



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/7/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services and Probation

Staff Name and Phone Number: Angela Struckmann (707) 565-5800, Brad Michnevich (707) 565-6310, Regina de Melo (707) 565-4346

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Approval of the Child Welfare System Improvement Plan and Funding for Services for Foster Youth and Families Involved in Child Welfare Services

Recommended Action:

- A) Approve the Sonoma County Child Welfare Services 2024-2029 Community Self-Assessment and System Improvement Plan.
 - i) Authorize the Director of the Human Services Department to sign the Child and Family Services Review Signature Sheet on behalf of the Board of Supervisors to approve the 2024-2029 System Improvement Plan.
- B) Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Director of the Human Services Department to:
 - i) Execute a contractual agreement with the California Department of Social Services for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 for the provision of child care services through the Alternative Payment Child Care Program.
 - ii) Execute future amendments to the contract with the California Department of Social Services for changes to revenue that do not significantly alter program requirements.
- C) Accept the findings from the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Child Care Program Self-Evaluation.
- D) Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Director of the Human Services Department to accept funding as follows:
 - i) \$159,509 in new funding as well as additional future funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program for Transitional Age Foster Youth; and
 - ii) \$1,026,050 in new funding as well as additional future funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for the Transitional Housing Program for Transitional Age Foster Youth.

Executive Summary:

Family, Youth and Children's Services and Juvenile Probation Services have partnered to complete an intensive, community-driven assessment and strategic plan to address contributing factors to child abuse and improve the child welfare and juvenile probation service systems of care in Sonoma County. The resulting System Improvement Plan for the period of February 2024-February 2029 documents several key goals for improved service delivery as well as strategies to achieve them. Additionally, Human Services needs Board of Supervisors approval of two recurring allocations to continue foster youth housing services and authorization for the

Director of the Human Services Department to approve an upcoming contract for renewal of funding to provide child care subsidies to families with child welfare cases.

Discussion:

Approval of the System Improvement Plan

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) requires the Human Services Department (HSD), Division of Family, Youth and Children's Services (FYC) and Juvenile Probation (JP) Services to complete a County Self-Assessment (CSA) and System Improvement Plan (SIP) every five years. The CSA and SIP require Board approval and authorization for the Director of HSD to sign the Child and Family Services Review Signature Sheet on their behalf.

The CSA examines the full array of child welfare and probation programs from child abuse prevention through the continuum of care for foster youth. FYC and JP division staff use this community data, internal metrics of performance and feedback from various forums for stakeholder input to develop the SIP. The SIP outlines strategies and activities to improve foster youth outcomes in identified performance areas.

Community stakeholders and staff from both departments were fully engaged in the CSA and SIP process. FYC and JP staff conducted two large stakeholder community meetings, conducted a peer review in spring 2023, and hosted 24 focus groups from May through October 2023. Stakeholders included staff from the CDSS, Child Welfare and Probation services, former and current foster youth, parents, resource families, public and private agencies, community-based organizations, Indian Child Welfare Act experts representing local Native American tribes, and other partners in child abuse prevention work. A variety of data was also reviewed as part of this planning process. In addition to CDSS-developed metrics, FYC staff analyzed case review and reporting data on potential areas of inequities in practice and outcomes for foster youth.

Many strengths and some challenges in FYC services were identified in the CSA. Findings demonstrated consistently good outcomes in many performance categories, including the target goal for children residing in as few different homes as possible during their time in foster care. This was one of the priority areas from the prior five-year SIP. Areas of challenge included supporting foster youth to secure permanent homes in a timely manner, availability of timely services, lack of sufficient Spanish-speaking bilingual services, the need to develop a clear concurrent planning process, and the need for workforce capacity building related to staff vacancies and retention. The updated SIP is comprised of strategies to improve in these areas. Also, as part of this work, FYC has prioritized addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and is creating a separate strategic plan to address areas needing improvement.

Juvenile Probation similarly showed consistently positive outcomes in several federal measures, including placement stability and reunification rates for children in care between 12-23 months and no instances of youth re-entering foster care following reunification. Additionally, JP continues to see a significant reduction of delinquency cases entering the foster care system as well as several successful placements with resource families. Based on findings from the County Self-Assessment, JP developed a goal to improve staff, caregiver, and foster provider training.

Child Care

FYC's Alternative Payment Program (APP) offers twenty-four months of child care subsidies to all eligible families involved with Child Welfare Services. These subsidies are funded through a contract with Alternative

Payment Child Care. Funding for the APP contract has been received annually since 1974.

Child care subsidies are provided to child welfare clients with an active family maintenance or family reunification case and who need child care in order to meet the requirements of their case plan goals. CDSS requires a resolution from the Board indicating that the Director of HSD has the authority to sign the contract for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026. While the new contract amount is not yet communicated, the contract will be received later this fiscal year and CDSS has asked that the resolution be done in advance.

Summary of FY 2023-2024 Child Care Program Self-Evaluation Review

In order to comply with contractual requirements with CDSS for the child care program, the Board must be made aware of program goals as well as formal program reviews, results, and corrective actions taken. Beyond providing financial assistance for child care, the program has a goal of increasing parental understanding of and involvement in a child's child care experience by providing resources about child care and childhood development to parents and resource families. HSD partners with the Community Child Care Council (4Cs) to provide individualized education and assistance to help parents and caregivers find quality child care that meets their specific family needs regarding location, hours, and program type.

Another goal of the APP is to build effective community partnerships to help families transition to long-term subsidized child care. FYC staff work collaboratively with other child care agencies to raise awareness of the needs of families involved with child welfare. FYC staff add families to the Centralized Eligibility List (a waiting list for all state and federally funded child care programs in Sonoma County) and provide information and referrals to help families access long-term affordable child care. When other child care agencies enroll families involved with child welfare from the Centralized Eligibility List, families transition to longer term subsidy programs that help them maintain stability in their child care arrangements for as long as they need the child care.

Program staff complete an annual self-evaluation using CDSS developed tools to monitor program and fiscal operations. A self-evaluation team of six HSD program and fiscal leadership staff participated in the annual review in spring 2024.

The team reviewed files for thirteen children, representing 72% of the children who received services for the month of November 2023. Applicable sections of the Program Integrity and Improvement Review Guide (Revised October 2023) were used for each file review to ensure compliance with established policy and procedures and state and federal regulations. A parent survey was also completed. Areas of review included attendance, completion of required application documents, Notice of Action forms, correspondence with families, ensuring each family file has current emergency information, and parent satisfaction with program services.

Of the 33 items reviewed, there was compliance on 31 items and two required a corrective action. The corrective action for both items were completed and resolved by May 30, 2024. Overall, parents were happy with the program and available child care and felt the support helped their children thrive socially.

Youth Housing

HSD requests Board adoption of a resolution to accept additional funding from the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). This funding will maintain existing housing services for exiting and former foster youth. This multi-year funding from two allocations totals \$1,185,559 and must be expended by June

30, 2027.

The Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program (HNMP) allocation is \$159,509 and will continue to be used to provide direct financial assistance for exiting and former foster youth who are seeking housing. HSD will contract with Interfaith Shelter Network to provide former foster youth with housing location and case management services, as well as direct financial assistance in order to overcome barriers and find safe and stable housing. Previous allocations are sufficient to fund the program through June 2025; this new allocation will be utilized to continue the program through FY 2025-2026.

The Transitional Housing Program (THP) allocation is \$1,026,050 and will continue to be provided to TLC Child & Family Services (TLC) to manage the Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus) with a contract of \$1,000,000 annually. Through this contracted service, approximately 21 former foster youth are able to live in transitional housing for up to three years while being supported by TLC through case management, life skills development, building work force skills and assistance with securing permanent housing at program exit. This allocation will also continue to partially fund the FYC Program Planning and Evaluation Analyst position currently supporting all youth housing programs. Like the HNMP program, prior THP allocations are sufficient to continue funding the THP-Plus program through June 2025; this new allocation will be utilized to continue the program through FY 2025-2026.

HCD has also requested that the Board authorize the Director of HSD to accept additional funding through these allocations, in the event that it becomes available.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

03-26-2024: Adopted a resolution authorizing the Director of HSD to execute an agreement with CDSS to receive \$1,321,646 for the local administration of subsidized child care services through the APP and execute future amendments to the contract with CDSS.

01-30-2024: Adopted a resolution authorizing the Director of HSD to apply for and accept funding for THP and HNMP.

01-24-2023: Adopted resolutions authorizing the Director of HSD to execute contracts and subsequent amendments for the APP and authorizing the Director of HSD to apply for and accept new funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for THP and HNMP.

11-08-2022: Accepted the FY 2021-2022 Child Care Program Self-Evaluation for the Child Welfare Services Alternative Payment Contract.

01-25-2022: Adopted resolutions authorizing the Director of HSD to apply for and accept additional allocations for THP and HNMP.

11-02-2021: Adopted a resolution authorizing the Director of HSD to execute an agreement with CDSS to receive funding and execute future amendments to the contract with CDSS.

09-22-2020: Adopted a resolution authorizing the Director of HSD to accept \$168,800 in funding for the THP and sign the allocation acceptance form from the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

09-01-2020: Adopted a resolution authorizing the Director of HSD to execute an agreement with the California Department of Education to receive up to \$910,489 for the local administration of subsidized child care services and to execute future amendments for changes to revenue.

04-21-2020: Adopted resolutions authorizing the Director of HSD to accept new funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for THP and HNMP.

03-10-2020: Approved the Sonoma County 2019-2024 Child Welfare Services SIP.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY24-25 Adopted	FY25-26 Projected	FY26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$1,185,559	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$1,185,559	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal		\$1,185,559	
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$1,185,559	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

\$159,509 in funding for HNMP and \$1,026,050 in funding for THP-Plus totals \$1,185,559 in new funding that will be available upon execution of the award, through 6/30/2027. HSD expects to expend these funds starting July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, and will be included in the HSD budget for FY 2025-2026.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Agenda Date: 1/7/2025

Attachments:

- 1) Resolution for the Alternative Payment Program
- 2) Resolution for Housing Allocations
- 3) Allocation Acceptance Forms for Housing
- 4) SIP 2024-2029 Summary
- 5) 2024-2029 System Improvement Plan

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None