

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

353 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335



DATE: June 21, 2021

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

FROM: Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director *RM*

SUBJECT: **Off-Agenda Report on Placement Disruptions for Children in the County's Care**

At the February 25, 2020 Board of Supervisors (Board) meeting (Item No.9), Supervisor Ellenberg requested that the Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) provide an off-agenda report clarifying out-of-home placement changes and information to offer a better understanding of why placement disruptions occurred.

Background

The mission of DFCS is to keep children safe and families strong. In carrying out this mission, DFCS collaborates with the community to create safe and stable homes for children in care. The family's circle of support plays a significant role in this effort. Made up of parents, siblings, extended family, service providers, resource families, and community members, the circle of support shares in the care of children, provision of services to families, and the establishment of safe environments.

Children are placed in out-of-home care by order of the juvenile dependency court when it is determined that they cannot safely be maintained with their families of origin or when relative placements are not a safe alternative or viable option at the time of the removal following a placement disruption. During the time, a child is in placement, supportive services and resources are provided while their parents address the safety and risk concerns that brought their families to the attention of the child welfare system. The vast majority of children are placed with relatives or a resource family in less than 24 hours; many ¹children never enter the County's receiving center.

Reasons for Placement Disruptions

Children and youth in the County's care experience placement disruptions for various reasons, some of which can positively or negatively impact their permanency.

¹ Data collected from October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 showed that 26 percent of children were placed directly with family, non-relative extended family members, or resource parents, and did not enter into a County receiving center. For further information on children entering into the Keiki Center and scattered sites, please refer to the February 21, 2021 off-agenda report titled, Off-Agenda Report on Length of Stay for Children at the Keiki Center and Scattered Sites

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian
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Placement disruptions that have a positive impact on permanency include reunifying with one or both parents, when transitioning to the home of a family or non-relative extended family member (NREFM), to a home with a lower level of care, or a home with planned permanency of legal guardianship or adoption.

There are also times when a child or youth experiences a placement disruption due to requiring a different home or needs a home with additional supports and services to address their underlying trauma. The reasons for these types of placement disruptions include the need for a higher level of care, a therapeutic setting, or the relocation of caregivers, as well as, the child or youth leave their placement without permission, or the child's behavior negatively impacts the stability of their placement.

The department analyzed placement disruption data from July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The data showed there were 1056 unique children under the County's care during this timeframe. Of those children, 325 unique children, or 30.7%, experienced a placement disruption, and some children experienced multiple placement disruptions, resulting in a total of 441 placement changes.

Of the 441 placement changes, in the last two quarters of the calendar year 2020, the most common reasons for disruption were due to Foster Home/Agency request (30.84%), reunification with a Parent/Guardian (20.86%), placement with a Relative/NREFM (15.19%), the child's behavior (4.54%), and the child left placement without permission (3.17%).

The table below illustrates both the number and reasons for placement disruptions occurring during this period.

Reason for Disruption July-December 2020	Number of Disruptions
Foster Home/Agency Request	136
Reunified with Parent/Guardian	92
Placed with Relative/NREFM	67
Child's Behavior	20
Child left Placement without Permission	14
Complaint on Foster Home	14
Licensed Substitute Care Provider Moved	14
Returned to Care from Juvenile Hall or Medical Facility	12
Higher Level of Care Required	11
Adoption	10
Lower Level of Care Required	8
Guardianship	6
Moved from Emergency Shelter	5

Moved to Non Foster Care Placement	4
Moved to THPP/THP+FC	4
Relative Unable to Care for Children Any Longer	3
Child in Medical Facility	3
Fost/Adopt Placement	3
Child Committed to State Hospital	2
Incarcerated	2
Change of Address of Facility	1
Child Returned Home for Trial Visit	1
Caregiver Changed Agency	1
Intercounty Transfer	1
Parent Rejected Voluntary Family Reunification Services	1
STRTP Closed	1
Child Released Home	1
Child Returned After Leaving Placement Without Permission	1
Caregiver Medical Issues	1
Other Non-CWS Agency Has Jurisdiction	1
Unknown	1

c: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board