



Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies, and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient.

MINUTES

June 6, 2024

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Meeting held in-person for Committee Members and public.

Virtual option via Microsoft Teams for public only

I. Call to order and introductions.

Ed Avila

- Meeting called to order by Committee Vice-Chair, Ed Avila, at 9:10 AM with roll call by DSS Support Staff, Julia Perez.

II. Approve Minutes for April 3, 2024 and June 5, 2024 Agenda.

- Kevin Lisitsin (District 2) motioned; Wilma Hashimoto (District 5) seconded to approve the April 2024 Minutes and June 2024 Agenda.

III. Updates

A. Receive Report From Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas

Dalvin Baker

- Child Welfare Services (CWS) Deputy Director (DD), Dalvin Baker recognized the month of June as Family Reunification Month. A Proclamation went to the Board of Supervisors ("Board") honoring the month for the community. Family Reunification month celebrates the hard work families accomplish in order to reunify with their children. CWS assists with facilitating that process.
- There will be Family Reunification Celebration on Friday, June 21st, 2024 at 3:30 at Hope Plaza. The FCSOC Committee is invited. The Family Reunification Celebration will be renamed the *Welcome Home Celebration*, which is inspired by one of the families that reunified with their children 2 years ago and continue to be in contact with the assigned Social Worker to provide updates about how the children are doing. When this family reunified with their children, they placed a "Welcome Home" banner on their garage, hence where the new name for the celebration comes from.
- Ed asked Dalvin when Family Reunification Month began and who led the celebration. Dalvin said it is based from the Family Reunification Task Area and CWS' first celebration was held in 2016, but Family Reunification Month has been recognized nationally for multiple years. This year's celebration is being led by CWS Division Chief, Shawn Peyvandi.
- Copies of the usual CWS data were provided in advance as well as a new document that demonstrates Quarterly Data Trends. Dalvin asked the Committee if anyone would like to go into further detail regarding the data; no questions were asked by Committee.
- Dalvin highlighted the number of youth in Foster Care placement is trending downwards. A year ago, there were over 2,000 children placed in foster care, but as of April 2024, there were around 1,704 children in a foster care placement. Currently, the number of placements is below 1,700.
- Wilma pointed out an increase in the number of neglect allegations over the span of one month. Dalvin said more data will be pulled to see if there are any trends occurring for the increased amount of neglect allegations.
- A lot of the data is trending downward, so Kevin asked Dalvin what he believes is being done differently. Dalvin believes the Child Welfare Enhancement work and Safety Organized Practices have played a role to provide improvement.
- Kevin would like to further discuss Mod C entries at the next FCSOC Meeting.
- Ed asked how many beds in Mod C are occupied. CWS DD, Cathi Huerta, said Mod C has 6 beds in total and there is not a set number of beds occupied, as the numbers change daily.

IV. New Business

Ed Avila

A. Welcome Recently Appointed FCSOC Member Patricia Scovill

- Patricia comes from Chicago, Illinois and one of her first jobs with the County of Fresno was with County Counsel. She was involved in court process for foster youth and eventually became a CASA Advocate during her retirement.

B. Independent Living Program (ILP) and Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) Program Presentation

DSS CWS ILP Social Workers

Committee was provided with the ILP & NMD Program PowerPoint Presentation in advance. Below are additional key points that were discussed at the FCSOC meeting.

- CWS Division Chief, Kathleen Miller manages ILP, Melissa Chacon is a Supervisor for ILP and Ida Mendoza is the liaison for youth who have been victims of or at-risk for Human Trafficking. The ILP Social Workers present are Katie Wettlaufer, Josh Medina and Sanford Thomas. The ILP Team is located at DSS, but also provides services to youth who are in Probation. DSS provides services to all youth who are involved in the court system for Fresno County.
- Before 2012, when youth reached the age of 18, they were dismissed from the foster care system. Assembly Bill 12 took effect in 2012 to provide Extended Foster Care for youth in similar situations. Extended Foster Care allows youth to stay in care and receive support up until the age of 21. Additionally, Extended Foster Care is voluntary.
- THP + is only for youth who are in Fresno County. If a youth is from a different county, they would have to apply to their county of origin. Fresno County currently contracts with Aspiranet, Inc. for THP+ and FUP services.
- The FUP/Section 8 is open to all youth from all counties.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between DSS and Housing Authority for the City of Fresno for FYI program recently went to the Board that will allow 50 more housing vouchers reserved specifically for youth.
- DSS assists NMDs with providing them baby cribs, mattresses and other necessary furniture. Additionally, women at 7 months of pregnancy could be eligible for Expectant Parent Payments (EPPs). Payment is \$2,700 dollars.
- Ari Martinez (Supervisor Proxy) asked if any of the foster family homes can qualify to become a Section 8 provider, that way NMDs do not have to leave the foster home they are residing at. Josh confirmed that this does occur. Sanford added that this is referred to as Extended Foster Care. Ari requested data on how many youth remain or do not remain with their foster family after aging out.
- Independent Living Program (ILP) provides services to foster and probation youth ages 14-21. The goal of this program is to provide youth with necessary skills and support to obtain self-sufficiency.
- Being married or being in the non-active-duty military excluded youth from being able to be part of Extended Foster Care/AB12, but in 2018 that was no longer the case.
- Ed asked if youth could directly reach out to Aspiranet for housing or are they required to check in with DSS first. Josh said youth would have to report to DSS ILP first if they are inquiring about Extended Foster Care.
- Wilma asked if SWs at the school districts are getting the same information to pass on to the youth. The Department does partner with school SWs to provide training and information regarding these programs. Communication happens regularly.
- Pamela Hancock (District 5) expressed that while these services are out there, some youth are not understanding and taking advantage of the services that are being offered to them.
- Supervisor Quintero asked how many youth are enrolled in AB12. Kathleen said about 248 DSS youth (aged 18-21) are currently enrolled. This number doesn't include Out-of-County youth.
- The ILP team encouraged the Committee to reach out with any further questions, as the ILP program is very complex.
- On top of provide necessary services, the ILP team also likes to have fun by hosting events and parties for youth to socialize and gain a sense of community.

V. Subcommittee Update

A. Children's Mental Health

Kevin Lisitsin

- Dragonfly Program data suggests an increase in Substance Abuse cases and are currently gathering information as to why that is and how to decrease those rates.

B. Education

Pamela Hancock

- Education Subcommittee is working on creating *CalKIDS* accounts for High School Senior youth.
- There is continued work on the Foster Care Communication Process, which will be launched on August 1st.
- 99 out of 134 FAFSA applications have been completed for youth.
- On May 10th there was a celebration for middle and high school students who completed a Leadership Program through the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools.

VI. Public Comments

- Lorraine Ramirez, SEIU Representative and Social Worker, expressed that mental health services is not an ongoing service that is provided at Mod C. Additionally, she believes Mod C lacks structure and does not present responsibilities to youth. She suggests Mod C should become a facility that teaches youth life skills to learn responsibility.

VII. Announcements

- Wilma appreciated the support that was received for the *Splash Day* event. A total of 896 children in foster care and their resource parents attended the event.

VIII. Adjourn

- Next meeting will be held Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 9:00am in-person for Committee members and the public. Virtual option via Microsoft Teams, for members of the public only. Please note: FCSOC meetings require in-person attendance in order to participate. Virtual option is view-only. Meeting adjourned by Ed at 10:48 AM.

Committee Attendance

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sal Quintero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ari Martinez (Proxy)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Karina Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Lisitsin	<input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Thomas	<input type="checkbox"/> Rosemary Alanis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Hancock
Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/> Maisie Young	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patti Scovill	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Avila
Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Kashian	Vacant	Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wilma Hashimoto

* Marked Boxes Indicate Committee Member Attended

Attending Staff and Guests

In Person: Dalvin Baker, Cathi Huerta, Julia Perez, J’Lyne Montejano, Taylor Chavez, Hillary Bolger, Kathleen Miller, Melissa Chacon, Ida Mendoza, Katie Wettlaufer, Josh Medina, Sanford Thomas, Sing Syrisack, Amina Flores Becker, Alexandria Hernandez, Brian Van Anne, Rocky Vang, Chad Valorosi, Lorraine Ramirez