

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: Shining a Light on Foster Care
Report Date: May 20, 2014
Response by: Marin County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: **F1, F2.**
- We disagree wholly or *partially* with the findings numbered: **F3.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered **1, 2, 3** have been implemented.

Date: August 5, 2014

Signed: _____

Number of pages attached: 3

Marin County Board of Supervisors

Response to Findings and Recommendations from Grand Jury Report "Shining a Light on Foster Care"

F1: The Marin County Department of Health and Human Services annual budget for foster care recruitment is not adequate.

Response: Agree.

F2: Communication between social workers and foster parents needs improvement.

Response: Agree.

F3: Foster children are not receiving consistent therapy from licensed clinical psychologists or therapists.

Response: Partially Disagree.

As of July 2013, all foster children receive a mental health screening that is conducted by a licensed psychologist or therapist. Children with identified mental health needs are referred to Children's Mental Health for further assessment by a licensed mental health clinician and linkage to an appropriate provider. Over 70% of the children currently receiving mental health services are being served by a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or a Licensed Clinical Psychologist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2013-2014 Marin County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

R1: Marin County Department of Health and Human Services allocates additional funds for the recruitment of foster parents.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) allocates \$5,000 for foster parent recruitment (advertising, etc.), HHS has earmarked additional \$150,000 funds, received in July 2014 from Seneca Family of Agencies wraparound reinvestment funds, to work in partnership with local community based organizations to target recruitment of bi-lingual Spanish speaking foster families. Discussions are currently underway with two agencies. Additional resources have also been allocated to expand use of technology such as Google and Facebook as a means to enhance foster parent recruitment and other recruitment strategies are being explored. Full implementation will take place by fall 2014. Overall, every California county struggles with foster care recruiting and with finding enough foster

homes to fill their needs. Marin County does have a dedicated recruiter position and would propose to increase that part time position by an additional one day per week. Recruitment of foster parents is a challenge and additional funds would not necessarily garner better results in recruiting foster parents.

R2: The Marin Children and Family Services staff improves its communication with foster parents by developing a protocol to return calls within 24 hours.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented.

The existing protocol already requires social workers to return calls to foster parents within 24 hours of receiving them. Health and Human Services (HHS) management has reviewed the existing protocol and re-issued to staff on June 10th. Copies of the protocol will be shared with the Foster Parent Association so that they can be included in an upcoming edition of the Foster Parent Newsletter.

HHS management also meets quarterly with the Foster Parent Association to provide agency updates and receive feedback from Association members. In addition, on July 9th, Children and Family Services in conjunction with the Marin Foster Parents Association and the College of Marin's Foster and Kinship Care Education Program offered training on "What's New at Children and Family Services". This informational training is available free of charge to all foster parents and relative caregivers.

R3: Marin County Department of Health and Human Services budget sufficient funds to provide foster children with therapy by licensed clinical psychologists or therapists rather than relying predominately on interns.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented.

Sufficient funds are budgeted to provide foster children with mandated therapy by licensed clinical psychologists or therapists. One hundred percent of children in Foster care have access to Mental Health Services. Not all of the services are paid out of the County budget as some clients have private insurance, Medi-Cal, EPSDT, etc. that cover the cost of services. Hence, there is not a way to quantify the value of the services provided at this time. Nevertheless, Health and Human Services (HHS) has two full-time dedicated Licensed Mental Health Practitioners that work with children and adults to connect them to services from private providers and community based organizations.

As of July 2013, Children and Family Services and Children's Mental Health must work in collaboration to ensure that foster children receive a mental health screening and assessment. The screening and assessment

are conducted within the first 30 days of placement and children are then linked to the appropriate level of mental health services. Services are tailored to the strengths and needs of each child and family and are often overseen by a child and family team. The team includes licensed practitioners as well as family and ancillary individuals who are working with them toward their mental health goals and their successful transition out of the child welfare system. Children and Family Services and Children's Mental Health staff meet regularly to ensure that the mental health needs of the minors are being met.