

**THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES' RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY'S  
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
Dated May 9, 2001**

**FINDINGS**

**Finding 1:** A "foster home" is a County-licensed home that is run by foster parents (though there might be only one) in which 24-hour care and supervision in a family setting are provided to up to six dependent children under 18 years of age.

**Response:** **Agree.** "Foster homes" care for both court dependent and non-dependent minors.

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**Finding 2:** "Emergency-care foster homes" take children into protective custody at any time of the day or night, seven days a week while their cases are being investigated.

**Response:** **Agree.** Child Welfare Services (CWS) "takes" children into custody while emergency care foster homes "receive" children taken into custody by Child Welfare Services.

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**Finding 3:** "Therapeutic care foster homes" are run by specially trained foster parents for seriously emotionally disturbed dependent children, many of whom are in a MISC program. Therapy is not provided in these homes.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 4:** "Group homes" are State-licensed facilities that provide 24-hour care and supervision to dependent children in a structured environment, with services provided, at least in part, by trained staff employed by the licensee.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 5:** A "dependent child" is a child who has been removed from his or her home for various reasons other than the commission of a crime. The courts are petitioned to and then do determine whether and where to place them.

**Response:** **Agree.** However, there are "dependent" children who are **not** removed from their homes who receive community services in order to strengthen their families of origin. As cited by Welfare and Institutions Code Section 300 and Division 31, there are basically three programs in which dependent children adjudicated by the court fall under: family maintenance, family reunification, and permanency planning.

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**Finding 6:** From July 1999 to June 2000, there was an average of 113 County-licensed foster homes with a total of 251 beds in Santa Barbara County.

**Response:** **Agree.** Agree that the “average” from July 1999 to June 2000, Santa Barbara Department of Social Services’ licensed foster homes was approximately 113. However, the total number of “County licensed” beds (251) may include relative placements where the homes are assessed not necessarily licensed. As of June 2001, there are 119 licensed foster homes.

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**Finding 7:** From July 1999 to June 2000, there were about eight State-licensed group homes with 51 beds and three residential care facilities with 144 beds in Santa Barbara County. The five Santa Barbara County group homes have a total of 51 beds.

**Response:** **Agree per Community Care Licensing (CCL) statistics.** However, many of these beds are not available to Child Welfare Services’ children. Also, Community Care Licensing (CCL) does not differentiate between residential care facilities and group homes. At least two of the facilities (Devereux and Genesis) only accept developmentally disabled or delayed children. This population is generally not involved with Child Welfare Services. Also, some of the group beds in a few of the facilities have contracted with Tri-Counties Regional Center and accept only those children. There are also group homes in Santa Barbara County, which are predominantly for the Welfare and Institutions Code 600 Probation Wards and again, only accept children who are on probation. In addition, we cannot mix Child Welfare Services children with Probation children per law except under specific exceptions. Thus, the Grand Jury’s findings are misleading, as there are limited available group beds for Child Welfare Services children.

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**Finding 8:** The Santa Barbara Department of Social Services is currently using only four of the available 51 group home beds and is sending 26 children to group homes outside the County.

**Response:** **Agree.** However, many of these beds are not available to Child Welfare Services children as well as the number of available group home beds for Child Welfare Services is misleading as stated in Finding #7. In determining appropriate group home care for Child Welfare Services dependents, several factors are assessed such as the special needs of the child, age, gender, education, medical and past/present behaviors to name a few. These factors need to be best matched with the availability of group homes and the client population of the available group homes.

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**Finding 9:** For the period ending June 30, 2000, there were 552 children in various types of out-of-home care in Santa Barbara County. As a group, they spent an average of 37 months in a facility.

**Response:** **Disagree partially.** For the period ending June 30, 2000, there were 531 children in various types of placement. The 552 children your report indicated were for the period ending June 30, 1999. It is important to note that out of the 531 children for the period ending June 30, 2000, 232 children or 44% were placed with relatives or guardians. This is comparable, if not higher, to the percentage of children in California being placed with kin. Agree that as a group, they spent an average of 37 months in facilities. Again, it is noted that 44% of those facilities were relatives or guardians.

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**Finding 10:** By law, CWS must send a social worker to visit each child under its protection at least once a month.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 11:** It costs roughly \$139 per half-day to send a social worker to a nearby county and roughly \$629 per day to fly the social worker to Northern California.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 12:** Many more dependent children than ever before are hard to deal with for a variety of reasons ranging from aggressive and/or abusive behavior to illness, disability, and drug or alcohol addiction. These are referred to as high-need/high-risk children.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 13:** The Santa Barbara Social Services Department and its Child Welfare Services management are wedded to the foster care model of child welfare because of its allegedly homelike atmosphere. When they have to place dependent children in group homes, they usually place them in group homes outside of the County.

**Response:** **Disagree partially.** We disagree with the term we are “wedded”. Current Federal, State and Best Practice guidelines dictate that we utilize the least restrictive placement possible. The foster care model is the least restrictive placement model besides placement with kin. A number of factors are considered when deciding to place a child out of home. In addition to the legal mandates that require the Department to place at a certain Residential Care Level, which is

based on the treatment needs of the child, and ordered by the Court, an assessment of the individual child's needs based on Best Practice and concurrent planning is considered. Other considerations relate to availability and experience with the group homes.

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**Finding 14:** Neither the State nor Santa Barbara County has done any research on what happens to children after they leave the Child Welfare Services system.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 15:** Very little is known about what happens to children after they leave the Child Welfare Services system; more importantly, very little is known about whether any of the programs work and, if not, why not.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 16:** Dependent children are wards of the Court; many made so because of dysfunctional families.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 17:** Dependent children should be given out-of-home care that not only makes them feel comfortable but also prepares them for successfully living outside of it.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 18:** Santa Barbara County foster care generally does not provide the homelike atmosphere it is thought to provide.

**Response:** **Disagree.** The Central Coast Foster Parent Association agrees that foster care homes may not be the ideal placement for all foster children. They do believe that children need to be raised in the most homelike settings available within the child's community. The licensed foster homes in Santa Barbara County do provide the most homelike settings, as they are often single home dwellings within the community.

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**Finding 19:** Most of the foster homes in the County are run by single women without husbands or other male role models to assist them, so the atmosphere often is not ideally "homelike."

**Response:** **Disagree.** The licensed foster homes in Santa Barbara County are predominately (approximately 70%) two parent male/female households. The following is a breakdown of the family composition in relation to the number of adults and gender of licensed foster homes in Santa Barbara County:

Type Household	Santa Maria Region	Lompoc & SY Valley Region	South Coast Region	Total
Two Parent Male/Female	40	18	25	83
Two Parent Female/Female	1	0	2	3
Two Parent Male/Male	0	0	1	1
Single Female Parent	10	9	10	29
Single Male Parent	2	0	1	3
				119

Values, beliefs, roles, responsibilities, and resources have changed in our society as have the views and composition of "family". We can no longer assume that the "average family" consists of one adult male and one adult female as parents. In addition, to assume that "homelike" is defined by a two-parent male/female household is inaccurate in today's society.

As there are a variety of household compositions, there are also a variety of models that can be effective in dealing with children especially those who are in need of out-of-home care.

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**Finding 20:** There are too many repeat and multiple placements, suggesting that foster home care may not be ideally stable.

**Response:** **Agree.** However, to assume that repeat and multiple placements are the result of foster homes not being the most stable is inaccurate. As stated in the introduction and the California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CACFS) report (Attachment 3), the shortage of group home beds that meet the individual "optimal" needs of the child is the primary reason for repeat and multiple placements

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**Finding 21:** Not all children are best served by foster home care, and not all children can even be handled in foster homes.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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**Finding 22:** Placement of dependent children in the first instance is done by a social worker, usually the caseworker that is first assigned to the child.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 23:** The assessment of the child has usually just begun when the child is first placed into out-of-home care.

**Response:** Agree.

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**Finding 24:** Unless the caseworker has personal knowledge of the suitability of available foster and group homes, there is little to go on in the initial placement, because there is no database with detailed information on the homes.

**Response:** Disagree. Response incorporated with Findings 25 and 26.

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**Finding 25:** Oftentimes, the caseworker does not know the child (e.g., his or her physical or mental health) or the suitability of the child's "fit" with the home.

**Response:** Disagree. Response incorporated with Finding 26.

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**Finding 26:** Because of the lack of knowledge about the children and the available homes, many initial placement errors occur and a chain of multiple placements often results.

**Response:** Disagree. Findings 24 and 25 are related in terms of responses. The placement process is essentially a four-prong process. First there is an "emergency" placement where the priority is physical safety and protection. Once physical safety is secured, a search for viable relatives is sought to establish a more permanent and stable home for the child if family reunification services are unsuccessful. Social workers utilize a thorough and comprehensive tool to assess relatives. First, an emergency home study conducted by the assigned emergency response caseworker determines the initial appropriateness of the relatives (Attachment 4). Next, a more thorough and comprehensive relative assessment and home study is conducted by a concurrent planning social work practitioner (Attachment 5). The concurrent planning worker is trained, skilled, and specializes in assessing, evaluating, and making clinical recommendations pertaining to the appropriateness of relatives or other caretakers as possible permanent homes for children. During this process, the assigned emergency response worker is

concurrently gathering information on the needs of the child as well as offering services to the parents.

Once the concurrent planning worker completes the assessments on relatives, the assigned worker, the concurrent planning worker, and their respective supervisors consult regarding the most suitable placement for the child. If there are no relative resources, a foster home is most likely sought as the next “least restrictive” placement option. The assigned worker confers with a licensing/placement specialist to best match the needs of the child with an available foster home ideally in the child’s community or geographic region.

If, during this multiple level assessment process and professional review, the assigned social worker learns that the child needs a more restrictive placement than a foster home, the group home search is initiated. The assigned social worker in collaboration with other personnel from Alcohol Drug & Mental Health Services (ADMHS), Probation, Education, and the Department of Social Services staff the case to determine the need and appropriateness of a more restrictive placement. In fact, if the child requires the highest level of care, an ADMHS practitioner must certify this placement. The Court must then agree with the more restrictive level of placement. The licensing/placement specialist then searches for the most appropriate group home facility that meets the child’s needs.

Due to the essential functions of the licensing/placement worker, Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services has staffed two full-time equivalent positions in order to focus and specialize on the most appropriate out-of-home placements for children. The State funds for less than one full-time equivalent position (.7 FTE). The licensing/placement workers regularly visit group homes, in addition to licensing and renewing foster care licenses that require at least an annual home visit. These on-site visits build expertise and knowledge of the out-of-home facilities.

Initial placement errors and multiple placements are not necessarily the result of lack of knowledge about the child or available homes. As indicated in our introduction, the Grand Jury’s findings regarding this issue is over-simplified for such a complex issue. The California Alliance of Child and Family Services indicates that the lack of assessment tools, knowledge and training are not the primary causes to the problem of “marginal” or “mis-matched” placements (Attachment 3). These “less than optimal” placements result from two factors.

- First, social workers’ caseloads can leave them insufficient time to conduct a comprehensive assessment and identify the group home that best meets the needs of the individual child. Santa Barbara County has realized that in order to meet complex needs, more than one worker is necessary even though the State does not fund that worker. Hence, Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services has the assigned caseworker and a placement/resource worker allocated utilizing Child Welfare Services Block Grant funds to meet the needs of children.

- Second, group homes often are full or have waiting lists. Once the most appropriate group home program for a child is identified, the staff may have no choice but to make a less than optimal placement decision. This may entail:
  - The child may be placed in an appropriate program located far from their home.
  - The child may be placed in a high quality program close to home that is not designed to meet his/her specific needs.
  - The child may be placed in a facility that the social worker would prefer not to use but has no better option at the time.

The fact of the matter is that there is a significant shortage of group home beds in California that provide the needed services for children who require the higher level of care.

**Finding 27:** While the foster homes are licensed annually, once initially trained and licensed, a foster parent is not regularly evaluated nor otherwise monitored, nor is he and/or she given more training to do the job better.

**Response:** **Disagree.** Licensing occurs on an annual basis to assess the safety of the physical plant, that medications are locked, that Health and Education passports are present and that the child has the necessary items for comfort and safety. Prior to obtaining a license, 12 hours of pre-placement training is required. Children in placement are to be seen by their assigned social worker on a monthly basis in the foster home so there is ongoing evaluation being conducted. Monitoring is also an ongoing process. Any concerns are reported to the licensing worker who then conducts an independent investigation. There is close communication between the assigned social workers and licensing workers. It is mandated by Title 22 regulations that each year the licensed foster parents attend and complete 8 hours of training. The County contracts with both Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) (for the South County region) and with Hancock College (for the North County region) to provide training for foster parents and for kinship relative caregivers. Specialized all day conferences are provided throughout the year to attract and support foster parents and kin so they can meet with each other, obtain training to address special problems and to complete their yearly training. No additional placements may be made into a foster home if the annual training is not completed.

The following is a listing of the specialized foster care training that was offered and provided to foster parents over the last year:

- A half-day training dealing with "burn-out" was provided by Caterina Rando MA, MCC on Friday, June 1, 2001 in Santa Barbara, sponsored by Santa Barbara Community College (SBCC), Allan Hancock College and the Department of Social Services.



- A "Foster Parent Panel" was provided Saturday morning, June 6, 2001 in Santa Barbara, offering experienced foster parents and an adult, ex-foster child as resources to attending foster parents.
- " Love & Logic" conference all day Saturday, April 28, 2001 in Buellton, with speaker Dr. Foster Cline, a nationally recognized expert on parenting and working with difficult children. Dr. Cline is a psychiatrist, lecturer, and author of 8 books of working with children. Dr. Cline & his wife have 3 birth children, an adoptive child, and several foster children. The conference was sponsored by the Department of Social Services, the Central Coast Foster Parent Association #50 (CCFPA #50) and Allan Hancock and Santa Barbara City Colleges.
- Dr. Richard Delaney, sponsored by Santa Barbara City College and Central Coast Foster Parent Association #50 (CCFPA#50), presented an all-day conference in Santa Barbara on Saturday, April 7, 2001. Dr. Delaney is a nationally known trainer and consultant who has worked extensively with troubled foster children and youth since 1970. He is a consultant to foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers, mental health and child care agencies. He has published 7 books on foster care including working with disturbed foster and adoptive children, and making placement decisions.
- Stanford University provided an all day training in Santa Barbara on Saturday, January 27, 2001 on "Medically Fragile Children," a cutting edge training on working with this population of infant foster children with specialized health care needs. Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) and the Central Coast Foster Parent Association #50 (CCFPA #50) sponsored the training.
- On July 2 and July 3, 2001, Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) and the Central Coast Foster Parent Association #50 (CCFPA #50) are sponsoring nationally recognized speaker and consultant Nancy Thomas, on "Radical Attachment Disorder."

In addition, both Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) and Allan Hancock College provide weekly training to foster parents which meet and exceed Health & Safety Code Section 1529.2 initial and annual training requirements.

Further, the Department of Social Services contracts with two long time experienced foster parents as "mentors," to provide 24 hours, 7 days a week telephone support and training for potential, new, and ongoing foster parents, to increase their skill level and competencies.

There are also currently two church sites (one in the North County region and one in the South County region) which provide monthly networking, support, and training opportunities for potential and current foster parents.

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**Finding 28:** When the going gets too tough, many foster parents cannot cope and simply make the child move on to another foster home. Consequently, there are more and more multiple placements.

**Response:** **Agree.** However, when children need to move from a foster home due to their individualized special needs, they usually require a higher level of care. They are placed in either a Foster Family Agency or a Group Home which offers therapeutic services that are more intensive than the ones offered by the Family Foster Home model. Therefore, the changes in placements are results of the children's diverse specialized needs not the inability of the foster home to deal with the children.

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**Finding 29:** There are simply too many children who "blow out" of foster homes and/or have serious problems (ranging from medical or physical disability to significant antisocial behavior) to be cared for effectively in a foster home setting.

**Response:** **Agree.**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** The Board of Supervisors should seriously consider establishing a Crisis Center for high-need/high-risk children to provide both emergency and transitional care for these children.

**Response:** **The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented.** The County of Santa Barbara, Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services has been in the process of requesting agencies to submit proposals for a Specialized Residential Youth Program. The timeframe for implementation will potentially be 12 to 24 months as it will depend on a few factors. First, one of the bidders must meet all or most of the specifications and requirements outlined in the attached. (Attachment 6). Second, such a facility requires the Board of Supervisors authority and approval prior to operating such a facility. Therefore, an approximate timeframe can only be projected at this point.

On October 3, 2000, the Department of Social Services issued a report to the Board of Supervisors on the Status of Emergency Care for Children in Santa Barbara County after conducting a two-year analysis. The report examines Santa Barbara's program for children in need of emergency care, reviews the background and history of the shelter care program, examines the current and future situation, and evaluates alternatives. Finally, the report offers conclusions and recommendations, which are found on pages 14 and 15 of the report. (Attachment 1)

As a result of the conclusions and recommendations, the Department of Social Services sent a Request for Proposals on April 6, 2001 calling for a Specialized Residential Youth Program (The primary specifications and requirements are included as an attachment) (Attachment 6). The bid opening occurred on May 17, 2001, at which time we accepted two proposals for consideration. The review committee met on May 25, 2001 to evaluate the proposals. On June 15, 2001, a letter was sent to one of the bidders indicating that we are strongly considering their bid but we are awaiting additional financial information about their program. Considering that this process has not yet been completed, a definitive timeframe for implementation is difficult to predict. As there is no Federal or State funding for the costs of designing a new group home, the fiscal implications would require a minimum guarantee by the County of Santa Barbara of approximately 1 to 2 million dollars of new, strictly local, funding. Therefore, the questions: "**What is best for the children?**" and "**How is the facility going to be funded?**" need to be answered prior to implementing this recommendation.

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**Recommendation 2:** This Crisis Center should be located in mid-County.

**Response:** **The recommendation requires further analysis** as it is directly tied to Recommendation #1. The timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by our Department shall not exceed the six-month date after the date of publication by the Grand Jury Report as required by law. Again, the timeframe for implementation will be 12 to 24 months depending on the outcome of Recommendation #1. If the Board of Supervisors approve #1, an in-depth analysis is required with essential input from several departments including the Alcohol Drug & Mental Health Services, the Courts, County Administrator's Office, General Services, County Counsel, Fire Department, Planning and Development, and Public Health to name several. There also needs to be community support. As stated in Recommendation #1, the challenges include balancing the best interests of children and funding. Thus, Board of Supervisors approval is only one preliminary step in the planning process.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department of Social Services should train, supervise, and support foster parents in the manner now used by CALM for the therapeutic foster homes it manages for Child Welfare Services.

**Response:** **The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.** Not all children and foster parents require the therapeutic level of training and support suggested in the therapeutic foster care model. However to support foster parents several years ago, the Department dedicated a full-time position to recruitment, training, support, and resource development for our foster parents. We believe that this position is essential. Our foster parents have provided feedback indicating that they feel more support as a result of this reallocated position.

As indicated in our response to Finding #27, we have provided opportunities that support, train, and supervise our foster parents as well as our relative caregivers. In terms of licensing, there is a 12-hour training requirement prior to placement and to uphold the foster care license, 8 hours per year of additional training is required. Our Foster Parent Association in Santa Barbara is fully committed to this concept and has been working with Child Welfare Services as partners in order to meet these goals and objectives to insure that foster children receive the best care.

Not all foster parents and children need the same intense level of training and support provided by the Therapeutic Foster Care Model. The amount and degree depends on the needs of the child. Effective July 1, 2001, the Department of Social Services will assume program oversight of the Therapeutic Foster Care Program. The training and support provided through CALM and Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family center will be more available to foster parents who have children in need of this higher level of services. Child Welfare Services definitely supports the concept of training supervising, and supporting foster parents.

In addition, as of July 1, 2001, the Department of Social Services will assume financial responsibility for one-third of the Therapeutic Foster Care Program - the supplemental component. Alcohol Drug & Mental Health Services (ADMHS) is planning to renew its contracts with CALM and Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center for three months. Alcohol Drug & Mental Health Services (ADMHS) will continue to be financially responsible for recruitment and training, and will remain the financial conduit for the Medi-Cal billable therapeutic portion of the program during the contractual period.

From July 1, 2001 to October 1, 2001, the Department of Social Services will be researching possible funding streams to sustain the recruitment and training component. The Department of Social Services is also in the process of restructuring its Specialized Care Increment (SCI) AFDC-FC rate schedule which will include the supplemental portion of the Therapeutic Foster Care Program. From the period July 1, 2001 until the State approves the new SCI rate schedule, all County dollars will be sustaining this part of the program. Once Therapeutic Foster Care is incorporated into the SCI rate schedule, Federal and State shares of cost will be allowable utilizing AFDC-FC funding for those children who need this higher level of care.

**Recommendation 4:** The Department of Social Services should encourage foster parents to attend and participate in meetings of the Santa Barbara County Foster Parents Association so that they can share their experiences and knowledge with each other.

**Response:** **The recommendation has been implemented.** The Department of Social Services discusses the existence of and advantages of joining the Central Coast Foster Parents Association #50 at the initial licensing orientation meetings (held 3 times a month in each of our 3 geographic areas). This is also discussed at the pre-placement and ongoing training held by Santa Barbara City College and Allan Hancock Community

College in which Department of Social Services' licensing staff participates. In addition, during all-day conferences described under "FINDING 27" the advantages of joining the Foster Parent Association is discussed. Also, information about the Foster Parent Association is also presented in the "Caregivers Newsletter," a quarterly publication co-edited by the Department of Social Services, Santa Barbara City College, and Allan Hancock Community College which is mailed to relative caregivers and potential and licensed foster parents, as well as others.

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**Recommendation 5:** The Department of Social Services should provide more professional and supervisory support to line staff to help reduce the high turnover and short tenure of employment that currently exists in the Department.

**Response:** **The recommendation has been implemented.** Recruitment and retention of staff is not a unique issue to Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services. This is a nationwide concern. Career patterns suggest that individuals entering the workforce today do not remain in their same jobs or the same agency for more than three years. People with their Masters of Social Work or Masters in Family Therapy receive a higher rate of compensation when employed in the private industry as therapists.

The Department of Social Services is looking at a number of ideas to reduce turnover and increase retention. These include:

- Increasing salaries
- Broadening the job classification to allow for more flexibility to move to lateral positions, to increase job enrichment, and reduce burnout.
- Providing opportunities for bachelor level social workers to earn their Masters of Social Work by furthering their education through the Title IV-E CalSWEC program. (partnerships with universities).
- Developing a contract with community based organizations (CBOs) to provide clinical supervision for the masters' level practitioners.
- Specializing and dedicating certain key functions such as licensing/placement workers, con-current planning workers, court workers, and foster parent liaison.

The Department of Social Services continues to be committed to provide professional and supervisory support for line staff through:

- Training at the Central Coast Child Welfare Training Academy
- Training developed specifically for Child Welfare Services through the Department's Staff Development Division which developed Child Welfare training two years ago and added two full-time Social Services Supervisor II equivalents for this purpose.
- Training through the Santa Barbara County's Employee University.
- Attending a variety of conferences both within the state and outside California to enhance skills, knowledge, and individual professional development.
- Insuring that supervisory staff are master's level individuals

The Department of Social Services has also made efforts to enhance and provide support for supervisors by:

- Hiring a third Child Welfare Services Division Chief for the Lompoc region to coach, guide, and support supervisors and line staff. (Prior to December, 2000, the Santa Barbara Division Chief managed both the Santa Barbara and Lompoc regions).
- Utilizing the Training Academy to build supervisory skills
- Training through the County's Employee University
- Attending a variety of conferences both within California and outside of California to increase skills and promote individual professional growth.

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**Recommendation 6:** The Department of Social Services should make every effort to rehabilitate the families of dependent children before they are reunified with their parents, as the law requires.

**Response:** **The recommendation has been implemented.** Per the Welfare and Institutions Code Section 361.5 and Division 31 Regulations, Child Welfare Services offers and provides family reunification services to all parents and/or legal guardians. "Reunification" services are child welfare services offered to the child and the child's mother and statutorily presumed father or guardians. These services address issues

that resulted in the removal of the child and strengthen the family in order to return the child to a safe and nurturing home.

Unless the parents and/or guardians waive these services or if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that reunification services need not be provided, the Child Welfare Services worker offers reunification services. Any one or more of the 14 reasons under Welfare and Institutions Code 361.5 that the court finds, both legally and in terms of Best Practice, is sufficient to not offer family reunification services. (Please refer to W&I Code Section 361.5) (Attachment 7)

**Recommendation 7:** The Department of Social Services should conduct and/or sponsor outcome research to determine, to the greatest extent possible, what happens to children when they leave foster care, and use the data as feedback to help modify Department practices to improve outcomes.

**Response:** **The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.** Although the Department of Social Services strongly supports outcome measures and research about children who leave foster care, the Department is not funded to conduct professional research and analysis. The Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services is supervised and funded by the state to provide direct services to children and families. The California Department of Social Services is working with UC Berkeley to develop measures to assess current programs and evaluate how these programs are administered. New Federal mandates are being implemented regarding outcomes. The development of these outcomes are at the early stage and are being analyzed as they are implemented at the state and local levels