



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/10/2020

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

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

Staff Name and Phone Number: Nick Honey, 565-4343 & Vanessa Fuchs, 565-6258

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Sonoma County 2019 - 2024 Child Welfare Services System Improvement Plan

Recommended Action:

1. Approve the Sonoma County Child Welfare Services 2019-2024 System Improvement Plan. (Majority Vote)
2. Authorize the Human Services Department Director to sign the Child and Family Services Review Signature Sheet on behalf of the Board. (Majority Vote)
3. Authorize submission to the California Department of Social Services. (Majority Vote)

Executive Summary:

In accordance with state law (AB 636), the Human Services and Probation Departments are required to develop a System Improvement Plan (SIP) to address areas of need in child welfare that was identified in the 2018 County Self-Assessment.

The SIP and the County Self-Assessment constitute the Child and Family Services Review; a system focused on measuring outcomes in safety, permanency, and well-being for victims of child abuse, some of whom have been removed from their families, and for juvenile offenders who require out-of-home placement. The Sonoma County 2018 Self-Assessment report was completed and submitted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) as required on September 14, 2018. The findings and themes that emerged from the Self-Assessment process served as the foundation for the SIP. The Plan will act as the County's roadmap for system improvements over the next 5 years.

Since the County Self-Assessment was completed, the Human Services and Probation Departments have been planning and identifying strategies to address the underperforming outcome areas that emerged during the Self-Assessment and are working with CDSS to finalize and approve the new SIP.

In December 2019, CDSS pre-approved Sonoma County's SIP pending the Board of Supervisors approval.

. The references to staffing model changes in the attached document refer to the way that the programs are organized and structured in terms of staffing assignments and do not refer to any anticipated increased staffing needs at the CPS Social Worker level. There is a connection between the SIP and some of the staff needed in other classifications.

Discussion:

As part of the Child Welfare Services SIP process, the Human Services and Probation Departments led multiple activities to engage and elicit feedback from community stakeholders, partners and families regarding strengths and weaknesses of the child welfare system, and to identify shared solutions to address areas in need of improvement. The Departments conducted community stakeholder meetings in February and May 2018, performed a peer review of child welfare and probation cases the week of April 10, 2018, and hosted 18 focus groups throughout April and May 2018 to inform the next 5-year cycle of the SIP. There were a wide variety of child welfare and probation stakeholders who participated in the County Self-Assessment process, including CDSS, child welfare and probation staff, former and current foster youth, parents, resource families, public and private agencies, community-based organizations, Indian Child Welfare experts representing local Native American tribes, and prevention partners.

The peer review provided an opportunity for Sonoma County social workers and probation officers to thoroughly explore specific outcomes or practice areas through in-depth peer interviews about randomly selected cases. Child welfare focused on the federal outcome measure for Placement Stability and Probation focused on the outcome measure for Permanency in 12 Months.

The County Self-Assessment identified many strengths of Sonoma County child welfare practice in the areas of child welfare and juvenile probation. Sonoma County showed consistently good outcomes in many performance categories; most notably for child welfare was that the number of children placed in group homes had been cut at least in half since 2012, and the number of children placed at Valley of the Moon Children's Home had significantly decreased since 2016. In addition, the rates of placing siblings together had increased. The County Self-Assessment also highlighted areas where the County remained below the state and national targets for reunifying children and families within 12 months, preventing the recurrence of maltreatment of children in their homes, and the rate of placement moves while children are in foster care. In addition, there were eleven overarching themes identified in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being for child welfare during the County Self-Assessment. The themes included the need for additional placement resources; the need for additional Spanish-speaking bilingual services; the need to enhance collaboration with various agency partners; and the need for workforce capacity building relating to staff vacancies.

The Probation Department similarly showed consistently positive outcomes in several federal measures, including placement stability and reunification rates for children in care between 12-23 months, and had minimal instances of youth re-entering foster care following reunification. Additionally, over the fiscal year 2017-2018, the Probation Department saw a significant reduction in delinquency cases entering the foster care system, as well as the first successful placement with a resource family. Nevertheless, there were areas that could benefit from improvement, most prominently reunification of youth with their families within a specified 12-month period. Through the County Self-Assessment process, eight high level themes emerged, which included the need for specialized placement options; the need to implement more robust family-centered practices; and the need to address gaps in behavioral health services.

The 2019-2024 SIP establishes 5-year improvement goals for Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation services, and outlines strategies and timeframes to improve in the underperforming outcome areas specified in the 2018 Self-Assessment. The Human Services Department focus areas for the 2019-2024 SIP are to reduce the number of placement moves of children in foster care, to improve the rate of achieving permanency for children while they have been in care between 12-23 months, and to improve workforce capacity and CPS

Social Worker retention. The Probation Department’s focus area will be to improve permanency rates for youth in care during the initial 12 months of entering the foster care system. Even though final approval has not yet been given, both the Human Services and Probation Departments have begun to address the identified service areas that need improvement.

Prior Board Actions:

- February 2014 - Board approved the 2014 - 2019 Sonoma County System Improvement Plan.
- August 2013 - Board approved 2013 Sonoma County Self-Assessment of Child Welfare Services.
- September 2010 - Board approved 2010-2013 Sonoma County System Improvement Plan.
- September 2007 - Board approved 2007-2010 Sonoma County System Improvement Plan.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY 21-22 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	0	0	0
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	0	0	0

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The references to staffing model refer to the way that the programs are organized and structured in terms of staffing assignments and do not refer to any anticipated increased staffing needs at the main CPS Social Worker level. However, there is a connection between the SIP and some positions to be requested as part of a future Board item. Specifically, this refers to the two Social Worker III positions, which in part are intended to address the need to increase the Family, Youth and Children workforce capacity.

This strategy includes the need to increase the number of bilingual staff that are qualified to become CPS Social Workers in order to better serve the Spanish-speaking client population. The intention is to recruit at this level and “grow our own” bilingual CPS Social Workers.

Also, the need for an additional CPS Supervisor will help with the structure of the staffing model in Emergency Response in that it will enable the CPS Social Workers in this program to receive sufficient oversight and supervision.

Staffing Impacts:

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- 2019-2024 Sonoma County System Improvement Plan Executive Summary
- Child and Family Services Review Signature Sheet
- 2019-2024 Child Welfare System Improvement Plan Diagram

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

- 2019-2024 Sonoma County System Improvement Plan
- 2018 Sonoma County Self-Assessment of Child Welfare Services