

Countywide Services Agency

Department of
Health and Human Services

Child Protective Services

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Consultant's report to Board of Supervisors: CPS is on track with significant improvements

SACRAMENTO – Sacramento County Child Protective Services is on track and focused to improve safety, increase permanency, and demonstrate greater accountability, according to a consultant with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) who delivered his final report on CPS improvements to the county Board of Supervisors on Tuesday morning.

In June 2009, the county contracted with the CWLA to help CPS implement improvements recommended by the 2008-2009 Grand Jury and 2009 MGT of America, Inc. reports. Priorities included enhancing practices to keep children safe and improving the use of the risk and safety assessment tool.

Calling his message a positive one, Andrew Reitz, Ph.D, discussed the agency's progress and offered a data-based review of the latest performance outcomes.

"All the pieces are in place to ensure CPS' continued progress," Reitz said. "And it was accomplished in spite of the devastating loss of over one-third of the agency's personnel."

He cautioned, however, that sustainable systemic change takes 5-7 years before change becomes embedded into everyday practice.

Reitz's report highlighted numerous improvements in the last year including:

- Significant structural improvements related to child safety, including timely response to immediate referrals (the most serious reports that CPS handles) which improved from

82.5 percent in 2008 to 96.3 percent in 2010. CPS' performance has been better than the state average for a year and a half.

- Significant improvement in timely completion of the safety assessment tool. Performance improved from 26.3 percent in 2008 to 79.1 percent in 2010. Sacramento County performs better on this measure than five comparison counties and has surpassed the state average since December 2008.
- Significant increases in the use of Team Decision Making, a tool which brings together extended family members, foster families, social workers, and service providers to create a safety plan for children who have been or are at risk of being removed from a home. As of May 2010, CPS had completed 30 percent more TDM meetings than it had in 2008.

Reitz noted that CPS still had work to do in the performance outcome of children returning to foster care after being reunified, and said he was concerned with staff feeling overwhelmed by both caseloads and new practice changes.

Reitz's written report to the Board of Supervisors will be available in July.

Although the CWLA contract has ended, CPS is receiving ongoing assistance on improvement efforts from Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest foundation dedicated to improving the lives of children in foster care. Assistance is being offered at no cost as part of Casey's philanthropic mission.

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