

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency



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DATE: May 7, 2019

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Agency Director

SUBJECT: Off-Agenda Report relating to the Out-of-Home Placement Report

BACKGROUND

On February 20, 2019, the Children, Seniors and Families Committee (CSFC) received a report from the DFCS regarding Out-of-Home Placement of foster children and youth. The CSFC requested that the below items be addressed:

- 1) Present a plan addressing communicating via paper versus communicating electronically.
- 2) Discuss the opportunities technological improvements afford in improving performance.
- 3) Provide an update to state changes to congregate care.

1) ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

With the support of Technology Services and Solutions (TSS), DFCS has a plan to automate forms in order to better support staff so they can better serve the people of Santa Clara County (SCC).

DFCSLink is the mobile platform for forms mobilization for the DFCS. The goal of DFCSLink is to offer as many mobile forms as possible, based on DFCS prioritization, during the upcoming fiscal year. The platform began with piloting a mobile Level of Care (LOC) form, which enabled workers to access the form in the field. An upgrade planned for the upcoming fiscal year includes the ability for social workers to obtain signatures from caregivers in the field on a mobile device. The piloting phase is complete and the final process will be presented at the DFCS Operations Meeting to discuss how to proceed with the roll out of the automated form. Roll out of the LOC mobile form is scheduled to be completed by June 1, 2019.

DFCS has a plan to omit the need for paper referral submission. DFCS began by assessing external services referral processes to see which process can be automated. Currently, an automated referral to the Home Visitation Program with the Public Health Department (PHD) is being piloted. The referrals are sent to the PHD on a weekly basis. The initial focus is on

children in out-of-home care. DFCS will conduct an evaluation of the accuracy and completeness of automated referrals versus paper referrals.

In an effort to cut down on the time social workers spend completing paperwork, the Receiving, Assessment, and Intake Center (RAIC) has a plan to digitize the intake process for children and youth. The RAIC utilizes an application called KIDZ. The information entered into the application is automatically populated into any forms created, significantly cutting down on the time spent completing paperwork. In addition, this application allows social workers to exchange information in real time with the statewide database Child Welfare Services/Case Management Services (CWS/CMS); SCC is the only county in the state with this ability. KIDZ is updated quarterly, with the next scheduled update for August 2019. This update will include remapping of placements, enhancement of advanced search features and the addition of the ability to upload a photo of the child through a County mobile phone.

The DFCS is committed to finding new, innovative ways to reevaluate processes, increase utilization of electronic communication and reduce the time from identifying needs in order to implement services. Here are some other ways the DFCS is working with TSS to improve the use of electronic means of communication:

- Providing remote access mobility for social workers by providing VPN access as well as enabling hotspots for up to 400 social workers in the upcoming fiscal year.
- Providing tablet PC's for social workers in the field to evaluate their use in place of a laptop or smartphone while in the field. This will be piloted by a group of social workers to assess impact on work efficiency.

2) TECHNOLOGY AND IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

The DFCS has a collaborative working relationship with TSS. Currently, the DFCS has 14 prioritized projects needing TSS support for addressing during the upcoming fiscal year. The core themes of the projects revolve around providing social workers more resources in the field; streamlining processes, such as generating referrals and resource information; and providing management the resources to collect and analyze data.

Some of the items for prioritization are:

- CWS/CMS mobile application upgrades that will allow social workers to access the official California Department of Social Services (CDSS) case management system through their mobile phones, allowing for the access of case files and the inputting of contacts and case information while they are in the field.
- Development of a platform and process to exchange bidirectional data between the DFCS and the Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) regarding the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment.
- TSS will support the DFCS with the acquisition of an application to track resource families in ways that the CWS/CMS does not have the capability to do. TSS is looking at Binti, which is a program used by over 30 other counties in the State. This program would streamline recruitment efforts along with tracking the RFA application process for each interested foster parent.
- Additionally, the Department will work with the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) to find and evaluate research on how technology might improve performance and child welfare outcomes and how that information might inform practice.

The Department is also working on automating forms in order to improve staff performance and families' access to services. DFCS anticipates that form automation will help in the following ways:

- Provide additional data points to gather information (demographics, needs, linked services) and provide the ability to analyze data not currently available through paper submitted forms;
- Provide more consistency in the way that forms are completed, information is provided to clients and data is collected, which will provide opportunities to analyze data collected and increase form standardization;
- Provide a time stamp to enable the DFCS to evaluate areas of interest on a deeper level, such as length of time to enrollment in services and time engaged in services, which can be applied to assessing outcomes of services.

In May, the DFCS will be going live with ERConnect. This is a new application that helps in automating Emergency Response (ER) unit assignments and displays real-time ER social worker availability for referrals to be assigned efficiently. The application will be able to assess data, such as language needs and referral zip codes, to match with the capability of ER workers, enabling the DFCS to align internal resources with community needs.

3) STATE CHANGES TO CONGREGATE CARE

The Department has ongoing conversations with BHSD, group home and Short Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP) providers to discuss the needs of youth to support them in transitioning to home environments. The DFCS is currently using three group homes in SCC and a few out-of-county as a last resort. The group homes were given extensions to continue operation until June 30, 2019 under Continuum Care Reform (CCR). There are two STRTPs in SCC; both are provisionally licensed (Uplift and Rebekah's).

The DFCS has carefully focused on the specific needs of youth in congregate care and has not moved them to a family setting without a plan for support and permanency to increase the likeliness of success and stability.

The Department Deputy Director conducts weekly Red Team Staffings with staff, supervisors and stakeholders. These meetings take an individualized approach to looking at specific youth's needs with the goal of establishing permanency. In addition, Child and Family Team meetings (CFTs) are held to develop transition/discharge plans from congregate care.

In the past year, the number of youth in group home care has decreased from 88 to 31 youth (April 2018-April 2019). In this same period, the number of youth in STRTPs has ranged from 12 to 21.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to roll out the use of the LOC mobile form for workers to use in the field. Piloting has been completed and the movement is towards operationalizing.
- Continue partnership with TSS with the goal of automating all forms in the DFCS library. (This discussion has already begun and TSS is scheduled to attend DFCS leadership meetings to prioritize forms for automation). This partnership is crucial and the DFCS continues to explore with TSS all technological solutions to support documentation and service referrals moving from paper to electronic formats.
- Collaborate with the PHD on the automated referrals for the Home Visitation Program. This will include an assessment to ensure this new process increases the number of

families linked to the service. (This process is being piloted currently with weekly referrals being sent to the PHD).

- As forms become automated, the DFCS will evaluate how to further leverage data available to assess areas such as the time it takes to enroll in services, length of time a child or family receives services and outcomes. This will be done with the support of Social Services Program Manage I's (SSPMIs), who play a key role in the Department's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts and collaboration with TSS and ORE.
- The ERConnect application will go live in May 2019. The Department is excited to see how this application will support the efforts to align resources with community needs and help to guide future practice in regards to service needs and prevention efforts.
- Continue conversations and collaboration with BHSD. Statewide, Behavioral Health Departments are beginning to assess the early impacts of STRTPs to assess if they are meeting the needs of our most vulnerable foster youth. It will be vital that the DFCS is aware of these outcomes to further assess and determine needs for our youth. The need for ongoing communication with SCC's BHSD is critical to support families.
- DFCS has sponsored a recent Unit Based Team (UBT) that developed a template for workers to complete contacts in the field while information is being gathered. The template will be available to workers on their iPhone for ease of access. The DFCS supports this tool being made available to workers.

c: Chief Board Aides
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