Children and Families First
A Chronicle of the Alameda County Social Services Agency Foster Care System

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About the Writer

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Summary

This chronicle focuses on the inspiring story of progress and change made by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of Alameda County, California.

Casey Family Programs has had a long partnership with Alameda County through Casey's provision of services for the county's families in the areas of mental health, employment, permanency, and reunification.

We had been a strong supporter of the efforts of Alameda County's foster care system, and admirers of their accomplishments.

—James Edmondson, Managing Director Field Offices, Casey Family Programs

Many of Alameda County's ground-breaking efforts in foster care were initiated by Chet Hewitt, then-director of Alameda County’s Social Services Agency, and these efforts have continued under the current leadership. The work being done by Alameda's DCFS, Hewitt, and his team came to the attention of Casey Family Programs in 2005. The county had dramatically lowered (by 40 percent) the number of youth coming into the child welfare system from 2000 to 2007.

Alameda County’s success in reducing the number of youth in their child welfare system is in alignment with Casey’s goal of cutting the number of children and youth in foster care in half by the year 2020.

Alameda County’s sweeping change was a direct outcome of strong leadership, old-fashioned risk-taking, a demand for accountability, and the unflinching courage to create unprecedented alliances within the Alameda County community. Once new partners were on board, Hewitt and his team were able to inspire them to help create a child welfare system that truly responds to the needs of all children and their families first through intervention, then through an allocation of resources. Their goal was to safely return children in the system to a loving family as quickly as possible.

Alameda County DCFS’s ingenuity and innovative tactics impacted everyone at every level, from the frontline workers to labor to top-level management and local government officials.

At a time when many state and local governments are facing severe budget cuts and funding for child welfare and social services are at an all-time premium, Casey Family Programs believes there is the opportunity for other systems to learn from the methodology that Alameda County, Hewitt, and his management team used to create change.

Casey understands the importance of sharing powerful examples of successful leadership and team building as well as highlighting original approaches to creating community support. The story of Alameda County’s DCFS is an impressive example of the fundamental change that is possible within child welfare.
Acknowledgments

This chronicle of the Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals. They are truly agents of change, and it is their openness and honesty that brings this story of transformation to life.

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Gwen McWilliams, Alameda County Foster Parents Association
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Introduction

*Children and Families First* is the story of Northern California’s Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services’ foster care system. Serving more than 2,172 children, today the agency's work is some of the most original and successful in the state of California.

What makes the story of Alameda County’s foster care system so remarkable? To answer that question, one needs only to look at the very depths from which the department rose and the challenges facing the county as whole.

Alameda County encompasses the cities of West and East Oakland, Hayward, Berkeley, and Albany, and it had a diverse population of 1,443,741 as of the 2000 Census. Whites make up 48.8% of the community; Asians 20.4%; Hispanics and Latinos 19.0%; and Blacks or African Americans, 14.9%. Like a number of other urban areas, the county is facing a myriad of social challenges including a climbing crime rate, with more than 100 homicides and more than 5,000 incidents of aggravated assault annually. A majority of all crimes in the county occur in Oakland.

Alameda County’s poverty rate is 8.8% with 13.8% of children under the age of 18 living in poverty. However, 40% of those children live in the East Oakland and West Oakland areas.

In 2000 DCFS was facing extremely difficult challenges in their attempt to serve a growing number of children in their foster care system. The department had close to 5,000 children in foster care with African Americans representing a disproportionate number of those being served (70%), according to the Center for Social Services Research at U.C. Berkeley. Also, there were around 500 youth in foster care in the juvenile justice system with no coordination between probation officers and case workers. Caseloads were increasing daily, along with a staff shortage. It was the fall of 2000, and DCFS was about to end another year in which they would fail to meet the child welfare regulations set by the California Department of Social Services. The department was in a crisis, and the well-being of the children in foster care was hanging in a dangerous balance.

“I had triple the caseload. I was so depressed because there was a great difference between what I wanted to do and what I could do.”

Child Welfare Worker, Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services

Accountability as well as morale among staff were reportedly at an all-time low, with many workers feeling “burned-out” and “trying to figure a way out.”

“It seemed Children and Family Services was always the stepchild of the agency as a whole. People saw a parallel between how society treated foster children as to how the department was treated by the agency.”

Staff Member, Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services
New initiatives were proposed almost monthly by leadership, only to be postponed or discarded after months of research and planning by department managers.

“It felt chaotic to most of us. The leadership was well meaning, but there was no real control, there was no real center, no shared vision of where anything was headed. We had no established goals and no outcome measures.”

Staff Member, Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services

For those who desperately wanted change and to feel passionate about their work, it felt as if transformation would take nothing short of a miracle.

Chet Hewitt Profile

Chet Hewitt has been described by many who worked with him as the quintessential visionary. He is charismatic, a straight-talker, and a passionate leader. Many characterized his staff meetings as part-college lecture, part-church revival. His staff credits his vision, his uncompromising commitment to excellence, and his constant focus on creating a foster care system that works for all children and their families as being what took Alameda County’s system from one of the worst to one of the best.

But who is Chet Hewitt, the man at the center of this story of transformation who led Alameda County’s DCFS and its Social Services Agency for seven years?

“I am a product of my environment in many, many ways. It is my connection to those folks who, despite my shortcomings, believed in me which has led me to where I am today.”

Chet Hewitt’s path into the world of community service and child advocacy was not a direct one. It came out of the challenges he faced during his formative years. A native of New York City, Hewitt was a self-described “struggling kid.” At 17, Hewitt found himself incarcerated. When he returned home, some felt it was just a matter of time before he would again find himself in trouble.

But two things moved Hewitt in a different direction. One was the support and love of a family that believed in him and the other was a job given to him by one of his mentors, “one of the great servants” in his community. Hewitt began working as a program director at a YMCA center in a New York City housing development. There he oversaw youth sports and started a GED program and an evening center for the neighborhood.
youth. It was through these jobs that Hewitt realized the power of giving back and making a difference in the lives of others, especially children.

In so many ways, those early challenges that Hewitt faced mirror many of the experiences faced by young people in the foster care system. Hewitt acknowledges that the support of those in his community who stepped up to help him is what made such a difference in his life.

“Throughout the challenging periods of my life, people didn’t give up on me. I went from being a troubled child to a community asset. Those same set of skills I once used for negative things I used for things that are positive.”

In 1981, Hewitt took the skills he’d learned working in his community to San Francisco, where his introduction into the foster care system began. Hewitt worked in a number of the city’s group homes and was extremely discouraged by what he observed. There was, as he described it, a “low level of expectations” for the children in these facilities. He saw first hand the isolation from the community that children in group homes experience. Hewitt himself was an example of how the support of schools, churches, and community centers can impact the life of a young person searching for stability and a family. He soon decided to play a more personal role in the lives of children in foster children.

In 1984, Hewitt and his family became one of the first families in the Casey Family Programs’ Therapeutic Foster Parents Initiative. In this program, foster parents, including Hewitt, opened their homes for 18 months to a foster child who would have otherwise been placed in a group home. During that time, with the help of the county and state, the birth parents would work on issues they were facing, while the foster parents provided a healthy, loving, and positive environment for the children. The goal was to reunite birth parents and children after those 18 months.

“What I loved about the program was that it was a model built on hope. You could see that parents that were struggling with poverty, drug addiction, and other major problems through it all still had love for their children.”

Hewitt participated in the program for 12 years, providing a home for, as he calls them, “his four boys” and becoming an advocate. He occasionally challenged the system when he felt their rights were being violated, including once when his foster son was being medicated without a court order by the day treatment facility he was attending. Because of Hewitt’s actions, it was discovered that 75 percent of the African American males in the facility were also being medicated illegally. Hewitt got legal help, the county agreed the facility was in violation, and the practice was stopped. Hewitt realized at that moment “that law can make a difference” and he decided to pursue a law degree.

“So there I was, this former troubled child with a GED from a correctional facility applying to law school.”

After his unconventional path to becoming an attorney, Hewitt took a job with the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice and created an alternative to detention programs for delinquent youth in San Francisco. His ground-breaking work got him noticed.
In 1995 Hewitt moved back to the East Coast and into the world of philanthropy when he received a National Children and Family Leaders Fellowship from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. That position was followed by an assistant directorship at the Rockefeller Foundation in their innovative Working Communities Initiative, a program designed to impact the lives of those in our most challenged and underserved communities. It was a role that was very familiar to Hewitt.


Then in August of 2000, Hewitt received a call from the director of the Alameda County Social Services Agency. During his fellowship with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Hewitt had done an internship with Alameda County. The assistant agency director of the Department of Children and Family Services was leaving, and the director felt Hewitt would be perfect for the job and asked him to consider it. In October, the director called again. Hewitt told him he needed a few more days to decide.

Hewitt was at another crossroads in his career. As he contemplated a return to public service, especially in the challenging area of child welfare, Hewitt got a telephone call from one of his former foster sons who had just turned 18 and had become emancipated from the system. His foster son had no place to go; he was homeless.

“So I did a quick calculation of how much the state spent to raise him in the system. And I thought, ‘Okay, what we have is a homeless 18-year-old.’ I had a job offer to go into child welfare, and I had a kid who had just experienced child welfare without the best outcome. Did I need anymore messages than that? I called up the director and told him I’d take the job. I realized that sometimes we find a job and that sometimes the job finds us.”
Reality Check

There was a great deal of anticipation among the staff of Alameda County DCFS surrounding the arrival of Chet Hewitt as assistant agency director. Although he had done an internship with the department as an Annie E. Casey fellow, most saw Hewitt as an “unknown quantity” and wondered what impact his presence would have on the department. As it happened, there was a significant amount of change happening in the field of child welfare at that time. A new era seemed to be dawning.

“A lot of attention was being paid to the plight of children in the foster care system. Accountability was being pushed for at the state level. There was a lot of pressure on Alameda County and systems nationally to really think about how they were going to address the needs of children differently. We were going to have to reform our system to be more responsive to the emerging needs of the time.”

Former Manager, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Hewitt arrived on November 30, 2000, and one of his first meetings was with one of the senior division directors, Carol Collins, to assess where the department stood and what programs were being developed. Hewitt quickly learned that there were no fewer than 25 projects in development. The staff was overwhelmed, discouraged, and not sure of their priorities. Much to their relief, Hewitt cut back the list to just a handful of achievable outcomes.

Hewitt knew that running a child welfare department wouldn’t be easy, but little could have prepared him for the surprising developments that occurred during his first two weeks on the job.

In the first week, he learned that the agency director who hired him was leaving. During the second week, Hewitt was given a report on the “health” of Alameda County’s foster care system by the Child Welfare League of America.

In 1998, CWLA had been contracted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to come in and review Alameda County’s child welfare system. CWLA reviewed how DCFS and the Alameda County Social Services Agency were responding to the needs of the abused and neglected children. The group also examined the agency’s out-of-home care system for abused and neglected children, and its inter-agency planning procedure. The outcome of the year-long study was an evaluation listing over 100 recommendations that were crucial to the improvement of the department. Areas of the department targeted included the following: child welfare management structure, recruitment and retention of child welfare staff, kinship care services, and recruitment and retention of foster care and adoption caretakers. (The CWLA report can be found in Appendix A.)

Perhaps more troubling for Hewitt was the discovery that Alameda County DCFS had failed to pass their Division 31 Regulation compliance audits, the State’s requirements for running a safe child welfare system,

—John Gardner

One of the reasons people stop learning is that they become less and less willing to risk failure.
for 15 years in a row. A letter to the Alameda County Social Services Agency alerted the DCFS staff to the finding of the State's October 1999 review of random cases within the department (see Appendix B). Cases that received Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Permanent Placement, and Independent Living services were reviewed.

“It had been a long standing problem and the department had never taken steps to address it in any serious kind of way.”

Staff member, Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services

As Hewitt began plans for writing the State-required Corrective Action Plan, he was informed of a meeting to discuss a “change in approach.” In that meeting, attorneys for California’s Department of Social Services served Hewitt with a Welfare and Institutions Code 10605 Notice, the first step in the State’s proposed takeover of a child welfare system. Just two weeks into the job of assistant agency director, Hewitt was faced with the sobering reality of being at the helm of the poorest performing child welfare system in California, and the real possibility of losing control of the department to the State.

In December 2000, Hewitt called a meeting of the entire DCFS staff. Close to 300 concerned and anxious child welfare workers, program managers, division directors, labor union personnel, and county officials packed into an auditorium at the Oakland Police Department to hear his message. For a majority of them, it was their first time meeting him.

“He wanted to give people a sense of the direction for the department. We had reached a point of no return. We either succeeded or the State was going to take us over. There were no other options.”

Former program manager, Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services

It was a difficult meeting and a difficult message for the staff to hear. The goal for Hewitt was to use the tone of the conversation to motivate the staff to think differently about their work and the county’s child welfare system. To move the department beyond the crisis it was facing, Hewitt would need to use his skills as a community servant, an attorney, a foundation executive, and most importantly a team builder.

“I was not quite sure I was going to be successful. I knew I had to try as hard as I could and that I need not be worried about failing. Anything I made better would benefit the kids who were in foster care.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency
Building a Team, Finding a Purpose

According to senior leaders in DCFS, there were “several challenges” that Alameda County faced in its efforts to become compliant, including a high number of caseloads and an inadequate number of staff. Chet Hewitt didn’t waste time wondering why and how the department had gotten into such a critical situation. His focus was to keep the department out of the hands of the State and to prepare the entire staff for the enormous task ahead.

By January 2001, the message that began to filter throughout the department was that business as usual was over. DCFS had to operate differently and everyone had to rise to the challenge. Hewitt stressed that the department’s goal was not only to be in compliance but to also to be one of the most “cutting-edge” child welfare systems in the country.

“The complex factors that we were facing was that open door that would allow us to make changes. I said we would run as fast and as hard as possible through that door. What we needed were individuals who were willing to take the risk and the journey with us.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Several senior managers, including Division Director Carol Collins, were enthusiastic about the incredible challenge and opportunity ahead. According to DCFS staff members, there was some resistance to change by others, and two percent of the department staff left through retirement or resignation.

“There were people who knew the environment was going to be different and said, ‘I don’t think I can do this.’ Then there were others who had to see change before they can embrace it. At some point I realized that change is a difficult process and you really can’t expect everyone to buy into it immediately.”

Carol Collins, Asaistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

A number of managers in the department had been in child welfare for several years and understood the pressures of the system. In putting together his team—his soldiers of change—Hewitt looked for individuals with these fundamental three qualities:

1. The ability to think beyond what was currently in existence. These are the individuals who have a passion for innovation and a commitment to “continuous quality improvement” and the idea that no matter how well an idea works, it can always be made better over time.

2. A commitment to learned institutional models, and the understanding that knowledge can come from various individuals and perspectives. A manager’s responsibility is to have respect for a “diversity of ideas” and to be willing to execute those ideas properly.
The ability to facilitate conversations in an atmosphere where different perspectives are present and honored. A key to successful leadership is cultivating the commitment that comes with "the broad level of ownership" for chosen strategies and initiatives.

Hewitt put together a team that included senior managers, front-line child welfare workers, and administrative personnel. He also began an open dialogue with the county’s Board of Supervisors.

In early 2001, Hewitt and a group of senior managers traveled to the mountains of Santa Cruz, California, for the first-ever department retreat. One major goal of the retreat was to plot out the “Get It Fixed” plan, which included writing a Corrective Action Plan that would help the department come into compliance. Another goal of the retreat was to help the team find inspiration and a purpose and to create an environment where bold ideas could take root. Hewitt asked his managers to imagine a child welfare system different from the one that existed in Alameda County, a system that was much more family-centered and dedicated to supporting children and their families at every step of their experience within the foster care system.

“I told them we’d been managing Alameda’s foster care system as if we were managing a farm. Our child welfare model is built around the notion of a barn. A barn has a huge front door and you can move a lot of things inside it, big things—in this case large numbers of kids. We had huge storage capacity, so we can load it up but we have no back door. I asked them to look for the exits. Large numbers of kids would come in, they stay for a very long time, and very few ever go home or find permanency through the system. You have kids who are not being adopted, not going into guardian situations, and not going home. They turn 18 and they turn to the streets. It suggests that the system we have them growing up in is in no way providing the kind of parenting and support and development that young people need to be healthy.

I told them we were going to shrink the front door by working with families early on so they need not come into the system at all. I told them we needed to restructure the way we thought about getting kids home when they come into care or the ways in which we support guardians or family members who take responsibility for those kids. They should never feel as if we’re dumping the kids on them. If we created a big back door, we would lower or reduce our storage capacity, and children could flow through the system. They would come out of crisis and move into a healthy environment. That is what child welfare was designed for. It was never designed to be a parent.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

It was a transformative experience for those at the meeting. It was their “Ah-ha moment.” The “Big Barn” metaphor gave them a clearer understanding of what was wrong with the system and its various components without blame and finger-pointing. The team understood which part of the barn they needed to be responsible for—prevention, adoption, reunification, or permanence—and they were committed to the shared objective of being successful.
The department’s motto became “Children and Families First.” It was the beginning of the notion that the entire staff be committed to the concept of anticipating what families needed and then supporting those families in the raising of their children. The team concluded that if everyone could buy into that vision, the department would start to see a dramatic decrease in the number of children in Alameda County’s foster care system.

During the retreat, there was a great deal of discussion about hope and the belief that change was possible.

“It was an amazing turnaround. People who’d had a dejected dullness in their eyes suddenly had sparkling eyes. I remember feeling like this was the first time in all my years with the department that we had a leader who really believed in us, and believed that we could achieve what had seemed to be impossible.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Surviving the Audit

In February of 2001, Alameda County’s DCFS was presented with a formal notice of Non-Compliance of California’s Division 31 Regulations.

According to California’s Department of Social Services, DCFS was out of compliance in the following nine areas of service specifications:

CP1: The child welfare worker’s Initial Case Plan is completed within the first 30 days of the initial face-to-face contact.

CP2: The parents’ signatures on the Initial Case Plan are included by the court-ordered disposition date.

HE1: All known health and education information is provided to the current placement caregiver within 30 days of the initial placement and within 48 hours with any change of placement.

C1: A child welfare worker should see a child within a required timeframe.

C2: Two to three additional face-to-face meetings with the child occur within the first 30 days of the initial face-to-face contact.

C3: The required monthly face-to-face contacts with each dependent child are met.

MED1: Every child in an out-of-home placement has had an initial physical exam within 30 days of placement.

MED2: Every child in an out-of-home placement has had an initial dental exam within 30 days of placement.

TILP: Every child who is 15½ years or older in out-of-home care has had a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) completed.

California requires that each item meet a 90-percent compliance threshold. According to one manager, “The department wasn’t even close.” In addition to the nine audit items, there was also the CWLA report and its numerous recommendations. The sobering question was “Where to begin?”

Hewitt and his team scaled back the recommendations to a manageable number.

“We needed to organize the recommendations in a series of categories. If we did one big thing, it would impact 10 other things on the list. We could have spin-off effects.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Regarding Division 31, one of many state requirements that Alameda County had to meet was the writing of a mandatory Corrective Action Plan. In essence, this would be the department’s road map to passing the audit.
Hewitt and his team decided on a three-pronged approach to passing the Division 31 audit, to ending the State's takeover threat, and to reforming the department.

Step one was the formation of a Quality Assurance Team. The team's sole focus was to track and analyze all existing data associated with the nine audit items that were needed to bring the Department of Children and Family Services into compliance.

Senior staff member and then-Program Manager Donna DeAngelis was tapped to oversee the team. According to other managers, DeAngelis was well respected and someone whom the staff admired. DeAngelis was managing four of the agency's programs, including the Independent Living Skills Program, which she started in 1987, when Hewitt asked her if she would work exclusively on the department's compliance efforts.

“I felt like it was the biggest challenge I had ever been given because so much was riding on it. Everything we had worked on in the department and all of the unique situations we were trying to create for children and families were in danger of going away. So, there was a lot to lose.”

Donna DeAngelis, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

DeAngelis had to first determine “what it meant to be in compliance” from the perspective of the State of California. She was convinced that the main reason for the department's Division 31 problem was "poor documentation, more so than child welfare workers failing to do the work.”

Also, Alameda's DCFS didn't have full utilization of the state's Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS), an online database system used to track all case activity. Some workers had refused to use the system because they felt it slowed down their productivity; therefore, the majority of the documentation was still on paper and in hard files. Adding to the problem, a few workers using CWS/CMS were entering the information improperly, so when representatives from California Department of Social Services reviewed the data, the department appeared out of compliance.

Management realized a large reason for the lack of documentation was the department’s astronomical caseload. According to child welfare workers, their caseloads could number 100 instead of the usual average of 39. Realizing that if caseloads went down, compliance would come up, Hewitt hired 35 new staff members to ease the burden.

DeAngelis began meeting with representatives from California’s Department of Social Services to negotiate and determine what was considered “acceptable documentation that would count towards compliance.”

Hewitt and his team knew that the second part of the strategy had to be educating the staff. It was imperative that everyone have a copy of Division 31 policies and procedures and understand the definition of each audit item.

“Many of the child welfare workers were unfamiliar with Division 31 regulations. How can you hold a person accountable when they don't know what is expected of them?”

Staff member, Department of Children and Family Services

Part three of the department’s plan was Hewitt’s idea to hire an outside public relations firm to create a moti-
vational and training campaign for staff and community partners focusing on what was at stake for DCFS, a possible state takeover. He also wanted the campaign to help workers believe that success on all levels was possible.

Sylvia Myles-Soublet was a department specialist in the area of policy information planning and community organizing. After giving it some thought, she asked Hewitt for the chance to create the public awareness campaign. It was another example of an inspired senior manager committed to the vision of a different kind of child welfare system.

“I had no idea what I was going to do. All I knew was that it was an opportunity. I knew the department and staff would respond better to someone who understood them and knew their challenges.”

Sylvia Myles-Soublet, Public Information Officer, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Her persuasive argument convinced Hewitt to keep this critical part of the strategy within the family.

Myles-Soublet and her team decided to develop a sophisticated campaign based on the hit reality series SURVIVOR, with the theme being the department’s goal “Survive the Audit.” Similar to the contestants on the series, there were “challenges” the staff had to face such as increasing the numbers in each performance area of the audit. Their accomplishments would be rewarded with prizes and other incentives. As one manager noted, the campaign worked perfectly with the “competitive nature” of the DCFS staff.

Meanwhile, senior management focused on writing the Corrective Action Plan. Hewitt and the team created a document that included an analysis and explanation of the problems impacting DCFS, department benchmarks and timeframes, and an overall vision for getting the department to compliance and beyond. The plan outlined steps that would impact a variety of issues from strengthening front-end services and renewing efforts regarding adoption and kinship to increasing staff recruitment efforts.

On March 20, 2001, the department delivered the plan to the child welfare director of California Department of Social Services outlining the problems and an analysis of how and when those problems would be corrected. (Portions of the Corrective Action Plan appear in Appendix C.)

“The state representatives said it usually takes about eight to ten months to get a plan approved once you received notice. Our approval took 45 days.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Hewitt considered the acceptance of the plan by the State as the department’s first sign that success was possible.

The department’s three-part strategy plan began to work in unison. Joining Donna DeAngelis in her attempt to correct the documentation problem was Sarah Wales, a quality assurance supervisor.

“The assignment was right down my alley. Chet and Donna wanted someone from child welfare who knew what we were expected to document and where to find that documentation.”

Sarah Wales, Quality Assurance Supervisor, Department of Children and Family Services
Part-motivational coaches, part-detectives, DeAngelis and Wales began going through random cases, hoping to locate any missing or misfiled records. If any material was not there, everyone involved with the case was contacted and asked to look through personal files of the case. The Quality Assurance Team’s mantra became “If it isn’t written down, it didn’t happen.” There was also the training of caseworkers to enter data on CMS/CWS. Many felt that for the first time in a long time, staff were being held accountable.

DeAngelis used her personal relationships and reputation to encourage DCFS staff. She had face-to-face meetings with caseworkers as a reminder that non-compliance was not an option.

“We did it every day. We could never allow the notion of following regulation and being in compliance to wane or disappear from our day-to-day work.”

Donna DeAngelis, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

Another invaluable component was the implementation of an electronic version of the policies and procedures of Division 31 and a definition of each item. Hewitt considered the online guide to be a safeguard to ensure that the department would never again find itself out of compliance.

Striving for a score of 90 percent on each audit item, DeAngelis and Wales ran monthly and weekly audits on random cases to monitor the department’s improvement. The team wanted to know where they stood on the audit items before the State did.

“Analyzing our data was new for us as child welfare workers. Suddenly we could tie the data to outcome measures, to performance measures, and to how the children and families we served were faring.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

The department made systemic changes in the reporting of documentation that was used. They designed “triggers” within the reports (i.e., reminders regarding dental and mental exams) to help caseworkers prioritize their tasks and do what was needed for each situation.

As the months passed, everyone, child welfare workers, managers, supervisors, clerks, and elected officials, got on board and supported the campaign and the efforts of DeAngelis and her team. DCFS’s work areas contained posters displaying inspirational messages about team work, dedication, and pride. Every major milestone was celebrated with department-wide parties and gifts.

The first test for DCFS came in November 2001 with their first audit by the State. The department’s first test became its first big victory. DCFS passed six audit areas with 90-percent accuracy: HE1, C1, C2, C3, MED1, MED 2.

Hewitt, his management team, and the department’s staff were absolutely ecstatic with the results, but everyone stayed focused on passing the remaining three audit areas: CP1, CP2, and ILP1.

“We had something to prove and we were determined to prove it. We were a good, hard-working group of folks that really wanted to do well by children, and all we needed was the leadership. We needed someone who could give us direction and believe in us.”

Staff member, Department of Children and Family Services
In December 2001, Chet Hewitt was named director of Alameda County’s Social Services Agency, California’s sixth largest county. Hewitt’s promotion put him at the helm of a system with 2,300 employees, and a reported $600-million budget, providing social services for more than 200,000 residents.

“It felt good to have an agency director that understood the issues and the challenges of the Children and Family Services department.”

Staff member, Department of Children and Family Services

In August of 2002, Carol Collins was named Assistant Agency Director of the Department of Children and Family Services. Collins had two decades of experience in DCFS. She had started as an eligibility worker and had worked in every program within the department. Described by colleagues as “a strong, quiet leader,” Collins was ready to continue DCFS’s journey toward reform.

The work of monthly audits by the Quality Assurance Team continued throughout 2002 and in November of that year, DCFS was audited for the remaining Division 31 items and passed.

In January 2003, Hewitt received official notification that the department was in full compliance, and the state’s takeover threat was being rescinded (see Appendix D).

DCFS had come through what had seemed like an insurmountable challenge. In less than two years, the department had reversed a trend that had been prevalent for 15 years.

“The State was floored when we passed all nine items. We were the third county to ever get an order of non-compliance. The other two counties were not able to get into compliance as quickly or as efficiently as we did.”

Donna DeAngelis, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

According to management and county officials, the victory forged a new relationship between Alameda County Social Services Agency and California’s Department of Social Services, and changed the State’s perception of the county’s foster care system.

The victory also transformed the way the staff saw themselves and their work.

“It was just a remarkable achievement. We realized if we could get past an order of non-compliance and the threat of a State takeover, we were virtually unstoppable. It gave us the momentum and belief in ourselves as a department to move forward with those initiatives that had been put on the back burner for various reasons.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Creating Bold Initiatives and Programs

The work done by Alameda County’s DCFS during their journey to compliance consisted of much more than locating documentation and performing routine self-audits.

Chet Hewitt, Carol Collins, and their management team had committed themselves to doing more than meeting California’s regulatory mandates. Lowering the existing caseloads and the number of children entering foster care and reforming the way the department did business were paramount.

By January 2001, DCFS reported a total of 4,347 children in foster care.

“There were too many cases to handle effectively. One of our themes became ‘Let’s focus our efforts on early intervention, prevention, and keeping children safely at home.’ We wondered, ‘How many children could we safely leave at home, versus how many should we remove?’ That idea was a very different mindset for us. Obviously the best strategy to reduce caseloads is to not bring children into care to begin with.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

Achieving the goal of bringing fewer children into foster care meant refocusing the department’s existing programs and initiatives as well as designing new ones.

“We said we would craft and test new programs and strategies. If they were successful, we would work hard to restructure and finance the system so that we could support those strategies for everyone. So if we did a pilot and it was successful, we’d want all communities and all families with those particular challenges to have an opportunity to benefit from that particular program or service.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

One of the many critical issues facing DCFS was its adoption backlog. The courts had terminated the parental rights of close to 800 children, and their pending adoptions had yet to be finalized. The number continued to climb, with more children coming into the system. The situation was described by one of the staff members as “extremely distressing.”

Newly promoted Division Director Erika Shore was given the tremendous task of evaluating the department’s adoption program and creating a plan to decrease the number of children waiting for permanency.
Understanding that good ideas and solutions come from a variety of sources, Shore, along with the adoptions program manager and management analyst, created a work group that was open to everyone across the agency.

“We had a very large group of people we were meeting with regularly. We did a charting of the current system and identified where the roadblocks were and then worked to restructure the program and address barrier points that were giving us trouble. Working with Labor, we took the adoption functions, including adoptive placement, the negotiation of the adoption assistance payments, and all court activity that resulted in the finalization, and created a team to handle those functions.”

Erika Shore, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

In addition to DCFS, the enormous backlog was also impacting the court system. Hewitt, Collins, and Shore began working closely with the presiding judge of Alameda County’s Juvenile Court to resolve the situation.

“We set up an adoption calendar in the court of one of our commissioners so that every Friday that commissioner would do four adoptions. So we chipped away at the backlog that way and then we participated in Adoption Day.”

Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte, Former Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court, Alameda County

Alameda County participated in the first National Adoption Day in November 2000. Judge Harbin-Forte and her team finalized 36 adoptions that day.

On Adoption Day, November 2001, with about 20 judges, children, families, and the press in attendance, 88 adoptions were finalized. That year, the adoptions program finalized a total of 152 adoptions of “court-dependent children” along with 90 step-parent adoptions and 80 independent adoptions.

“It was so incredible to do something in child welfare that was so happy and affirming and positive, especially as we saw that backlog dwindle and we saw these kids finally getting the permanency they really deserved. It was exciting and gratifying.”

Erika Shore, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

In 2002, DCFS developed two major programs influencing both early intervention and the front end of their system. Hewitt, Collins, and their team were committed to implementing a differential response reform within the agency. They knew that supporting children and their families who were on the brink of becoming a statistic would greatly impact those children as well as the department’s intake numbers.

“It is a shift of a perspective that is needed in social service agencies. We don’t want to get to a crisis situation. We don’t want to get to the point where you need to remove a child from their family. You look at the first signs of trouble and try to get into the home to work directly with the family to give them some tools and assistance. You have to try and help them stay intact.”

Mark Friedman, CEO, First 5 Alameda County
In March 2002, after many discussions and much planning, the initiative, Another Road to Safety (ARS), became a joint partnership between the Alameda County Social Services Agency, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, First 5 Alameda County, and several community-based organizations.

ARS targeted three neighborhoods with populations that make up the largest number of children in Alameda County’s foster care system: South Hayward (predominately Latino), East Oakland (predominately African American), and West Oakland (Latino and African American).

The services for ARS are delivered by community-based organizations’ social workers. They are the face of the program, linking parents with medical services, developmental assessments, job training, interpretation services, and basic life necessities. Anchoring their efforts is a team ranging from developmental specialists to psychologists ready to provide support.

In addition to providing families with a bit of security, DCFS hoped Another Road to Safety would provide families with a different image of Child Protective Services.

“We didn’t want to be seen as ‘baby snatchers’ or that we were trying to arbitrarily remove children from their families. We believe there is strength in all families and that children do better at home rather than in the foster care system.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

Knowing that there are times when children must be removed from their families, the DCFS staff began to take a hard look at their removal process. What were the experiences of those children after they were removed from their homes?

According to staff, children would usually have to wait at a police station, a fast-food restaurant, or at the child welfare worker’s desk until placement could be found. The experience was a “secondary trauma” that the staff wanted to change.

For 10 years, DCFS had envisioned a full-service, “child-friendly” center where children would go immediately after removal. Once there, they would receive a complete physical and mental evaluation, placement, and information about the process ahead.

Carol Collins had been instrumental in the evolution of the idea, chairing a planning and design committee for the center for over a year. She knew that the center would be an invaluable resource for children, their parents, foster parents, and child welfare workers. According to staff, the idea was one of many that had been put on “the back burner” due to the agency’s inability to secure funding for the project.

Using his extensive foundation and funding contacts, Hewitt put the creation of the center on the fast track. During the fundraising process, Hewitt had discussions with members of Labor, the behavioral health care agency, and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors about the facility, and how it would affect the DCFS and the county as a whole.

“Once the external dollars and matching funds from other agencies started to come in, it was easy to make the case that the Children’s Assessment Center could be successful and sustainable.”
Hewitt and Collins chose Division Director Lori Jones to oversee the day-to-day management of the planning process.

The Alameda County Children’s Assessment Center opened its doors in August 2002, after 14 months of planning. Operating 23 hours a day, every child entering the child welfare system comes through the soothing environment, dedicated to lessening the trauma he or she faced. According to DCFS, the facility is the only one of its kind in the nation.

The Children’s Assessment Center’s staff consists of contract workers in the areas of mental health, childcare supervision, and public health nursing.

“We would engage the kids when they arrived. As we were talking to them, we would also be checking to see if they had any other needs. Were there any medical needs that had to be addressed? We also observed the mental health status of the child.”

Lori Jones, Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

After the initial physical and mental health screening, the children are tracked through placement. Placement services are also located in the center, which gives the staff an opportunity to get to know the child, ensuring the best possible placement.

A few months after the Children’s Assessment Center opened, the DCFS team noticed a shift in the way in which child welfare workers and community partners experienced the removal process as well.

“They would bring in the kids and stand around. We’d say, ‘You can leave, you don’t have to stay here. Go and finish your investigation, we’ll take care of everything.’ I think slowly they began to realize they were relieved of a huge responsibility. Also, the feedback we were getting from the foster parents was that they were getting more information about the children who were coming into their home.”

Lori Jones, Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

According to Jones, the Children’s Assessment Center also changed DCFS’s relationship with the police. Officers were no longer doing “the social work part of the job.”

In addition, the Board of Supervisors could look to the Children’s Assessment Center with pride, as a ground-breaking facility unique to their county.

“Their skepticism grew out of the previous planning process. It took so long. They would hear about it and then not hear about it at all. They became very jaded. So when the Children’s Assessment Center actually opened, that made a big difference to them.”

Staff member, Department of Children and Family Services

The year ended with DCFS reporting an improvement in the number of children entering the foster care
system. The total of 859 children was a decrease from the 1035 children who entered the system in 2001.

By the beginning of 2003, The DCFS had made tremendous strides toward total restructuring. Creating a system that put children and their families first and was supported by the community was clearly in focus. For Hewitt and Collins, there was one more initiative that would bring the goal within reach.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation initiative, Family to Family, focuses on the strategies and tools that help child welfare systems reform and become more family- and community-centered.

The four essential principles outlined by the Annie E. Casey of the Family to Family initiative are as follows:

- A child’s safety is paramount.
- Children belong in families.
- Families need strong communities.
- Public child welfare systems need partnerships with the community and with other systems to achieve strong outcomes for children.

The concept behind Family to Family was extremely appealing to Hewitt and Collins.

“We were doing this kind of family-centered work. So we contacted Annie E. Casey Foundation about becoming a Family to Family site. We were told sites were selected; there wasn’t an application process. But after a lengthy conversation, they agreed to come out and engage us so we could tell them our story.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

During their meeting with Annie E. Casey representatives, Hewitt and Collins discussed Alameda County’s on-going efforts to transform its child welfare system and how the departments’ values about children and families were very much in line with those of the foundation.

“At the end of our conversation, I told them we were choosing to participate. I told them it was less about them selecting us and more about us selecting them and their approach. I said, ‘We’re going to do this with or without you. But it would easier to do it with you so we have access to information and the knowledge and resources, but we’re going to do this.’”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Hewitt’s risk-taking paid off. A few days after the meeting, Annie E. Casey Foundation contacted him and invited Alameda to be a part of the Family to Family initiative in May 2003 (see Appendix E).

The feeling in the department was that being accepted as a Family to Family site was like a “badge of honor” considering the ordeal that the agency and the DCFS had come through. The decision gave everyone confidence and added to the buoyant energy and the power the department was experiencing.

“The Family to Family initiative felt good. It was as if we were doing something valuable, beneficial, that was child- and family-focused. On the whole, the work came into focus and there was momentum, support, and a shared mission in the department that had not existed before.”

Erika Shore, Former Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Forging Partnerships

According to DCFS reports, from July 2002 to June 2003 the number of children entering Alameda County’s foster care system was 678, down from 792 the previous year. African American children made up more than one-third of those entries at 292. DCFS staff credited the programs Another Road to Safety and the Children’s Assessment Center and structured decision-making methods for the decrease.

By early 2004, the DCFS, under Carol Collins’ leadership, was hard at work planning the integration of Family to Family’s core strategies throughout its practice. The strategies were as follows:

- Building Community Partnerships: Building relationships with a wide range of community organizations and leaders in neighborhoods in which child protection referral rates are high, and collaborating to create an environment that supports families involved with the child welfare system.

- Team Decision Making: Including not just foster parents and caseworkers, but also birth families and community members in all placement decisions to ensure a network of support for children and the adults who care for them.

- Resource Family Recruitment, Development, and Support: Finding and maintaining foster and kinship homes that can support children and families in their own neighborhoods.

- Self-Evaluation: Teams of analysts, data managers, frontline managers and staff, and community partners collect, analyze, and interpret data about key Family to Family outcomes to assess whether progress is being made and to determine how policy and practice needs to be changed to bring about further improvement.

Collins and her team saw Team Decision Making (TDM) as being critical to the department’s intake efforts and keeping children and their families together in safe and healing environments.

DCFS moved forward with a gradual introduction of TDM, starting with work groups, planning meetings, and training sessions. It was important to introduce the concept in a way that would not disaffect both birth and foster parents and community partners. On September 1, 2004, TDM was implemented in the department and used prior to all child removals beginning with the South Hayward area. Parents were encouraged to bring anyone from their support system to the meeting.

“We would sit with the family and tell them, ‘This is what we’re concerned about. You’re not going to see it in the court report. We’re going to tell you directly and we’re going to work together with you and help with your children.’ We had never brought the family to the table before. TDM was a different way to let parents know what we were trying to do. They became our partners.”

Michelle Love, Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

There was a culture change slowly taking place throughout the department and the agency. Staff members would confess to Hewitt and Collins that TDM helped them to remember why they had wanted to be a child welfare worker.

Although there was a sense of urgency to “officially” incorporate all Family to Family strategies, one approach
was very familiar to the DCFS management team. Building strong partnerships, as a way of achieving far-reaching success, was a concept Hewitt had stressed from the moment he arrived in Alameda County. A large part of DCFS’s success was due to the team’s ability to build bridges of cooperation inside and outside of the Alameda County Social Services Agency.

In 2004, the Social Services Agency, DCFS, and Probation began to brainstorm ways they could maximize their efforts to lower the number of children they had in out-of-home placement.

“Probation is also involved with how to place a kid. We never really talked to them about it. We used the same facilities, sometimes governed to some extent by similar regulations, but there was no communication between our systems outside of billing arrangements. There were things we were doing that we thought were significant for Probation given their responsibility as well.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

Hewitt and Collins felt that the overlap and the possible collaboration between the two groups needed to be addressed. Too often they were seeing children who had “a social worker, child welfare worker, and probation officer.” Despite common goals, there was very little “common review” of which system would best meet the needs of a particular child.

“We realized that if DCFS is more effective, there are fewer kids coming to Probation because of their intervention. We have invested some of our money in front-end prevention services, which get to some of their children as well. We were investing in the same things to try and keep our kids out of the system. That’s when we started hearing the message. Sometimes our staffs are working in a counterproductive manner and there’s finger pointing. It’s not ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ We want to find where the kids will get the best services and programs to meet their needs.”

Donald Blevins, Chief Probation Officer, Alameda County Department of Probation

Together, the Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation began to work on ways to achieve better case management for children in both systems and to lower the rate at which they would migrate from foster care to delinquency.

DCFS also felt that a more integrated partnership with the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency was another critical component to achieving better outcomes for children in foster care. There was also a shared commitment to find ways to improve mental health care services for children and their families.

The services existed, but the DCFS felt it was often a challenge for some families to access them. The discussion became how to move children and their families between both systems in a way that was as comfortable as possible, especially for families in crisis.

The second part of the discussion centered on changing the traditional structure of the mental health services offered to children in care.
“It’s important that our departments not be passive recipients of somebody else’s program but decide what will work for the young people that we serve. We’re living with them all the time, and we’re responsible for them. Partnering with us, DCFS took the lead in the designing of what would serve them best.”

Dave Kears, Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

Perhaps the biggest breakthrough was the partnership that was formed between the Department of Children and Family Services and Labor.

Described by staff on both sides as “strained” at best, the relationship seemed to embody many of the traditional frustrations between management and labor. There was tension around the increasing number of children entering the system, the lack of available caseworkers to handle the demand, and the plan to solve the problem. DCFS felt that Labor was an integral part of the change strategy the department was developing, and management wanted to find a way to transform the interaction between them.

“We started using what was called a Proposal-Based Negotiation System where we would write up what we were trying to do and how best we wanted to achieve it. Labor would receive the document before our meeting. Then we would move into a face-to-face negotiation with the expectation that Labor would make some modifications to whatever was presented. Those points had to help move us forward or identify obstacles we didn’t think about. That information would be included in the next draft of the proposal.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

According to staff, the process eliminated any possible difference in interpretation of the discussion or strategies set forth by both management and Labor. It was a discussion and a partnership based on mutual respect.

“I think there has to be trust first of all, and I think that everything has to be on the table when you’re talking about it. Both sides have to understand that both people have an agenda, constituents, and clients. So you have to go in with that understanding and ask, ‘How can we both provide a product that we are proud of?’”

Fred Beal, Labor Union Leader, SEIU, Local 1021

Through the partnership, DCFS and Labor agreed on the need for additional child welfare workers. Everyone understood that lowering the caseloads meant lowering the number of children entering the system when possible. However, one factor that remains consistent is the overrepresentation of African American children entering Alameda’s foster care system. DCFS felt there was a need for more diverse workers who could go into poor communities of color and assess a child’s level of risk or safety in the home. Hewitt and Collins proposed hiring some individuals who had extensive work experience and insight into a specific community but only had a Bachelor’s degree instead of the Master’s in Social Work typically required by the agency.

After much negotiation between management, Labor, and the Board of Supervisors, the Alameda County Social Services Agency was able to change the minimum qualifications allowed for those child welfare workers. It was a decision that benefited from the improved partnership between DCFS and Labor. Both were
willing to remove certain concerns that might lead to a breakdown in negotiations and to look at a bigger vision of creating a renewed child welfare system.

“Sometimes our search for ‘the perfect’ is the death of the good. Let’s do some of the things we agree on now and continue to talk about the things we have to figure out. But let’s not stop the entire process if we concur on eight out of ten things.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services County

DCFS also had a supportive relationship with many of the county’s foster parents and the Foster Parent Association of Alameda Country. There were efforts on the part of Hewitt and Collins to remind foster parents of the great resource they were to the department. During the department’s move toward Family to Family, foster parents who came to be identified as Resource Parents were invited to discussions about the initiative’s potential impact on the community.

“We were included in many major decisions affecting the department. We sat in on meetings and we were asked our opinion. It felt like a team effort, because they included us. That’s all we could ask for.”

Gwen McWilliams, First Vice President, Foster Parent Association, Alameda County

In addition, the majority of the county’s foster parents were aging or retiring and younger families were not choosing to become involved. According to DCFS, a decline of 76 percent of licensed foster homes during 1995 to 2005 had left Alameda County with 250 homes within the system. In early 2005, Hewitt and Collins began to look at an “untapped resource” they felt could help them recruit more licensed foster homes: the faith community. The department had failed in its earlier attempts to engage this important community partner so an idea was born to form the Alameda County Faith Initiative.

“We gave very good lip service to wanting to partner with them and telling them that they had a vital role. But ‘when the rubber met the road,’ we became entrenched into our old ways of doing business and going it alone. So the community felt there was no real sincerity on our part.”

Staff member, Alameda County Social Services Agency

This time, backed by Family to Family, the department was more open to community involvement, and the staff had been given the tools and strategies to do it successfully.

That summer, Hewitt and Collins enlisted the help of Rev. Raymond Lankford. In addition to having strong ties in the faith community, Lankford had been a foster parent for more than 16 years and understood its challenges and rewards.

Letters were sent to over 200 churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, inviting their leaders to a breakfast. In September 2005, more than 80 individuals attended. Hewitt and Collins informed the faith leaders, who were unaware of the purpose of the meeting, of the severe challenges they were facing in the child welfare system, stressing that “we’re all responsible for the safety of children in our community.”
“Chet and I spoke from the heart. Our presentation included the Big Barn theory and data reflecting that children were being removed from the faith leaders’ own neighborhoods. They were very surprised by the number of children who were leaving their communities because we didn’t have enough foster families in Alameda County. We told them we needed their help, and we asked for their forgiveness for whatever negative experiences they’d had with the agency.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

The faith leaders agreed to help the DCFS reach the goals they had set:

- Recruit an additional 400 licensed foster homes by 2009.
- Promote adoption as a permanent placement option for children in foster care who cannot return home safely.
- Collaborate with faith leaders to integrate their social programs with agency programs to meet the myriad needs of children and youth in foster care.
- Develop multiple pathways for faith leaders and community-based organizations to engage with the department to attract a diverse group of individuals and organizations designed to increase opportunities for children and youth in foster care.

A second meeting was scheduled in November; it was attended by some 50 faith organizations, which became the Alameda County Faith Council, “the foundation of the Faith Initiative,” with Rev. Lankford as its administrator. What Hewitt and Collins witnessed was the unfolding of a coalition of individuals who were truly committed to the lives and the well-being of children in the foster care system.

“The idea that we could develop and sustain partnerships with other entities in the community was invigorating. We had become accustomed to working in our own little silos, thinking that we knew all the answers. Now it didn’t have to be just us explaining and defending our work all the time.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ideas versus Ideology

By the year 2006, the Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services had reached two impressive milestones: the first, avoiding a state takeover, and the second, coming into compliance faster than any county in the history of California.

In addition, DCFS reported a steady decrease in the number of children in foster care.

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<th>Children in Foster Care in Alameda County</th>
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On the front end, intake numbers had also improved. However, African American children still represented a majority of the children entering the system.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Children Entering Foster Care in Alameda County</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jul 00–Jun 01</td>
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<td>811</td>
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African American Children

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<th>Jul 00–Jun 01</th>
<th>Jul 01–Jun 02</th>
<th>Jul 02–Jun 03</th>
<th>Jul 03–Jun 04</th>
<th>Jul 04–Jun 05</th>
<th>Jul 05–Jun 06</th>
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<tr>
<td>424</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>253</td>
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DCFS had also made good efforts in the areas of adoptions, reunifications, and relative placements.

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<th>Alameda County – Adoptions, Reunifications, and Living with Kin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>Adoptions</td>
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<td>Reunifications</td>
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<td>Living with Kin</td>
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The department had cleared its backlog of 800 adoptions in a little over two years.

DCFS staff credits groundbreaking programs and the integration of Family to Family principles in their practice for the lower numbers.

“The implementation of Family to Family was probably the biggest piece that helped to change the philosophy of the agency. Working with and involving the community, and considering

—John Gardner

The hallmark of our age is the tension between aspirations and sluggish institutions.
the youth and parents as our partners and not just people that we work with and want to do something for us, was extremely crucial in the development of the relationship.”

Lori Jones, Division Director, Department of Children and Family Services

Also, Hewitt and Collins had remained steadfast in their mission to keep children safely with their families when possible, or to create big exits to get them to reunification and permanence quickly.

In 2005, DCFS started to consider the consequences of their shrinking caseloads. In a child welfare system where fewer caseloads mean fewer resources, the DCFS team became concerned about future funding of many of their programs and reform efforts.

“We had partners who had supported us, but they were not going to fund us forever. It was our charge to solve our sustainability. We began working on reinvestment options in earnest and brought some national experts in to talk about what we were confronting. They offered us some models, but none met our threshold.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

In search of financing that would allow DCFS to “push the envelope,” Hewitt and Collins started looking at options around Title IV-E.

Traditionally, Title IV-E funds can only be used for out-of-home placement services for youth in foster care. However, in May 2004 California’s Department of Social Services began negotiating with the federal government to waive certain stipulations, and to allow funds to be used when children are also out of foster care. Funds could be used for services ranging from early intervention to permanence.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved the request on March 2006.

“Through Title IV-E, the federal government reinforces behavior at a certain level that is not what we want reinforced. For years those of us in the child welfare field have said we’d love to be more flexible with those foster care funds. If we had the same amount of money to focus on both the front end of the system to keep kids out of care and the back end of the system to keep them in a more permanent situation more quickly, that would be a much better thing for kids.”

Mary Ault, Former Deputy Director, Department of Child and Family Services, State of California

Hewitt, Collins, and the management team felt the flexibility of the Title IV-E waiver was one their best opportunities to ensure funding for the department’s initiatives.

In February 2007, with the support of the Board of Supervisors, DCFS applied for the 5-year Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation Plan Demonstration (see Appendix F).

The State of California approved Alameda County Social Services Agency’s participation in the waiver by the spring.

Because Probation’s costs are a part of the Title IV-E waiver’s allotment, both DCFS and Probation partici-
pated in the plan. The State approved allocation of $250 million for DCFS and $50 million for Probation based on federal payments to Alameda County during the fiscal years 2002-2005 when the caseloads were at their highest. The amount includes a 2% growth rate for each of the five years (see Appendix G).

**Alameda County’s goals for the waiver were:**

- To improve the array of services for children and families and engage families through more individualized approaches that emphasize family involvement.
- To increase child safety with an over-reliance on out-of-home care.
- To improve permanency outcomes and timeliness.
- To improve child and family well-being.

However, the waiver is not without its risks or controversy. There is the possibility that the DCFS’s caseloads could increase due to external factors beyond their control. The department could find itself facing additional costs they didn’t anticipate, affecting existing programs.

Despite the opt-out clause in the waiver, there was great concern from other departments as well as some providers that the DCFS might be making a mistake. Perhaps, Hewitt and Collins felt the bigger risk was in jeopardizing the progress they had made toward reform. The waiver would allow them to retain some of the money they were losing and “develop a system that would reward [them] for doing right by kids.”

“They have to stay with that waiver. As soon as they move away from the flexibility to use money differently and the obligations to use it better, you fall back into the routine of our work being just about widgets. When we focus on accounting instead of being accountable for our results, that’s when we’ve lost.”

Dave Kears, Agency Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
The Casey Family Programs/Alameda County Partnership

Casey Family Programs has been a presence in Northern California’s Bay Area for more than 20 years, with offices initially in the city of Walnut Creek. Casey began to notice that a majority of the children they were serving were African American and from the city of Oakland in nearby Alameda County.

Deciding it was vital to become a part of the community they were supporting, Casey relocated to Alameda County in 2004. Opening their offices in the heart of the community in downtown Oakland, Casey began to establish a relationship with various community-based organizations and Alameda County’s child welfare department.

Casey’s affiliation with Alameda County’s DCFS is first as a service provider in the community. Through Casey’s Comprehensive Care Program, children in foster care referred by DCFS are matched with foster families certified by Casey. Through this program, Casey supports 50 foster parents with resources designed to help meet the physical health, mental health, and academic needs of the child in care.

Anchoring its support of these foster families is Casey’s CLAS service package, which provides educational, parenting, and life skills resources. In addition, Casey’s Care Coordination service package, started in 2003 as part of Casey’s Integrated Practice Model, provides Alameda County’s foster families who have youth in care who are graduating from high school with resources to help with family maintenance and transition to college or employment.

Casey’s role in Alameda County is also centered around collaborating with DCFS and community organizations on ways to move children into permanency, whether it be through reunification with birth parents, living with kin or guardians, or adoption.

“Casey Family Programs didn’t want to continue to perpetuate children being in foster care. Our foundation believes children deserve to be with a family and to grow up in that family. Our shift as an organization is to move children into permanence as quickly as possible.”

James Edmondson, Managing Director Field Offices, Casey Family Programs

One ambitious effort in Alameda County is DCFS’s Family Finding and Group Home Family Preservation Programs. The programs are designed to locate family members of youth in foster care who are in group homes or living with foster families, in hopes of creating a permanent family connection.

In 2004, Casey supported the DCFS pilot program, Step Up, which also focused on finding lost family ties for those children in group homes.

In a very short time, Casey had made tremendous progress in addressing the needs of many of the county’s children in care and in building a significant relationship with DCFS.

—John Gardner

“Exploration of the full range of our own potentialities is not something that we can safely leave to the chances of life.”
In 2007, Casey began working with DCFS on a major initiative called the Reinvestments Program, which would provide funding to Alameda County to use in innovative services “to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.”

In 2005, James Edmondson, Managing Director of Field Offices for Casey, met Social Services Agency Director Chet Hewitt at a meeting to discuss DCFS’s interest in the Title IV-E waiver and reinvestments.

Edmondson was impressed with the work that Hewitt and his team had achieved in consistently lowering the numbers of the children in their foster care system and cultivating an attitude of reform throughout the department.

“Because our goal as an organization is to reduce the 500,000 children currently in foster care in half to 250,000 by the year 2020, we were interested in the methodology he used to create those numbers, and the challenges he faced. We believe we can take those lessons learned and share them with other foster care systems that hope to reduce their numbers as well.”

James Edmondson, Managing Director Field Offices, Casey Family Programs

Casey has continued to support the reform efforts of DCFS through its existing programs and alliances with community-based organizations.

In June 2007, Casey announced that it would underscore its commitment by agreeing to allocate $250,000 a year over a multi-year period to support child welfare reforms in Alameda County.

Because the success of the Title IV-E waiver is critical to DCFS’s initiatives, Casey is exploring ways to assist the department in building infrastructure and effective systems of evaluations.

“I consider our partnership with Alameda County to be more than a financial one. Together we are finding ways to create a child welfare system none of us have ever seen before, a system that is reduced in half. What does that look like? How do we achieve it when there is a $16-billion crisis in the state of California? How do we use our intellectual resources to change the outcome? We are deepening our relationship as we discover these answers together.”

Madge Haynes, Senior Director, Bay Area Field Office, Casey Family Programs
The Future

In August 2007, Chet Hewitt resigned as director of the Alameda County Social Services Agency. He had spent six years as the agency director and one year as director of the Department of Children and Family Services.

“I left confident that the individuals at the county were committed enough, motivated enough, and that they had a well-designed plan. The plan that we collectively designed would allow things to move forward. I don’t know if there’s ever a best time to leave. But I felt that my time had come.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

According to staff, from the moment he arrived, Hewitt never stopped being a driving force for change and excellence. He challenged old paradigms within the agency and set the DCFS on a path of transformation that few thought possible.

The number of children in foster care in 2007 was 2555, which represented a 40% decrease that occurred during Hewitt’s tenure at Alameda County, according to DCFS. Many feel it is a powerful example of what is possible in child welfare.

“We had created an environment where we were free to take risks that we hadn’t felt comfortable taking before. We could think ‘outside the box,’ be innovative, and be a ‘cutting-edge’ county. It was like a perfect storm, the convergence of wonderful opportunities coming together. We were so fortunate to have Chet’s bold visionary leadership at a stage in our department’s evolution that was absolutely critical.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

In November 2008, Yolanda Baldovinos, a 26-year veteran with the county, was appointed director of the Alameda County Social Services Agency. Along with DCFS Director Carol Collins, Baldovinos will focus on ways to be more effective internally and will develop several key partnerships within the community.

As DCFS moves forward with its initiatives and reform efforts, their priority is the success of the Title IV-E waiver. In support of that goal, Casey Family Programs will help fund a real-time data warehouse system, allowing DCFS to analyze outcome measures achieved through the waiver.

“Every time we implement a strategy, we need to be able to evaluate it very quickly so we can fine-tune what we’re doing or change the directions if it’s not giving us the results. We cannot wait six or nine months or a year for results. We need to be able to be able to monitor them on a real-time basis.”

Yolanda Baldovinos, Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency
DCFS’s decision to participate in the waiver seems to be paying off. The department reports that caseloads have declined by 3.8 percent through September 2008. Because of the waiver, Collins has been able to hire seven additional child welfare workers guaranteeing that individual caseloads will also decrease.

Another investment is a $1.6-million prevention pilot plan focusing on family maintenance cases.

According to DCFS senior staff, the department has some of the country’s highest reunification rates, currently at 75.7 percent. However, the percentage of those children returning to the system remains high at 23.8 percent. In an effort to decrease the re-entry rates of children, DCFS will begin Another Road to Safety Family Maintenance pilot.

The Family Maintenance component will provide support and resources in an attempt to stabilize children and their families before they leave care. The pilot is based on the department’s successful early intervention program, Another Road to Safety, and targets children from South Hayward, East Oakland, and West Oakland.

Collins and her team are moving efforts done by the Family Finding team to the front end of the system. DCFS has hired additional search clerks to begin to look for relatives as soon as a child comes into child welfare. The goal is to make the first placement with a family member.

Also, the Alameda County Social Services Agency and DCFS recently agreed to use Title IV-E waiver funds to pay the $750 legal fee for families who want to establish guardianship before the child enters the system. Previously, a child would have to go into foster care as a basis for reimbursement. According to Baldovinos, paying the fee allows that child to avoid “knowing the foster care system.”

From Collins’ perspective, participating in the Title IV-E waiver option is “one of the most strategic and forward-thinking decisions” DCFS has ever made. At a time when a weak economy and budget cuts have had a devastating effect on most child welfare systems across the country, DCFS has been largely unaffected. Looking at its second year in the waiver, Collins and her team anticipate a surplus of $23 million that must be reinvested into existing and new child welfare programs.

These funds will allow Alameda County to continue its commitment to keep children in safe and loving homes.

A great deal of state and national attention will be focused on Alameda County’s DCFS as it allocates the unprecedented amount of savings from the waiver. According to leadership, it is crucial for DCFS to make wise choices as it allocates these resources. A failure to do so could possibly lead outside critics of the waiver to conclude that DCFS’s participation and plan was ill-conceived (see Appendix H).

DCFS understands the vital role that community partnerships will continue to play in the future success of the department.

The Alameda County Faith Initiative project continues to grow with 160 newly recruited families. However, the challenge for DCFS is the continual loss of foster parents due to retirement. DCFS hopes their focus on locating relative placement early in the process will offset this trend.
The well-being and the success of emancipated youth has always been a priority of Alameda County’s Social Services Agency and DCFS. Too many of these children leave the system with very few options for a sustainable future. Increasing the permanency rates, as well as positive outcomes for these children, is a goal DCFS hopes to fulfill within the next two years.

In 2006, Chet Hewitt conceived of a facility that would provide housing and comprehensive services for youth making their transition out of the child welfare system. Hewitt’s vision became the Emancipation Village.

“Emancipated youth are a vulnerable population to such problems as homelessness, unemployment, suicide, depression, and drug abuse. The Emancipation Village will be a very trusting, comforting, and safe atmosphere for them to live in during their transition to adulthood.”

Vince Reyes, Special Assistant Agency Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

The $5-million facility will provide housing for 30 emancipated youth from foster care, ages 18-24, and 10 youth in care, age 16-17. In addition to housing units, Alameda County’s 22-year-old Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) will be a part of the facility. Through ILSP, emancipated youth at the Village will have access to an on-site employment center, a life-skills training program, and a health center. DCFS hopes to break ground in 2009 on what was formerly an orphanage located in East Oakland.

According to staff, one of the most critical issues facing Alameda County is the need for a viable succession plan to address the increasing number of retirements throughout the department. In the Alameda County Social Services Agency, Baldovinos anticipates losing 40% of her workforce in the next 4-5 years.

In response, the agency has created a series of interdepartmental meetings so that mid-level managers have the opportunity to work with each other to develop management and problem-solving skills.

DCFS has fared a little better. Management saw the retirement of two of its four division directors in 2008. However, Collins made several promotions of long-time employees with solid leadership skills, fresh ideas, a diversity of backgrounds, and a commitment to the vision of the department of putting children and families first.

“I think that they’ve built a strong infrastructure and plan since Chet left, with people who are committed to continuing the vision and the message of change. They’ve made great inroads and strong alliances with the community, which has come to see the good work they’ve done and help them think through solutions to some of the remaining challenges.”

James Edmondson, Managing Director Field Offices, Casey Family Programs
The Keys to Leadership

DCFS had a vision of creating a foster care system that puts children and families first. However, bringing that realization to fruition takes strong leadership.

What is leadership? What qualities does a leader need to possess? What does a leader have to do to be successful?

What follows are thoughts about leadership from those who have been involved with or witness to the transformational work taking place at the Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services.

“I tend to believe that the key characteristics of leadership are courage and character. It is the courage to say ‘I can do this. We will do this.’ You’ll be surprised how few people are willing to do that. It means accepting responsibility in a system that tries to shift or diffuse responsibility. So all of a sudden you have someone who has all the courage to stand up for it and push things, and that’s about 50-60% of what it takes for success. And then persevere enough to take the struggle and the loneliness and keep pushing it until it becomes acceptable, until it becomes the norm.”

Dave Kears, Agency Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

“Strong leadership is critical, and there has to be a clearly articulated vision that is put forward and that everybody understands. When we have a vision, it has to be a shared vision and top leadership needs to ensure the staff at every level buys into it. When there is a shared vision, it becomes easier for leaders to influence philosophical and cultural shifts within the organization. A leader takes the role as a change agent very seriously. What has to be reinforced constantly is that change is inevitable. It may be difficult but it will produce better outcomes.”

Carol Collins, Assistant Agency Director, Department of Children and Family Services

“The people who are the most successful at leading are those who really care about making things better for their clients, and improving the quality of life for the people they are responsible for. When leaders approach problems, they approach it from the perspective of the client. They have sensitivity to somebody being hungry, being homeless, being hurt, and that becomes their driving force. Second to that, leaders are very bright people who become technically savvy and deal with very complex bureaucratic environments and makes things move. There is a tendency in government to follow rules and regulations and then sometimes those rules become impediments to getting things done. Leaders let the concern of the client be the overriding force to make those systems work for them.”

Yolanda Baldovinos, Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency
“Leaders have to be accessible. They have to be community-oriented and have empathy for others. A leader has to look at the whole situation, not just from where they sit.”

Gwen McWilliams, First Vice President, Foster Parent Association, Alameda County

“I think a leader is someone with clarity of vision. A leader is someone who doesn’t lose the scope of vision so they don’t get distracted by things that can be tangential. That is truly important if you’re going to turn systems around. A good leader is an excellent communicator, providing information not just for information’s sake but targeted to helping people realize the improvements that are taking place. A leader has to be able to measure where his or her vision is, and changing it if the vision or the measures are off. And finally, a leader is someone who is able to own both the successes and the defeats in trying to make significant change.”

Madge Haynes, Senior Director, Bay Area Field Office, Casey Family Programs

“Leadership is needed to be able to work with everyone. Typically, we get used to working in our own agencies protecting our own interest and looking at our small piece of the puzzle. Leadership is about providing a bigger vision than perhaps is necessary to get the job done. Leadership is being willing to look beyond your own budget and workload and say ‘How can we effectively work together?’”

Donald Blevins, Chief Probation Officer, Alameda County Department of Probation

“I am a great fan of John Gardner, the professor and the architect for Medicare. He wrote an enormous amount about leadership. He said that when it comes to creating transformation, it doesn’t take a great leader as much as it takes a succession of great leaders. The key feature of your success is that you help create leadership beyond yourself.”

Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency

These leadership qualities are only a part of what led to DCFS’s progress. There were a few essential steps taken by the team to create a movement of growth and transformation:

• Generating a clear and consistent message of change that is communicated at every level. Hewitt, Collins, and the management team stressed the message of change and reform to top managers, frontline staff, community providers, and elected officials. They emphasized that change was important, that it was inevitable, and that it was an idea that needed to be embraced.

• Creating a vision and a set of goals that are inspiring and obtainable. DCFS established this idea of what a reformed child welfare system could look like through their Big Barn theory. The concept reminded staff of the true purpose of the foster care system. It also allowed them to examine every aspect of their system and determine which areas needed to be redesigned in order to achieve a shared outcome.

• Making accountability a major aspect of transformation. DCFS created a level of accountability that had long been absent from the department. No one was immune from the idea that excellence was not only achievable, but also expected.

• Being willing to challenge old paradigms and design new ones. A major part of DCFS’s continued
success is the department’s willingness to challenge old models and old assumptions. Leadership was not afraid to say, “Let’s look at this a different way.” Carol Collins continues to encourage her team to take risks and look for innovative and unique ways to achieve success.

- Building bridges of reconciliation and partnerships. One of the major barriers facing DCFS was its unresolved issues with various divisions in the agency and in the outside community. The team realized that before anyone would buy into the shared vision of a new child welfare system, DCFS would have to establish new ways of communicating, mend difficult relationships, and establish new alliances.

Some systems across the country facing similar circumstances may look at Alameda County’s progress and think it’s impossible for them to achieve the same success. However, those at Alameda County’s DCFS are quick to state that transformation of a system is attainable. Although DCFS’s story is ongoing, they continue to prove what is possible in a system faced with a myriad of challenges.

“Change is possible for everyone. There was nothing magical about what we did, but there was something special about it.”

—Chet Hewitt, Former Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency
Appendix A

Child Welfare League of America Report

Alameda County
Child Welfare Task Force

FINAL REPORT

January 1999

Child Welfare League of America
National Center for Consultation and Professional Development
440 First Street, NW, 3rd floor
Washington, DC  20001
I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

This report is the result of twelve months of work among key players in the child protection system in Alameda County in collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). It documents the extent and complexity of child welfare needs in Alameda County, and prescribes actions that would greatly improve the well being of children and families. The investment of time and other resources by all of the participants has demonstrated a strong commitment to better outcomes for children and families. However, additional hard work and resources will be needed to implement the report's many recommendations.

The people of Alameda County have expressed many concerns about the existing system of protection and care for children. These have included issues such as the relative lack of early intervention and prevention services, perceptions of poor communication and support among social workers, foster parents and others who provide services to children and families, and questions about responsiveness to the needs of minority children and families, who represent the largest group served by the system.

In response to these concerns, the County Board of Supervisors sought assistance from CWLA to assess the current child welfare system and, working with a specially created task force, to develop a plan for strengthening its effectiveness.

The Child Welfare League of America has worked in communities throughout the United States to address circumstances similar to those in Alameda County. The League provides a broad range of support and technical assistance to help agencies achieve more consistent performance and outcomes in child welfare services. And while nationally recognized for setting standards in child welfare, CWLA recognizes that local conditions create unique circumstances and expectations and that proposed solutions must always be responsive to local conditions.
B. Scope of the Report

This analysis has been conducted under the auspices of the Child Welfare Task Force, composed of agencies with legal responsibility and authority in the care and protection of abused and neglected children, and with others involved in the system. Co-chaired by Judge Robert Kurtz, Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court, and Supervisor Keith Carson, President of the County Board of Supervisors, the Task Force has met monthly since January 1998, and has served as a forum for issue identification, conflict resolution and consensus building. The project has consisted of three interrelated components:

1. **Cross-system analysis of the needs of abused and neglected children and their families, the multi-agency system of response to these needs, and decision making at both the system and case levels.**

2. **Evaluation of the Social Service Agency's out-of-home care system for children who have been abused or neglected**, including:
   - evaluation of case planning and decision-making practices for children in out-of-home care
   - analysis of the agency's process for recruitment, selection, and training of prospective foster and adoptive parents
   - assessment of foster care program resources, including staff training and education, and workload standards.

3. **Examination of the county's principal children's inter-agency planning process.**

January 1998
C. Principal Activities

The principal review activities included:

- establishment of baseline data of those systems responsible for the protection and care of abused and neglected children
- presentations by each of the key systems on the operations of their agencies
- conducting a county-wide multi-system survey to track cases of serious child abuse and neglect through the respective areas of responsibility of those agencies involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect
- conducting interviews with hundreds of people including social workers, foster parents, community-based organizations, and many others
- conducting a detailed review of case records drawn from a stratified random sample of children in out of home care
- reviewing pertinent plans, written policies and procedures, budgets, regulations, management reports, and other relevant program documentation of child protection issues.

This final report includes:

- a descriptive component providing baseline measurements and principal findings.
- a prescriptive component that recommends strategies to achieve identified outcomes.

D. Acknowledgments

CWLA wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals and groups involved in this comprehensive review of child welfare services in Alameda County. A complete listing of the individuals to whom the County Administrator's Office and CWLA wish to express appreciation is contained in Appendix A.
Appendix B

State of California Department of Social Services Review, October 1999

Dr. Rodger Lum, Director
Alameda County Social Services Agency
401 Broadway
Oakland, California 94607

Dear Dr. Lum,

Enclosed is the final report on the results of the California Department of Social Services review of the provision of Child Welfare Services in Alameda County. The review was conducted in October 1999 and focused on nine areas of service provision involving a selection of cases that were open in September 1999. The county was found out-of-compliance in all nine areas reviewed.

We received your May 18, 2000, letter in response to the Oversight Report we sent you on April 20, 2000. You provided additional information regarding the challenges and barriers the county has faced in its efforts to comply with Division 31 regulations; however, the information you submitted did not result in changes to the report findings. The final report does contain some minor formatting revisions.

We appreciate the assurances you made in your letter that the county has already initiated corrective steps to redesign and improve child welfare services and acknowledge the county’s efforts to implement innovative programs designed to support and protect children.

It is the responsibility of the California Department of Social Services to ensure each county is providing services necessary to meet the basic health and safety needs of children. The findings of the October 1999 review raise serious concerns about the health and safety of children served by your county. Since the review findings are not statistically valid, we plan to re-review the county in October 2000 using a statistically random sample of cases. The October 2000 review will be used to establish baseline information regarding compliance levels against which progress can be measured. Further action will be determined by the results of this review.

Children and Families First
Dr. Rodger Lum
Page Two

We require that the county act expeditiously to develop a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan that addresses the nine areas found out-of-compliance in the October 1999 review. The plan should specifically identify:

1. Statement of the problems;
2. Cause of the problems;
3. Measurable goals and objectives for correcting the problems;
4. Implementation and time frames for implementing the corrective actions; and
5. An evaluation component to measure progress which includes a target date by which compliance will be achieved.

The above plan must be submitted to the California Department of Social Services within 30 days of the date of this letter.

Please call me at (916) 657-2814 if you would like to discuss the report in greater detail. Your staff may contact Barbara Eaton, Chief of the Children's Services Operations Bureau, at (916) 445-2832 for information and assistance during the corrective action process. We look forward to working with you in your efforts to improve child welfare services in Alameda County.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

SYLVIA PIZZINI
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Enclosure

cc: Patricia Engelhard, Assistant Agency Director
Appendix C
DCFS Corrective Action Plan, March 2001

Alameda County Child Welfare Systems Analysis
Assessing Alameda County’s Department of Children and Family Services

Introduction

Policies and practices in the field of public Child Welfare in the United States have been in a state of flux for a number of years. Policy-makers, managers and practitioners are struggling to find the most effective approaches in the current patchwork of programs, practices, and funding streams. There is wide agreement that public systems have become too residual; that inadequate resources are provided for prevention and early intervention; and, that too many foster children remain in the system instead of being reunified or placed in a permanent alternative family.

In recent years, like many other large public systems, Alameda County’s Department of Children & Family Services has worked to assess service programs, understand best practices, and identify policy, resource, and practice barriers to improving outcomes. Several system review efforts have been launched in the past several years beginning with the hiring of an organizational consultant, Dr. Abner Boles in 1996. For the next two-years, Dr. Boles worked with the senior management staff to facilitate a system-wide assessment (See Attachment 1). Seeking to confirm findings from this internal review, in 1998 Alameda County entered into a consulting contract with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to evaluate the child welfare system and to propose action-oriented solutions for identified problems areas. CWLA expanded the Department’s review methodology through the use of focus groups and subcommittees that included frontline supervisors and staff. In December 1998 CWLA submitted a report that contained over 100 recommendations for policy and program changes (See Attachment 2). This report described Alameda County’s Child Welfare services as one of the most under-resourced public systems anywhere in the U.S. Over the past two-years, the League has worked with the Department and the County providing technical assistance and consultation on implementing key system change efforts.

Response to Review Findings

In response to issues identified through these reviews, in September 2000 the Department embarked on an effort to triage the myriad findings as a first-step toward implementing the strategic action plan developed by CWLA. The focuses of these efforts are outlined in general terms below to provide a context for understanding major reform efforts currently under way, or planned, and their relationship to improved Div 31 compliance. These efforts are organized under three separate, yet interdependent, headings: Administration and Policy; Program and Staff Development; and Resource Allocation and Availability. Specific programmatic detail for each is contained in the attached Corrective Action Plan (CAP), which begins on page 5.

Administration and Policy:
1. Management Structure

The Department’s analysis revealed structural deficiencies at the administrative level, such as unclear lines of authority and decision-making and inter-division competition, which have had a negative impact on program operations. To address this issue, the Department’s management structure will need to be reorganized, with an emphasis on clarifying roles and adding new skill-sets to buttress administrative team functioning.

1 Within the field of Social Work there is an ongoing debate on the value and effectiveness of Residual systems - which focus on families whose challenges are severe enough to warrant formal intervention, vs. Developmental systems, which focus on the healthy development of all families.
## CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

**Problem/Response Analysis**

**QUESTION # CP 1**

**QUESTION:** Was the initial case plan completed with in the required time frame?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement(s) of Problem</th>
<th>Cause(s) of Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does the county say the problem is?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What does the county say about what caused the problem?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve cases reviewed; four cases were found out of compliance (1 FM, 3 FR).</td>
<td>Transfer criteria and time frames are unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transfer criteria and time frames are unclear.</td>
<td>- No tracking or monitoring tools to establish and maintain timely transfers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cases coming from ER after lengthy investigation of referrals do not have case plans tracked or case plans not completed within required time frame.</td>
<td>- ER staff insufficiently trained on completing case plans which results in cases being transferred without timely completion of case plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parent’s signature or efforts to obtain signature not documented.</td>
<td>- Staff fail to indicate a reason for why parent’s signature was not obtained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supervisors not signing and dating case plans in a timely manner.</td>
<td>- Lack of active case tracking mechanisms resulting in Supervisors not seeing cases until transferred or closed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[ ] County has accurately identified the problem

[ ] County has identified the cause of the problem

### Plan Objectives

**How does the county plan to correct the problem?**

1. Establish consistent time frame in ER (ERU) regarding the transfer of cases to court investigative (DI) workers and when a case plan is due. ER will now be responsible for choosing a transferring case to DI prior to 18 days after initial contact. Otherwise ER is responsible for completing the case plan in a timely manner.

2. Develop, test and implement a case record review checklist that will 1) assist Child Welfare Workers to develop case plans in a timely and thorough manner; and 2) provide Child Welfare Supervisors with an efficient system for ensuring case plans meet Div 31 regulatory requirements.

3. Train Supervisors and Child Welfare Workers on Div 31 regulations that govern the development of case plans. Training sessions will emphasize case plan completion timelines and critical documenting efforts to acquire parent(s) and/or guardian(s) signatures; and case record checklist usage.

4. Create a template/Ad胡 report on CW/CMS to provide Supervisors with reminders as to when the case plans are due. The template will initiate an electronic tracking system that will trigger supervisor notification upon referral and d30 case data; 1st day reminder to

### Implementation and Time Frames

**When does the county say that they can start correcting action?**

**And when do they anticipate achieving compliance?**

1. Complete: As of February 2, 2001, ERU Division Director, Program Managers and Supervisors have developed and implemented consistent time frames for transferring cases from ERU to court investigative (DI) workers.

2. Complete: As of February 2001 the case record checklist had been developed.

   March 2001: Checklist is currently undergoing field-testing by Supervisors and Child Welfare Workers.

   May 2001: Meet and Confer with impacted unions.

   June 2001: Full implementation.

3. Complete: As of March 1, 2000, 100% of Supervisors and 90% of Child Welfare Workers have been trained on Division 31 Regulations.

   April 2001: Make-up training sessions will be provided for new Supervisors, Managers and Child Welfare workers.

4. Complete: As of March 1, 2001, a Template/Ad Hoc report on CW/CMS was created.

   April: All Supervisors will be trained to use the template.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County's objectives will eliminate the identified cause</th>
<th>Time frames are realistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] County's objectives will eliminate the identified cause</td>
<td>[ ] Time frames are realistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CSOB Evaluation of proposed CAP

- [ ] Approval Recommended
- [ ] Recommend Conditional Approval pending additional information
- [ ] CAP is insufficient and approval not recommended

Completed by: Date

---

**CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN**
January 8, 2003

Chet Hewitt, Director
Children and Family Services Department
Alameda County Social Services Agency
1106 Madison Street
Oakland, California 94607

Dear Mr. Hewitt:

I am writing to you with regard to the Formal Notice of Non-Compliance filed by the California Department of Social Services (Department) against Alameda County in February 2001 for failure to comply with Division 31 Regulations.

Since February 2001, the Department has provided ongoing technical assistance to the county to implement an extensive corrective action plan with the goal of improving the county’s compliance with child welfare services regulations and statute. Based on the results of the November 2001 and November 2002 compliance reviews conducted by the Department, my staff have determined that Alameda County has achieved and sustained compliance in all nine areas previously found out of compliance and cited in the Formal Notice of Non-Compliance. Accordingly, I am pleased to inform you that the Department is formally rescinding the Formal Notice of Non-Compliance issued to Alameda County Social Services Agency on February 1, 2001 effective immediately.

I realize that you and your staff invested considerable time and effort into implementing a successful corrective action plan, and as a result have measurably improved services to children and families in Alameda County. Congratulations to all staff involved!

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me at (916) 657-2596 or Sylvia Pizzini at (916) 657-2514 or have your staff contact Wesley A. Beers, Chief of the Children’s Services Operations and Evaluation Branch at (916) 445-3146.

Sincerely,

RITA SAENZ
Director

c: Carol Collins, Director
Department of Children and Family Services
Appendix E

Annie E. Casey Foundation Invitation to Join the Family to Family Initiative, May 2003

May 20, 2003

Chet Hewitt
Assistant Agency Director
Alameda County Social Services Agency
1106 Madison Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Chet Hewitt:

We are pleased to inform you that the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Foundation) has taken action to provide the Alameda County Social Services Agency with a grant of up to $150,000.00 for the period beginning January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2003.

This grant is intended to implement Family to Family (F2F) in Alameda County, California.

John Mattingly will be the Foundation staff person responsible for the management of this grant.

**Description of Work and Products**

As specified in the proposal submitted to us, we understand that the Alameda County Social Services Agency will:

- Create a formal governance structure for the F2F Initiative including Core Strategy Workgroups;
- Convene initial meetings of the Core Strategy Workgroups;
- Plan and implement a F2F kick-off event with the F2F Technical Assistance Team;
- Develop plans and set goals to address each of the four (4) Core Strategies, beginning with Recruitment, Training and Support (RTS) and Self-Evaluation, and continuing with Community Partnerships and Team Decision-Making later in the year;
- Send a team to the F2F conference in June 2003;
- Visit other F2F sites;
Grant No. 203.0434
Page 2 of 3

- Hold three-four community forums, meetings, and/or focus groups to educate the community about F2F; and
- Train staff about F2F.

Payment Provisions

Based on the approved budget, the Foundation agrees to pay the Alameda County Social Services Agency up to $150,000.00 in two (2) payments for this work. The first payment of up to $75,000.00 will be disbursed upon receipt and approval of this fully executed original Letter of Agreement.

A subsequent payment of up to $75,000.00 will be available upon receipt and approval of both the Interim Progress and Interim Expenditure Reports as detailed below.

Our understanding is that these funds will be spent according to the attached budget. Any changes in this approved budget that exceed 15% of any line item, as well as any changes in key personnel, must be approved in advance by the Foundation.

Reporting Requirements

The Alameda County Social Services Agency will submit Progress and Expenditure Reports to the Foundation according to the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Name</th>
<th>Due On or Before</th>
<th>Covering the Period of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

One (1) original and one (1) copy of each report should be submitted to the Foundation using the enclosed forms. Please send the reports to Grants Reporting and include the grant number designated on the first page of this document.

Further specific provisions of this grant are described in the attached Publication Acknowledgement Standards, and Terms and Conditions for Annie E. Casey Foundation Grants.

I hope you find the terms of this grant acceptable. Please indicate this by signing below and returning the complete original Letter of Agreement to Grants Reporting in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.
Grant No. 203.0434
Page 3 of 3

On behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, I look forward to a productive relationship.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Nelson
President

Chet Hewitt (or Authorized Representative) Date

cc: Carol Collins, Children & Family Services Department Director

Encl: Approved Budget
Terms and Conditions
Publication Acknowledgement Standards
Reporting, Forms
Return Envelope

File No. 946688

Children and Families First
Appendix F
Letter to Alameda County Social Services Board of Supervisors Concerning the Title IV-E Waiver

AGENDA
February 6, 2007

January 19, 2007

Honorable Board of Supervisors
Administration Building
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Board Members:

SUBJECT: Title IV-E Waiver – A plan to Reform the Delivery of Child Welfare Services in Alameda County

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to reform the child welfare system in Alameda County, better support at-risk families, and reduce the need for children to be placed in foster care, it is recommended that your Board:

- Approve and authorize the Board President to sign the Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project (CAP) Plan for submission to the California Department of Social Services for final State approval.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

This letter requests action by your Board for approval and authority so that the Social Services Agency (SSA) may submit the County’s Five Year (2007 – 2012) Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project (CAP) Plan for final approval by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). At present, federal funding for the child welfare system is oriented primarily toward supporting activities that remove children from their parents. California has negotiated a waiver with the federal government that will allow counties to redirect funds toward activities that better support at-risk families and are likely to reduce the need to place children in foster care. Although SSA serves the great majority of Alameda County’s foster children, a significant number are also served by the Probation Department. Accordingly, SSA has worked with the Probation Department to develop Alameda’s proposal.

Alameda was one of a handful of counties that worked closely with the state on the design of the California Waiver and the negotiation with the federal government. SSA staff have developed a plan to use the flexibility afforded by the Waiver to redesign child welfare system in the County. The plan is designed to operationalize the following goals:

- Safely maintain children in their homes, reducing the rate at which they enter foster care;
- When out-of-home placement is necessary, place children in the lowest/least expensive appropriate level of care;
- Reduce re-entry rates into the foster care system;
- Increase successful, permanent, timely reunifications of children with their families;
- Increase timely guardianships and adoptions; and
- Better support emancipating youth.
Honorable Board Members

System changes necessary to redefine the child welfare system, supporting the above goals, will be phased in over the life of the Waiver.

The Waiver agreement specifies federal financial participation in the program for counties that opt in, and requires that the state/county meet maintenance of effort requirements. The federal payments are built off a base period including federal fiscal years 2002 – 2005, and allow for two percent annual inflation. This is beneficial to Alameda County, since Alameda’s foster care caseload was significantly higher during the federal base period than it is at present. The state contribution, which was specified through a series of discussions with the state, is built off the actual amount of state money spent on foster care in state fiscal year 2005 – 2006, and the State Administrative Allocation to the county for 2006 – 2007, grown at two percent a year.

SSA and Probation have discussed the financial aspects of the Waiver and have reached agreement that SSA will pass through to Probation a capped and indexed allocation (derived from agreed-upon baselines) to support both Probation foster care administration and assistance expenditures.

The Waiver language requires that the county maintain its level of commitment to the child welfare system. SSA has been confering with the County Administrator’s Office regarding the financing of this project.

Submitting this plan is the next step in the process of implementing the waiver. However, before actual implementation occurs (projected for April 1, 2007), the Memoranda of Understanding must be finalized between the county and the state and between SSA and the Probation Department. SSA anticipates having MOUs ready for final approval and signature in March.

SELECTION CRITERIA/PROCESS:

Not applicable.

FINANCING:

In SSA’s financial modeling, and in its discussions with the state and the County Administrator’s Office, SSA has assumed that the current county level of investment in child welfare/foster care services would continue throughout the life of the Waiver.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Chief Probation Officer

Attachment: Two original Title IV-E Waiver plans for signature by the President of the Board.

c: County Administrator
   County Auditor-Controller
   County Counsel

Cost and Budget Neutrality

Describe the county’s budget model including start-up and development costs. Describe the strategies for generating savings and/or matching funds needed to be budget neutral. Counties must provide the county fiscal template included in Attachment B.

Alameda County has compared projected baseline expenses to County, State and Federal revenue streams. In order to estimate the amount of “reinvestment capital” likely to be generated to support system change/improvement work, Projected expenditures are based on conservative estimates of salary and benefit cost increases of 6% and a caseload decrease of 1%. The revenues have been agreed upon by Alameda and CDSS in accordance with the Federal - California Terms and Conditions Agreement dated March 31, 2006. The table on the following page summarizes this analysis.

### Alameda County IV-E Waiver Fiscal Analysis - Baseline Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Yr</td>
<td>$47,321,324</td>
<td>$36,037,042</td>
<td>$49,051,409</td>
<td>$132,409,774</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>$51,734,344</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>$52,769,209</td>
<td>$37,528,292</td>
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<td>$139,348,734</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>$37,944,829</td>
<td>$49,051,409</td>
<td>$140,820,649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>$185,639,700</td>
<td>$245,257,043</td>
<td>$689,669,910</td>
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</table>

### Projected Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SSA Administration</th>
<th>Probation Administration</th>
<th>Assistance Payments</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$51,751,180</td>
<td>$18,176,738</td>
<td>$59,049,913</td>
<td>$130,263,185</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$54,320,333</td>
<td>$18,176,738</td>
<td>$59,049,913</td>
<td>$132,486,984</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$56,999,935</td>
<td>$18,176,738</td>
<td>$59,049,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$59,828,108</td>
<td>$18,176,738</td>
<td>$59,049,913</td>
<td>$137,056,026</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>$18,176,738</td>
<td>$58,566,430</td>
<td>$139,556,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>$90,883,690</td>
<td>$297,419,913</td>
<td>$674,046,610</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Alameda County Title IV-E Waiver Information

Alameda County Title IV-E Waiver Dashboard
Updated October 13, 2008

- **Weekly point-in-time caseload by service component**
  - Permanent Youth Connections: 2108
  - Family Maintenance: 718
  - Family Reunification: 438
  - Emergency Response: 100
  - Guardian (Non-Dependent) Home: 181

- **Weekly point-in-time foster care placements**
  - Foster Family Home: 2,172
  - Relative/NREFM: 2,330
  - Foster Family Agency: 1,281
  - Group Home: 105
  - Guardian (Non-Dependent) Home: 280

- **Monthly entries by first placement type (8 days or more)**
  - Foster Family Agency: 29
  - Relative/NREFM: 22
  - Foster Family Home: 17
  - Group Home: 14
  - Guardian (Non-Dependent) Home: 3

- **Weekly point-in-time placements by type (percentage)**
  - Relative/NREFM: 38.6%
  - Foster Family Agency: 30.9%
  - Group Home: 15.3%
  - Guardian (Non-Dependent) Home: 10.6%
  - Foster Family Home: 4.5%

- **Weekly point-in-time placements by type (number)**
  - Relative/NREFM: 917
  - Foster Family Agency: 628
  - Group Home: 280
  - Guardian (Non-Dependent) Home: 219
  - Foster Family Home: 128

*Placement data through 9/22/2008 as of 10/3/2008 CWS/CMS extract

**Goal:**
- Reduce new entries to foster care by 25%
- Increase relative placements as first placement by 50%
- Increase percentage of children in relative placements by 25%
- Decrease the percentage of children in group home placements by 50%

*Children and Families First*
Alameda County Title IV-E Waiver Dashboard
Updated October 13, 2008

Foster care entries by first entry/reentry
(8 days or more)

Goal: Reduce new (first) entries to foster care by 25% over 5 years (to 527 first entries in FY 11/12 based on FY 06/07 baseline; n=702; first entries in FY 07/08, n=646)

Reentry

First Entry

Entries

Exits

Monthly foster care entries and exits
(8 days or more)

Goal: Increase percentage of children who reunify within 12 months to 60% (FY 06/07 = 65.9%)

Reunification within 12 months of first entry to foster care*
(Exit cohort: placement of 8 or more days)

Goal: Increase percentage of children who reunify within 12 months to 60% (FY 06/07 = 65.9%)

Adoption within 24 months*
(Exit cohort: placement of 8 or more days)

Goal: Increase percent of children who exit to adoption within 24 months to 40% (20% increase from FY06/07 baseline of 33.3%)

Guardianship within 24 months*
(Exit cohort: placement of 8 or more days)

Goal: Increase percent who exit within 24 months to 56.4% (20% increase from FY 06/07 baseline of 48.7%)

Reentries into foster care after reunification*
(Quarterly exit cohorts: all children reunified, placements of 8+ days, reentries through 7/11/2008)

Goal: Reduce reentry after reunification by 25%
Alameda County Title IV-E Waiver Dashboard  
Updated October 13, 2008

Goals
To increase the number of:
1. children who can remain safely in their own homes.
2. children and youth placed in least restrictive settings.
3. children who safely and permanently reunify with their families within 12 months.
4. To increase the percent of timely adoptions and guardianships.
5. To improve self-sufficiency and well-being for transition age youth emancipating from foster care. (data currently unavailable)

Through 9/22/2008
Caseload
↓ 3.8% decline in child welfare cases.
↓ 12% decline in PYC service cases.
↓ 4% decline in ER service cases
↑ 12% increase in FM service cases.
↑ 11% increase in FR service cases.

Percentage of children placed:
↑ With relatives increased by 9.3%
↑ In county foster homes increased by 31.1%
↓ In group homes declined by 15.7%
↓ In FFA foster homes declined by 6.5%

Between July 1 2007 and June 30 2008:
Entries & Exits
↓ Foster care exits exceeded entries, resulting in a 6% decline in children placed in out-of-home.
↑ Children entering foster care for the first time declined by 8%.
↑ Children (reunified) exiting within 12 months increased by 9.8% to 75.7%*
↑ The percentage of children adopted within 24 months increased by 3.9% to 36.7%*
↓ Children exiting to guardianship within 24 months decreased by 4.6% to 41.2%*
↑ With relatives as their first placement increased by 58%.

* using a 12-month running average

Children and Families First
The number of minors in probation out-of-home placements has declined by 27.7%.

The number of minors served by the Family Preservation Unit has increased by 64.9%.
Report on Waiver Outcome Goals: Year 1 Progress

Reduce new entries to foster care by 25% over the next five years
Baseline: 702 first entries in FY 06/07
Goal: 527 first entries in FY 11/12
Current Performance: 646 first entries in FY 07/08

Increase relative placements as first placements by 50% over the next five years
Baseline: 131 first placements with relatives in FY 06/07
Goal: 194 first placements with relatives in FY 11/12
Current Performance: 204 first placements with relatives in FY 07/08

Increase percentage of children in relative placements at any given time by 25% over the next five years
Baseline: 38.6% of children in relative placement on July 1, 2007
Goal: 48.3% of children in relative placement by June 30, 2012
Current Performance: 40.8% of children in relative placement on June 30, 2008
Report on Waiver Outcome Goals: Year 1 Progress

Decrease percentage of children in group home placements at any given time by 50% over the next five years
- **Baseline**: 15.3% of children in group home placement on July 1, 2007
- **Goal**: 7.7% of children in group home placement by June 30, 2012
- **Current Performance**: 14.3% of children in group home placement on June 30, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 06/07</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 07/08</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 08/09</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 09/10</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 10/11</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 11/12</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increase percent of children who reunify with their family within 12 months of first entry to 60% over five years
- **Exit Cohort**
  - **Baseline**: 65.9% of children who exited to reunification in FY 06/07 were reunified within 12 months
  - **Current Performance**: 71.4% of children who exited to reunification in FY 07/08 were reunified within 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Exit Cohort Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 06/07</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 07/08</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 08/09</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 09/10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 10/11</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 11/12</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Entry Cohort**
- **Baseline**: 42.6% of children who entered foster care for the first time in FY 06/07 were reunified within 12 months
- **Goal**: 60% of children will exit to reunification within 12 months of entry into foster care
- **Current Performance**: - 1st year entry cohort data for FY 07/08 will not be available until July 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Entry Cohort Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 06/07</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 07/08</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 08/09</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
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<td>FY 09/10</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 10/11</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 11/12</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Report on Waiver Outcome Goals: Year 1 Progress

Decrease children who reenter foster care after reunification by 20% over five years.

**Reentry Within 12 months**
- Baseline: 18.9% of children reunified in FY 06/07 re-entered foster care within 12 months
- Goal: Less than 15.1% of children reunified will re-enter foster care within 12 months
- Current Performance: - Re-entry data for children reunified in FY 07/08 will not be available until July 2009

**All Reentry**
- Baseline: 23.8% of children reunified in FY 06/07 have since re-entered foster care
- Goal: Less than 19% of children reunified will re-enter foster care
- Current Performance: - Re-entry data for children reunified in FY 07/08 will not be available until July 2009

Increase percentage of children who exit to adoption within 24 months by 20% over 5 years

- Baseline: 33.3% of children who were adopted in FY06/07 exited foster care within 24 months
- Goal: 40% of children adopted in FY11/12 will exit foster care within 24 months
- Current Performance: 33.9% of children who were adopted in FY07/08 exited foster care within 24 months

Increase percentage of children who exit to guardianship within 24 months by 20% over 5 years

- Baseline: 48.7% of children who exited to guardianship in FY06/07 exited foster care within 24 months
- Goal: 56.4% of children who exited to guardianship in FY11/12 will exit foster care within 24 months
- Current Performance: 38.9% of children who exited to guardianship in FY07/08 exited foster care within 24 months

Increase the percent of youth who exit foster care with support services by 50% over the next 5 years

- Baseline: to be determined
- Goal: to be determined

Prepared by Jennifer Uldricks, Program Evaluation and Research, 10/13/2008
Casey Family Programs’ mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately prevent the need for—foster care. Established by UPS founder Jim Casey in 1966, the foundation provides direct services and promotes advances in child welfare practice and policy.