.	January 2012	Program Administrators, and Home Assessment Team Supervisor
2.1.2–Train home visitors on licensing rules and regulations for relative home approval.	February to April 2012	Program Administrators and Home Assessment Team Supervisor
2.1.3–Develop rotational schedule and implement.	August 2012	Program Administrators
Strategy 2.2–Review foster care placements for appropriateness to move to relative placement and/or concurrent placement. Strategy Rationale: Children currently in county foster home or FFA homes may have relatives that were not available or able to provide care at an earlier date but who could at the current time.		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
2.2.1–Develop criteria to identify children with potential to move to relative and/or concurrent placement.	May 2012	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning
2.2.2–Develop a schedule or review in coordination with regular case staffing.	June to July 2012	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning
2.2.3–Implement review schedule.	August 2012	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning
Strategy 2.3–Evaluate effectiveness of Strategies. Strategy Rationale: Ongoing monitoring of cases and monitoring of quarterly outcome report will be required to evaluate effectiveness of strategies.		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
2.3.1–Review quarterly reports. Format developed and reports are reviewed by managers and supervisors	August 2011 to August 2014	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning
2.3.2–Review initial and Point in Time placements in social worker/supervisor conferences. Implemented	August 2011 to August 2014	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning
2.3.3–Revise procedures, provide training, or offer other interventions as required if initial and Point in Time placements with relatives are not increasing. Initial and PIT placements have met goal for the first year of the SIP	August 2011 to August 2014	Program Administrator for Permanency Planning

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Strategy 3.2–Seek feedback from families on perception of support with the adoption process. Strategy Rationale: Supporting families will be an ongoing process that is open to continuous quality improvement.		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
3.2.1–Develop interview tool for use with families to elicit their perceptions of the adoption process and the support they received during the process.	December 2012	Program Administrators
3.2.2–Schedule interviews or focus groups.	January 2012	Program Administrators
3.2.3–Conduct interviews or focus groups.	February 2013	Program Administrators
Strategy 3.3–Seek feedback from Social Workers on perception of support with the adoption process. Strategy Rationale: Supporting families will be an ongoing process that is open to continuous quality improvement.		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
3.3.1–Develop interview tool for use with Social Workers.	December 2012	Program Administrators
3.3.2–Schedule interviews or focus groups.	January 2012	Program Administrators
3.3.3–Conduct interviews or focus groups.	February 2013	Program Administrators
<p>Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals. Timelines of court hearings and continuations can delay finalization. Discussions with the Dependency Court Judges and attorneys will begin so that continuation of hearings can be kept to a minimum. HSA staff will work on timely filing of court reports as it is important to reducing time to adoption. Supervisors will monitor staff progress in this area and provide training and support to line staff to achieve this goal.</p> <p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Social Worker training identified in the strategies. Additional training for community partners may be needed. Family finding training through Seneca Center and Administrative Office of the Court is scheduled to begin in 2011 and continue to the end of 2012. Family engagement training for Social Workers using outside consultants and UC Davis.</p> <p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. CASAs, judges, line staff, and FFAs need to be aware of the emphasis on faster time to adoption. CASA is partnering to assist with family finding.</p> <p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified at this time.</p>		

2. Probation SIP Matrix

<p>Outcome/Systemic Factor: Improving Permanency Outcomes. Identifying and developing lifelong connections. County's Current Performance: The Probation Department does not currently have a tool to track this performance outcome; although, it is expected that some form of tracking will be established once the department is using CWS/CMS. Improvement Goal 1.0– To increase efforts in identifying relatives or caregivers/other caring adults as lifelong connections for probation youth in out-of-home placement so that 95% of youth in out-of-home placement have an identified lifelong connection prior to emancipation or aging out of foster care.</p>		
<p>Strategy 1.1–To develop risk and needs assessment tools and business processes to assess for lifelong connections and permanency options from initial intake through termination of probation services. Strategy Rationale: Establishing and improving our process in identifying extended family members and/or non-related extended family members/caring adults will assist with more timely and meaningful reunification and permanency efforts.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To
<p>1.1.1–Determine accurate level of intervention in order to avoid undue placements and/or escalating delinquent behavior. On June 8, 2011, all juvenile POs and supervisors were trained on Assessments.com - "Back on Track" (BOT) assessment tool. All juvenile POs are assessing risk factors with clients using the BOT. It determines the juvenile's risk level (i.e., high, medium, low) to re-offend. They were also trained on case plans using Assessments.com.</p>	<p>April 2011 to March 2014</p>	<p>All Juvenile Intake, Field Services and Placement staff, and Juvenile Services Supervising Probation Officers.</p>
<p>1.1.2–Use the Risk and Needs Assessment outcomes in developing relevant and useful case plans. Juvenile POs began using the BOT assessment to assist with creating case plans immediately following the training on June 8, 2011. The department's implementation team (1 Program Manager, 2 Supervisors, 1 Probation Officer) started Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) training in October 2011. This is an evidence-based, risk/needs assessment and case planning system to be implemented by the Central California Probation Consortium in conjunction with Assessments.com. Motivational interviewing is part of this.</p>	<p>June 2011 to December 2012</p>	<p>All Juvenile Intake, Field Services and Placement staff, and Juvenile Services Supervising Probation Officers.</p>

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<p>Strategy 1.2–To ensure that all relatives and/or caring adults are properly identified at the earliest stage of probation.</p> <p>Strategy Rationale: Accurate and timely identification of potential family members/caring adults will allow for the least restrictive environments to be used when a minor is being considered for out-of-home placement.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To	
<p>1.2.1–Engage families and understand the importance of lifelong connections and family finding for at-risk youth at all levels of the probation stages.</p> <p>Officers are engaging with the juveniles at intake and during field services to determine who is important in their lives. A family finding policy has not been developed to date.</p>	April 2011 to March 2014	All Juvenile Intake, Field Services and Placement staff, and all levels of Juvenile Services Management staff.	
<p>1.2.2–Encourage families to identify lifelong connections for at-risk youth by utilizing motivational interviewing techniques.</p> <p>The PACT implementation team has been trained on what is expected. Part of implementing PACT is motivational interviewing. They had training on February 27 & 28, 2012. All Juvenile POs and supervisors and the Program Manager were trained in Family Finding on July 26 & 27, 2011. Supervisors are engaging staff consistently regarding the importance of life-long connections for the minors during staff meetings.</p>	April 2011 to March 2014 (Motivational interviewing training has been offered and will be offered during current fiscal year and ongoing.)	All Juvenile Intake, Field Services and Placement staff, and Juvenile Services Supervising Probation Officers.	
<p>Strategy 1.3–To complete background checks and/or home evaluations on potential relative/caregivers prior to youth having engagement and/or being placed in relative/caregiver’s home.</p> <p>Strategy Rationale: Conducting background checks and home evaluations will ensure the department is meeting Division 31 standards and will increase the chances of positive outcomes for permanency.</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Milestone	Time Frame	Assigned To	
<p>1.3.1–Educate staff on the importance of investigating backgrounds and living environments of potential family members/caregivers and ensure staff understands the home assessment and approval process.</p> <p>There are two placement officers. One of them was able to attend relative assessment training (home assessment training) through the UC Davis Resource Center for Family Focused Practice on November 15, 2011. The second officer and/or the Placement Supervisor will attend when the training is offered again.</p>	April 2011 to December 2012 (Attend NREFM and Relative Assessment training being provided by The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice this calendar year and ongoing.)	Placement staff initially and all other Juvenile Intake and Field Services staff as permitted, and Juvenile Services Supporting Probation Officers.	

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<p>1.3.2–Develop policy and procedures for relative home approval which may include collaborating with CWS. They just re-addressed all MOUs with CWS. The Placement Supervisor has spoken with the Supervising Social Worker who oversees home assessments/approvals regarding getting assistance when needed. Written procedures will follow.</p>	<p>June 2011 to December 2012</p>	<p>Placement Unit Supervisor, Juvenile Services Program Manager, and possibly CWS staff.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.4–To collaborate with CWS to acquire Family Finding search engines and software to aid in the search and potential family members who may serve as lifelong connections for minors in out-of-home placement Strategy Rationale: Conducting extensive searches on potential family members of minors in out-of-home placement may increase the department’s ability to identify and develop lifelong connections for minors in out-of-home placement and enhance positive permanency outcomes.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>
<p>Milestone</p>	<p>Time Frame</p>	<p>Assigned To</p>
<p>1.4.1–Research available Family Finding search engine software. The department has not committed to the cost of search engine software or program yet. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) representative is talking about contracting with Seneca (FFA) to provide family search procedures, but solely for the purpose of assisting with the county’s pilot family finding engagement process. Further discussion will take place with department administration in the future.</p>	<p>April to December 2012</p>	<p>Placement Unit Supervisor, Juvenile Services Program Manager, and possible CWS staff.</p>
<p>1.4.2–Continue to attend collaboration meetings with CWS and other community stakeholders. This is ongoing. There was a Family Finding Engagement meeting on March 1, 2012. CWS, Probation, and CASA staff attended.</p>	<p>April 2011 to March 2014</p>	<p>Placement Unit Supervisor, Juvenile Services Program Manager, and CWS staff.</p>
<p>1.4.3–Assist with development of County-wide policies and procedures for Family Finding practices. This is in progress. Family Finding Engagement pilot process is being developed and implemented with CWS and CASA in hopes of creating county-wide procedure/policy. As per AOC, this may be used as a benchmark for other counties throughout the state.</p>	<p>April 2011 to June 2013</p>	<p>Placement Unit Supervisor, Juvenile Services Program Manager, and CWS staff.</p>

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

Increased family engagement and family finding is a systematic change consistent with the Probation Department's mission and values and is required to identify lifelong connections and increase positive outcomes.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

Staff will attend training to understand the importance of Motivational Interviewing, Family Finding, Family Engagement, Relative and Non-Relative Extended Family Member Home Assessment training, Independent Living Program and Transitional Housing Plus Program.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

CWS will collaborate with Probation regarding acquiring Family Finding search engines and software to assist in locating parents, relatives, and other caring adults. Training will be provided by The Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice and other available training organizations.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

Access to the CWS/CMS may assist the Probation Department in gaining information regarding family backgrounds and possible extended family members/caring adults to help meet this improvement goal.