California - Child and Family Services Review
Peer Quality Case Review
County of San Diego

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"True measurement of success will be when California's communities see and treat foster children as if they were their own. The day we prevail in our mission will be the day that we monitor the health, education, well-being and overall success of foster children the same way that we do for our own children."
-Vision for California's Child Welfare System

California's Child and Family Services Review Peer Quality Case Review	
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Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Health and Human Services Agency – Child Welfare Services
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Acknowledgements

Background

In January 2004, the State began the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). The State identified four child welfare outcomes and seven systemic factors for each county to use to assess the effectiveness of its child welfare system. These outcomes are: safety, permanency and stability, family relationships and connections, and well-being. Associated with each of these outcomes are indicators to measure the County's performance. The systemic factors are: Relevant Management Information System, Case Review System, Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention, Quality Assurance System, Service Array, Staff/Provider training, and Agency Collaborations.

The first step in the C-CFSR process was for each county to conduct a County Self-Assessment (CSA) of its child welfare system strengths and areas of need. On June 30, 2004, San Diego County completed its CSA.

The second step in the C-CFSR process was for each county to develop a System Improvement Plan (SIP). The State directed each County to develop strategies for improvement on a few selected outcomes and systemic factors identified as needing improvement in the CSA. On September 30, 2004, San Diego County submitted its SIP.

The CSA and SIP process indicated that the County needed to focus on the following outcome indicators and systemic factors:

Outcome Indicators

- Safety: The rate of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care
- Permanency and Stability: The length of time to exit foster care to reunification
- Family Relationships and Community Connections: The number of siblings placed together in foster care

Systemic Factors

- Fairness and Equity: Understand and develop strategies that address overrepresentation of certain ethnic and cultural groups in the child welfare system, which is a nationwide problem.

- Quality Assurance System: Evaluate current social work practices and provide technical assistance to social work staff that will improve accountability and promote continuous improvement.

The third step in this process was for each county to conduct a Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR). The PQCR is an intensive examination of a selected social work/probation officer practice area aimed at improving the provision of child welfare services. Social Work/Juvenile Probation staff have an opportunity to freely and honestly provide insight and practice wisdom for improving the provision of child welfare services. Cases are selected for review, and staff are interviewed on the selected cases. On April 15, 2005, San Diego County completed its PQCR.

The first section of this report describes the PQCR process in San Diego County. The second section of this report provides a summary of the data collected from the PQCR. The third section of this report provides a summary of the practices reported to contribute to the County's efforts to provide effective child welfare services. The last section of this report provides final observations and recommendations from the PQCR process.

I.   PQCR METHODOLOGY

<u>Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation</u>
In San Diego County, Child Welfare Services (CWS) is the primary County entity responsible for providing child welfare services to families experiencing child abuse and neglect. Juvenile Probation is the department responsible for providing child welfare services to children involved in the County's juvenile delinquency system.

Because CWS and Juvenile Probation play an important role in providing child welfare services to children and families, the PQCR was a concurrent process. CWS and Juvenile Probation worked together in the planning, facilitating and report writing of the PQCR.

<u>Area of Focus</u>
The PQCR is designed to review a specific area of focus of the County's social work and probation practice. The goal is to identify strengths, areas of need and make recommendations for improvement. CWS and Juvenile Probation conducted the PQCR as a concurrent process with different areas of focus.

CWS: The area of focus for CWS was the outcome indicator, length of time to exit foster care to reunification. This area of focus was chosen because actual social work practice and its impact on children and families could be assessed. This area of focus parallels the County's focus in its System Improvement Plan, and thus, helps guide the County's improvement efforts.

Juvenile Probation: The area of focus for Juvenile Probation was the outcome indicator, Probation Officer visits with children in foster care and their parents. This area of focus was chosen because of the connection between continued contact with children and their parents, and the effect it has on the children's success in treatment and family reunification. This area of focus was chosen to review Juvenile Probation's policies or practices that create challenges or barriers to meeting the State's mandate on Probation Officer visits with children and their parents.

<u>Sample Selection</u>
The purpose of the PQCR is to obtain qualitative information about the area of focus. Therefore, it was not necessary that the County's entire child welfare caseload be reviewed, nor that the cases selected represent a statistically valid sample. The sample selection for the County's PQCR was limited to the cases that fell within the area of focus resulting in a different sample selection for CWS and Juvenile Probation.

CWS: The CWS cases selected for the PQCR were from the County's family reunification caseload in January 2004 through March 2005. There were a total of 929 cases, of which 73 cases were randomly selected. The objective was to gather information from these cases on social work

practices, CWS policy and procedures, and obstacles present in family reunification cases that did and did not reunify timely.

Timely reunification is defined as those children who entered foster care for the first time, stayed at least five days and reunified within 12 months. After the PQCR was completed, 72 of the 73 cases selected had been reviewed. One case was removed from the sample because an emergency arose.

Juvenile Probation: The Juvenile Probation cases selected for the PQCR were from the County's Juvenile Probation foster care caseload in March 2005. There were 150 cases, of which 15 cases were randomly selected for the PQCR. The objective was to gather information from these cases on probation officer policies, practices and obstacles in visiting children and parents.

<u>Review Process</u>
The PQCR involves conducting interviews to gather information on the areas of focus. The interviews are conducted individually or as focus groups. After the completion of the interviews and the focus groups, the information is gathered, analyzed and summarized to write the PQCR report. CWS and Juvenile Probation had concurrent but separate review processes. Neither CWS nor Juvenile Probation observed any unique county issues during the PQCR process.

CWS: <u>Logistics</u>
                        CWS had a strong commitment to ensuring the PQCR process was a positive experience for the social workers, supervisors and court officers participating. Several steps were taken to educate all of the participants and ease any concerns they may have had about the PQCR process. The steps were as follows:

- A PQCR Orientation was provided to all of the social workers and supervisors.
- The social worker interviews were located in three regions of the County to make it as accessible as possible.
- The supervisors' focus groups were located in two regions of the County to make it accessible.
- The court officers submitted their interview tools via e-mail.

                        <u>PQCR Team</u>
                        The PQCR Team conducted the actual interviews and focus groups. The members of the PQCR Team are listed in the acknowledgment section of this report. The CWS PQCR Team was composed of San Diego County staff, staff from Contra Costa, Los Angeles and Orange counties, the California Department of Social Services, and the Public Child Welfare Training Academy (PCWTA).

The PQCR Team was divided into six interview teams, two teams for each social worker interview location. Neither the PCWTA nor the CDSS were members of the social worker interview teams. There was one interview team for the supervisors' focus groups. The CDSS was a member of this team. The PCWTA facilitated the training orientations for the PQCR Team.

Interviews and Focus Groups
A total of 53 social workers, 22 supervisors and seven court officers were interviewed. Court officers submitted their interview tools via e-mail by April 12, 2005. Social worker interviews and supervisors' focus groups were conducted from April 12, 2005 through April 14, 2005. Four social worker interviews and at least one supervisor focus group were held each day.

Juvenile Probation: Logistics
Juvenile Probation did not share the same logistics concerns CWS did because its program has only one location. All of the interviews were conducted at the probation officers and supervisor office.

Juvenile Probation PQCR Team
The Juvenile Probation PQCR Team was composed of San Diego County staff, staff from Contra Costa, and Imperial counties, California Department of Social Services, and the PCWTA.

The Juvenile Probation PQCR Team was divided into two interview teams. The CDSS was a member of one team. The PCWTA facilitated the training orientations for the PQCR Team.

Interviews
A total of seven Probation Officers and one Probation Officer Supervisor were interviewed. The interviews were conducted from April 12, 2005 through April 14, 2005. Five interviews were conducted each day. The Probation Officers were interviewed twice and the Probation Officer Supervisor was interviewed once.

Interview Tools
The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provided sample tools to CWS and Juvenile Probation to be used during the PQCR interviews. These tools were modified as detailed below.

CWS: CWS used five PQCR tools (see Appendix A), which were modified from the CDSS version. The tools used were:

1. Case Review Tool (CRT): CWS had two Case Review Tools. One was the CDSS version of the CRT, which the CWS Co-Chairs

completed using CWS/CMS, and the other version was generated and completed by the Children's Research Center[1]. Both of the CRTs were designed to give the PQCR interviewers background information about the case (e.g. ethnicity, sibling information, age, primary language, type of allegation, perpetrator, case plan, placement, etc.).

CWS modified the CDSS version of the CRT tool by narrowing the questions to information that could be captured from CWS/CMS. The questions that pertained to the Transitional Independent Living Plan were deleted from the CDSS version. Questions from the following areas were also deleted and included in the social worker interview tool:

- Timeliness in response to investigating referrals
- Recurrence of abuse and neglect
- In-home services
- Assessments of needs and services
- Case plan goal
- Family involvement in the case planning
- Placement stability
- Family relationships and community connections (as it pertained to siblings placed together and visitation)

2. Social Worker Interview Tool: This tool was designed to capture information about social work practices that contribute to family reunification. It was used for all of the social worker interviews and completed by the PQCR Team during the interviews.

CWS modified the CDSS version of this tool by adding questions about the following:

- Housing
- Income
- Transportation
- Employment
- In-home services if there was a previous voluntary case
- Assessment of needs and services for the child and parent
- Family involvement in case planning
- Placement stability
- Family relationships and community connections
- Visitation

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[1] This tool is not included in the Appendix.

Questions that pertained to permanency planning, school stability, and the independent living plan were deleted because these either were not pertinent to the area of focus or fell into one of the topics listed above.

3. Supervisor Focus Group Tool: This tool was designed to capture social work practice and supervisory techniques that contribute to family reunification. It was used with all of the supervisors that participated in the supervisors' focus groups and completed by the PQCR Team during the focus groups.

   CWS modified the CDSS version of this tool by deleting sections that did not pertain to family reunification (e.g. County's Self-Assessment; Emergency Response; etc…). The tool was modified to include the following topics deemed important to understanding social work practice in family reunification cases.

   - CWS programs that contribute to timely family reunification
   - Challenges and barriers in family reunification cases
   - Social work practices that lead to timely reunification
   - Concurrent planning and family reunification
   - Supervisory techniques that help social work staff assess, plan and monitor family reunification cases
   - Training needs to accomplish timely family reunification

4. Court Officer Interview Tool: This tool was designed to capture information about social work and court practices that impact family reunification. The court officers completed this tool via electronic mail. CWS used the CDSS – Riverside County version of this tool and made only minor technical modifications.

5. Daily Debrief Guide: This tool was designed to capture trends of the information gathered each day from the social worker interviews and supervisors' focus groups. CWS modified the CDSS version of this tool to include questions specifically focused on family reunification. This tool was completed after each interview or at the end of each interview day by the CWS PQCR Team.

Juvenile Probation: Juvenile Probation used three tools, two of which were modified from the CDSS version. The tools used were:

1. Case Review Tool (CRT): This tool was designed to give the PQCR interviewers background information about the case. Juvenile Probation modified the CDSS version of this tool by deleting questions that pertained to the Indian Child Welfare Act, termination

of parental rights and siblings placed together. These questions were deleted because they were not questions relevant to Juvenile Probation cases. This tool was completed before the interviews by the PQCR Team.

2. Deputy Probation Officer Interview Tool: This tool was designed to capture information about Probation Officer practices that impact contact with children and parents. Juvenile Probation modified the CDSS version of this tool by deleting questions that pertained to assessment of needs and case plan, delivery of services, school stability, independent living plan, and services to meet the physical and mental health needs of the child. The questions were deleted because these questions did not encompass issues of the area of focus. This tool was used for all of the Probation Officer interviews and completed during the interviews by the PQCR Team.

3. Probation Officer Supervisor Interview Tool: This tool was designed to document Probation's involvement in the County's Self-Assessment process, issues related to out-of-home placements, reunification and supervisory techniques that contribute to visiting children and parents. This tool was not modified and was used for the Probation Officer Supervisor interview. The PQCR Team member from the CDSS completed it during the interview with the Probation Officer Supervisor.

II.   Summary of Data[2]

Once the PQCR interviews were completed, the information recorded on the case review and the interview tools was compiled, analyzed and prioritized into major categories. Trends and recurring themes revealed by the data were identified. This information coupled with the Summary of Practice (see Section III), resulted in recommendations for improvement in the area of focus (see Section IV). CWS and Juvenile Probation compiled, analyzed and summarized their PQCR data separately, as detailed below.

CWS: <u>Social Workers</u>
A total of 72 cases were reviewed. 46 of the cases were reunified timely and 26 cases were not reunified timely. The 46 cases reunified timely represented 64% of the sample, which parallels the County's outcomes data. The following major **countywide** trends were observed.

Trends
➢ Child Abuse Allegation
<u>Timely Family Reunification</u>
- Substantial risk was the most common abuse allegation.
- Sexual abuse was the least common abuse allegation.

<u>Not Timely Family Reunification</u>
- Emotional abuse and general neglect were the most common abuse allegations.
- Sexual abuse was the least common abuse allegation.

➢ Housing, Transportation & Employment
In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
- Families were likely to have some form of housing (e.g. own home, renting an apartment or home, living with relatives or friends).
- Families were likely to either own their own vehicle, use public transportation or both.
- Families were likely to have some type of employment.

➢ Ethnicity
In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
- Hispanic families were the largest group.
- Caucasian families were the second largest group.
- African American families were the third largest group.
- Least common were American Indian, Asian, Filipino, Middle Eastern and Vietnamese families.

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[2] Please see Appendix C for detailed CWS Summary of Data.

➤ Assessment of Needs and Services
<u>Children</u>
In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
- Children' needs were assessed.
- Services were available and accessible.
- Major needs were:
  - therapy (e.g. individual and family)
  - medical care (e.g. health or dental)
  - safe, nurturing and structured environment
- Special needs were unlikely, but included:
  - special education
  - medical (e.g. lung infection, positive toxicology at birth, failure to thrive)
  - psychological

<u>Parents</u>
In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
- Parents needs were assessed.
- Services were available and accessible.
- Major needs were:
  - domestic violence treatment
  - therapy (e.g. individual, family or couple)
  - drug treatment (e.g. random drug testing, aftercare or in-depth treatment)
  - parenting skill development
  - in-home support services
- Special needs were unlikely, but included:
  - psychological (e.g. depression)
  - psychiatric (e.g. psychotropic medication)

➤ Case Planning
In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
- *Child involvement* in the case plan development and update was not likely because of the child's young age.
- *Parental involvement* in the case plan development and update was common.
- *Extended family members* were likely to be involved in the case plan or case by providing a placement for the child(ren), facilitating visitations, reporting the parents' progress, or attending Family Unity Meetings.
- *Cultural issues* were considered and likely to include language, poverty, immigration status and family traditions.
- *Most common barriers* to case plan development were:
  - incarcerated parents
  - parent's resistance to participating in the case plan
  - parent's denial of the problem

> ➢ Multiple Placements
> In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases:
> - Children were likely to have at least two to seven placements by the time they were reunified.
> - Multiple placements were the most common because the child was:
>   - initially placed in the County's shelter care facility and then
>   - either had one or more placements in a relative home, non-relative extended family member home or foster home.

> ➢ Location of Out-of Home Placement
> In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases
> - Children were likely to be placed in the same region as their parents.

> ➢ Sibling Placements
> In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases
> - All or some siblings were likely to be placed together.
> - Most common reasons for not placing siblings together were:
>   - insufficient adequate homes who could accept siblings
>   - some of the siblings were not part of the child welfare case because they were not dependents.

> ➢ Visitation
> In timely <u>and</u> not timely family reunification cases
> - The pattern of visitation progressed from supervised to unsupervised to overnights to trial home visits.
> - No clear trend on when visitation progressed was identified for how the progression of visits occurred.
> - Major barriers to the progression of visits included:
>   - Parent's lack of progress
>   - Parent's resistance to child welfare services
>   - Children's attorneys' objections to progression of visits and needing their concurrence before progression of visits could begin.

<u>Supervisors</u>
A total of 22 supervisors were interviewed. The following trends and recurring themes were identified.

Trends
> ➢ Top best practices that facilitate timely family reunification:
> - Family Unity Meetings – Help locate relatives for placements and conduct quick relative assessments; identify support system and resources the family has; and engages the family in the problem solving process.

- Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFPP) – Is a flexible program adaptable to the family's needs; provides feedback to the case carrying social worker because the FPP worker regularly visits and communicates with the family; and helps the family remain focused and reunified.
- Substance Abuse Recovery Management System (SARMS) – It helps address drug treatment and provides drug testing for clients presenting with alcohol and drug issues.

➢ Processes supervisors utilize to help social workers facilitate timely reunification:
- Meet with social workers on a consistent basis (e.g. monthly meetings, unit case reviews, case consultations, open door policy) to review the case (e.g. review family strengths, areas of needs, court reports, narratives).
- Encourage contact with service providers and attorneys.
- Cover on-call duty schedule or paperwork to help free up the social worker's time.
- Develop mentoring relationships between new social work staff and experienced social work staff.

Recurring Themes
Recurring themes were present when the supervisors were asked about what they observe when working with family reunification cases. The themes were as follows:

➢ Timely family reunification occurs when:
- Families are engaged via strength-based and non-adversarial interviews and interactions.
- The family's support systems are identified and used.
- Everyone involved in the case works as a team (e.g. family, social worker, foster parents, community, service providers, attorneys, etc.).

➢ Not timely family reunification occurs when:
- Parents lack knowledge about how the child welfare system works.
- Parents lack insight into why they are involved in the child welfare system.

Court Officers
Trends
Seven Court officers completed the interview tool. The information gathered from the court officers revealed trends in the following areas:

➢ Agency's influence on family reunification decision:
- Social workers have the greatest influence.
- Supervisors have a low to medium influence.

- Managers have no or medium influence, depending on the manager.

➢ Court influence on family reunification decision:
- Juvenile dependency Judges have the greatest influence.
- County Counsel and the dependency attorneys have a low to medium influence.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) have a low influence.

➢ Factors for successful family reunification:
- The top two factors are (1) parents' compliance with the case plan and (2) parents' willingness and ability to participate in services by their own initiative and with minimal guidance from the social worker.
- Other factors are (1) a working relationship between the social workers and parents, (2) parent's sobriety, (3) services offered in a timely manner, (4) sufficient visitation and (5) input from service providers (e.g. therapist).

Recurring Themes

The information gathered from the court officers revealed recurring themes in the following area:

➢ Court continuances in family reunification cases:
- Continuances slow down the family's progress towards reunification.
- Continuances delay the progression of visitations and frustrate families.
- Top reasons for continuances are (1) to obtain more input from service providers and (2) the bench officer requests additional information.

Juvenile Probation: <u>Probation Officers</u>
The information gathered from the probation officers revealed the following trends. No recurring themes were identified.

- Monthly visits by Probation Officers with children were well documented and done in a timely manner.
- Probation Officers' visits with parents were sporadic.
- Case plans were not regularly updated at six-month intervals.
- Medical and dental documentation was not in all of the case files.

III.   Summary of Practice[3]

Once the PQCR interviews were completed, the information recorded on the interview tools was compiled, analyzed and summarized. Strengths, barriers/challenges and training needs were identified. This information coupled with the Summary of Data (see Section II), resulted in recommendations for improvement in the area of focus (see Section IV). CWS and Juvenile Probation compiled, analyzed and summarized their PQCR practice separately, as detailed below.

CWS: Social Workers
                  ➤ Social work practices/factors that promote timely family reunification
                     The top factors that promoted timely reunification were grouped into three categories and listed below in order of importance:

                  1. Parental Involvement
                     Parents were the essential participants to achieve timely reunification. Family reunification was more likely to occur when the parents were motivated and determined to reunify. Reunification was more likely if the parents began services early in the case, were compliant with their reunification plan and making appropriate progress.

                  2. Service Providers
                     Family reunification was highly connected to service providers. Social workers reported that having a positive working relationship with service providers helped obtain the most appropriate services for families.   Constant communication with service providers helped monitor the parent's progress in the services.

                  3. Family Engagement
                     The relationship the social worker developed with the family was reported as being highly important to family reunification. It was important to establish rapport with the families and treat them with respect and a non-judgmental positive attitude.   Social workers reported spending time with the family to help them overcome their resistance to CWS involvement and help them identify their strengths and support systems that promoted family reunification.

                  ➤ Challenges/Barriers to timely family reunification:
                     Of the many barriers identified for family reunification cases, the prominent barriers were:

                  1. CWS Agency
                     High caseloads, multiple case transfers and the lack of support staff to help social workers with transportation, word processing, and

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[3] Please see Appendix D for a detailed CWS Summary of Practice.

paperwork posed the greatest challenges/barriers to working on family reunification cases.

- High caseloads were a barrier because it limits the social worker from spending time with the family and also from completing all tasks for the case.
- Multiple case transfers were a barrier because it disrupts the flow of the case as it pertains to visitations, services and the relationship with the family.
- Lack of support staff was a barrier because without support staff, social workers have to facilitate more transportation for clients, complete word processing tasks and spend more time on paperwork. This also limits the social worker from spending time with the family.

2. Parental Involvement
   Parents' resistance, lack of motivation, delay in beginning participation in services and non-compliance with the case plan activities were the barriers to family reunification. These were barriers because the parents' play the most important role in the family reunification process. The family reunification process is at a standstill until the parent is actively engaged and a committed participant in family reunification efforts.

   This challenge is compounded by the legal timeframes for family reunification. According to supervisors and social workers, the legal timeframes do not appear to consider the needs and issues families present with when they become involved in the child welfare system (e.g. parents' resistance, multi-generation child abuse, long history of substance abuse/chemical dependency addiction, illiteracy, etc.).

3. Services
   In the Summary of Data (see Section II) social workers reported that services were accessible and available in the cases reviewed. This was usually the case *once* appropriate services were identified for the family. Social workers reported a lack of appropriate services and appropriate reports from service providers were the barriers to timely family reunification.
   - There is a lack of appropriate services because there are insufficient Spanish speaking providers, lack of adequate housing, lack of therapists, lack of transportation for clients and overall a lack of adequate services tailored to CWS clients.
   - Reports from service providers are not provided timely to social workers and often are vague and do not address recommendations or the protective issue.

Supervisors

The information gathered from the supervisors revealed the following:

➢ Social Work Practices that facilitate timely reunification were:

1. Family Engagement
   The relationship the social worker developed with the family was important in family reunification cases. Supervisors consistently reported that the social workers ability to develop rapport and connect with the family was important. This appeared to help the parents overcome their resistance by creating a non-adversarial working relationship between the social worker and the parents. This in turn helped the parents engage in services and kept the family reunification case moving.

2. Services
   Supervisors reported that providing the family appropriate and individualized services through a well-developed case plan was important to the progression of the family reunification cases. This was dependent on ensuring parents began the services early in the case to ensure timely reunification.

➢ Challenges/Barriers
   Supervisors identified the same barriers as social workers and also identified visitation resources as a significant challenge/barrier to timely reunification.

Visitation Resources

Visitations enable the social worker to monitor the family's readiness for reunification. Supervisors reported there is a lack of visitation centers, visitation centers with hours convenient for families, transportation for the children and parents to attend the visits, and the visits are not purposeful or goal-oriented. Limited resources for visitation prolongs the family reunification process.

Court Officers
➢ Case Plan Activities and Family Reunification
   Court officers reported in most instances families are reunified with the case plan activities completed.

   There are instances a family may be reunified without all of the case plan activities being completed, such as:
   - the parent is a non-offending parent and really did not need the services, or
   - the parent(s) has completed the major activities of the case plan.

Juvenile Probation: The information gathered from the Probation Officers and Probation Officer Supervisor revealed the following:

Practice Strengths
- Monthly visits with children in out of home care are being conducted.
- Documentation supports the case plan goals, which include treatment and family reunification issues.
- Probation Officers attempt to keep families involved in services to meet case plan goals.
- The Probation Department utilizes a collaborative screening process to adequately assess the need for out-of-home placement. The screening team includes placement, program and forensics staff.
- The Probation Officers interviewed maintained a positive, honest and direct attitude regarding the cases reviewed.
- The Probation Officers displayed a direct approach to compiling and disseminating information.
- The Probation Officers interviewed showed the ability to meet demands and challenges through organization and time management.
- The Probation Officers interviewed showed a resilient character, even with increasing demands on their time.

Challenges/Barriers
- High caseloads.
- Lack of clerical support for the Placement Unit. With the increasing demands and volume of paperwork, placement officers are finding it challenging to file paperwork and prepare cases for transfer or closing.

Resources
- Limited availability of vehicles for field visits by Probation Officers.
- Inadequate access to specialized services (e.g. translators, counseling, neuropsychological evaluations, transitional housing, etc.).
- Limited access to data systems from remote locations.

IV.   Final Observations and Recommendations

CWS Final Observations

It is often speculated that the demographics of the families involved in the child welfare system or the various characteristics of how social work staff work with families contributes to timely reunification. This PQCR revealed to the County that this is not always the case.

Summary of Data
The summary of the data revealed only one clear distinction between cases that reunified timely and cases that did not reunify timely. This distinction was in the type of abuse allegation. The cases that reunified timely were more likely to have a substantial risk allegation. The cases that did not reunify timely were more likely to have an abuse allegation of emotional abuse or general neglect. With this exception, the summary of data revealed no distinctions attributable to either cases that did or did not reunify timely.

The summary of data revealed that timely family reunification was not dependent on the families demographics, multiple placements, or sibling placements. It revealed that in both instances, timely and not timely, the social workers were assessing families needs, identifying services, involving the families in the case planning process and facilitating visitations. The summary of practice provided some answers to what is contributing to timely family reunification.

Summary of Practice
Parental involvement, family engagement and services were the key to timely family reunification.   Social workers, supervisors and court officers who were interviewed overwhelmingly identified all three as key practices. In the cases that reunified timely, the parents overcame their resistance, were motivated and determined to reunify and participated in services early in the case. The social workers spent time engaging the family by developing a positive working relationship with the parents and focusing on the family's strengths and resources.

The provision of services was also essential.   In the cases that reunified timely, once appropriate services were located for the family, services were more likely to be available and accessible to the family.   Reports from service providers were likely to be timely and addressed the protective issue and the social workers' recommendations.

This can best be summarized in one word, "collaboration". Reunification is about parents, social workers and service providers collaborating to help families overcome their resistance, engage in services and successfully reunify with their children in a timely manner.

Recommendations[4]

An advantage of conducting the PQCR is that recommendations for improvement are made by the staff who are directly working with children and families. The recommendations may relate to training, systemic/policy changes and/or needed State technical assistance. The recommendations for CWS and Juvenile Probation are set forth below.

CWS: The recommendations made by the social workers, supervisors and court officers were prioritized to parallel the key social work practices, factors and challenges/barriers that impact timely family reunification as identified in the Summary of Practice (see Section III).

The recommendations listed below are those the County intends to prioritize for integration in the County's System Improvement Plan.

Parental involvement
Training
- Evaluate the training curriculum to determine how to provide more hands-on training for social work staff on how to help parents overcome resistance, lack of motivation, and non-compliance with the case plan activities.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- Explore the implementation of a procedure where a mandatory meeting with the family, social work staff and other pertinent persons occurs between the Detention Hearing and the Jurisdictional Hearing to help parents overcome resistance, identify potential placements and family support systems.

State Technical Assistance
None identified.

Services/Service Providers
Training
- Explore how to inform service providers about the CWS population and CWS needs in regarding services provided to CWS families and the reports of the family progress provided to social work staff.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- Explore how to increase timely and consistent feedback from and follow-up by service providers (e.g. therapists, domestic violence provider) to social work staff.
- Explore how to increase the provision of in-home support services to CWS families.

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[4] Please see Appendix E for a detailed summary of the CWS recommendations.

- Evaluate the Treatment, Evaluation and Resource Management (TERM)[5] team to identify its strengths, areas of need and how to improve the quality of therapists and services provided.
- Explore how to increase Spanish speaking providers, housing for families, transportation for clients, visitation resources (e.g. centers, centers with hours convenient for families) and the number of therapists.

State Technical Assistance
None identified.

Family Engagement
Training
- Explore developing a training that addresses the roles and responsibilities of foster parents, attorneys, and social work staff in family reunification cases.
- Evaluate the training curriculum to determine how to provide engage families in services early in the case.

Systemic/Policy Changes
None identified.

State Technical Assistance
None identified.

CWS Agency
- Explore how to decrease caseload size for social workers.
- Explore how to provide more support staff to assist social workers with transportation, word processing tasks, and paperwork.
- Evaluate the procedure for case transfers between social workers and programs to determine how to decrease multiple case transfers that result in delayed case management activities.
- Explore how to ensure supervisors conduct systematic case reviews with social work staff during regularly scheduled supervisory meetings.

Juvenile Court/Attorneys
Training
None identified.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- Explore how to decrease continuances in family reunification cases.
- Explore how to increase the preparation level of dependency attorneys at court hearings.

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[5] TERM is a quality control, utilization management and consultation unit comprised of mental health professionals developed under the direction of the County's Board of Supervisors to improve the quality of mental health services provided to CWS clients.

- Explore how to improve the working relationship between social workers, juvenile dependency attorneys and Juvenile Court judges, so social workers opinions and recommendations are considered and respected.
- Explore how to improve the role of County Counsel as a strong advocate for social workers at court hearings.

State Technical Assistance
None identified.

Juvenile Probation: The recommendations made by the Probation Officers and Probation Officer Supervisor are listed below. These recommendations will be prioritized for integration in the County's System Improvement Plan.

Training
- A process for better on-the-job specific training for placement officers when they are assigned.
- A mentoring program for new placement officers.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- Increase the Juvenile Court awareness of the roles of placement Probation Officers, assessment process and methods used in developing recommendations to the Juvenile Court.
- Increase the timely working relationship between Probation Officers and community agencies because this affects the expectations and time constraints placed on the Probation Officers by the Juvenile Court.
- Reduce caseload size to a manageable level. The recommended Placement Unit yardstick should be changed to 25 cases per Probation Officer. The current yardstick for Placement is 40 cases per Probation Officer. To effectively carry out the casework duties, monitoring duties, case planning efforts and mandated visitation with children and parents, a reduction in caseload size is needed.
- Increase staff for the Placement Unit.
- Increase clerical staff support specifically for the Placement Unit.
- Coordinate ongoing meetings with the Juvenile Court and community agencies regarding placement issues, roles and time constraints.
- Increase allocation of vehicles assigned to the Placement Unit.
- Provide wireless internet cards for access to Probation computer programs while on placement visits.

State Technical Assistance
- An examination of State mandates for family reunification as it applies to Probation wards and extend the family reunification legal timeframes for Juvenile Probation wards.

- ▪ Minors placed in out-of home placement by Probation are mainly placed because of a criminal offense or specific treatment need. Treatment cannot always be completed within the current family reunification, which are legal timeframes designed for dependent wards.
- Revise the State mandate regarding parent visits as it applies to Probation wards. (e.g. contact versus visit, visit one time every three months) Visiting parents monthly will create a big increase in workload for placement probation officers.
- Provide clear and consistent directives that do not change on how to reach goals and comply with State mandates. This will allow departments to implement policies and train staff without re-creating policies and procedures as directives change.
  - ▪ Provide technical assistance and training on regulations to Placement Unit officer.

Appendix A
CWS PQCR Tools

- Case Review Tool
- Social Worker Interview Tool
- Supervisor Focus Group Tool
- Court Officer Interview Tool
- Daily Debrief Guide Tool

Appendix B
Juvenile Probation Tools

- Case Review Tool
- Deputy Probation Officer Interview Tool
- Probation Officer Supervisor Interview Tool

Appendix C

Detailed CWS Summary of Data

Appendix D

[Detailed CWS Summary of Practice](#)

Appendix E

Detailed CWS Recommendations

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

FACE SHEET

Name of County: San Diego	
Focus Child's Case Name:	Case ID Number:
Date Case Record Reviewed:	Type of Case: ⊠ FR

Names of Reviewers:

1. _____
    _____

2. _____
    _____

3. _____
    _____

CASE INFORMATION	
Previous child welfare case: ☐ No ☐ Yes	If previous case(s), Type of case: ☐ Voluntary ☐ Dependency Type of allegation(s): _____

Child's Ethnicity:	Child's date of birth:	Primary Language:

Date of removal:	Date child reunified (returned) home:

Name of minor's sibling(s) (full, half, step):	Age:	Currently in out-of-home placement?
First MI Last 1.		☐ No ☐ Yes: 300 600 Other
2.		☐ No ☐ Yes: 300 600 Other
3.		☐ No ☐ Yes: 300 600 Other
4.		☐ No ☐ Yes: 300 600 Other
5.		☐ No ☐ Yes: 300 600 Other

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COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
PART I – CASE REVIEW TOOL

SECTION I: SAFETY
A. Child Abuse Allegation for Case in Review

1. What was the substantiated allegation that necessitated the case in review be opened? ☐ Physical Abuse ☐ General Neglect ☐ Emotional Abuse ☐ Severe Neglect ☐ Sexual Abuse ☐ Caretaker Absent (Parent Incarcerated/Incapacitated) ☐ Substantial Risk ☐ Substance Abuse	

1.a	What was the relationship of the perpetrator to the focus child?	1st Report ☐ Father ☐ Mother ☐ Sibling ☐ Other: _____	2nd Report ☐ Father ☐ Mother ☐ Sibling ☐ Other: _____

1.b	What region and zip code was the child living in when removed? Region: Central - Mills; Zip Code:

1.c	Was the parent living at the common address from where child was removed during the open Family Reunification case? ☐ Yes ☐ No. If no, list the region and zip codes the parent(s) resided in during the open Family Reunification case.

B. APPLICABLE ONLY, IF THERE WAS A PREVIOUS CASE: Recurrence of Abuse or Neglect

1.	Is this the first time a case has been opened for the focus child?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.	If yes, subsequent to the case being opened, were there additional substantiated reports of abuse or neglect by the parents?	☐ Yes ☐ No

2a.	If yes to #2, did the report(s) involve the same allegation(s)?
	
	If no, what were the allegations:
	
	  ☐ Physical Abuse
	  ☐ General Neglect
	  ☐ Emotional Abuse
	  ☐ Severe Neglect
	  ☐ Sexual Abuse
	  ☐ Caretaker Absent (Parent Incarcerated/Incapacitated)
	  ☐ Substantial Risk
	    ☐ Substance Abuse
		☐ Yes ☐
		No

2b.	Did the report(s) involve the same perpetrator?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2c.	What was the relationship of the perpetrator to the focus child?	**1st Report** ☐ Father ☐ Mother ☐ Sibling ☐ Other: _____ **2nd Report** ☐ Father ☐ Mother ☐ Sibling ☐ Other: _____

SECTION III: Case Plan

A. Case Plan

1.	Is there an approved case plan in CWS/CMS?	☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION IV: OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

A. Placement Stability

1.	Did the child change placement settings while in out-of-home care?	☐ Yes ☐ No
1.a	If yes, how many placements did the child have? (Attach Placement History report)	

B. Family Relationships and Connections

1.	What was the proximity of the child's out-of-home care placement to the: Mother: ☐ Same Region ☐ Same county ☐ Out of county ☐ Out of state Father: ☐ Same Region ☐ Same county ☐ Out of county ☐ Out of state Siblings: ☐ Same Region ☐ Same county ☐ Out of county ☐ Out of state

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW

PART II – SOCIAL WORKER INTERVIEW TOOL

INFORMATION

County Name: San Diego	Case Name:
Social Worker: 1 2 3 4 5	Date of Interview:

Names of Reviewers:

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

INTRODUCTIONS & BACKGROUND

Social Worker Background

Introductions:

- ❖ Review Team: Briefly identify interviewers and their work experience. Explain each interviewer's role (lead interviewer, recorder and time keeper).

- ❖ Briefly explain purpose of the interview.
  - ✓ Anonymity
  - ✓ No right or wrong responses
  - ✓ Qualitative information about practice
  - ✓ Concentrate responses on the focus topic: **Length of time to exit foster care to reunification**
  - ✓ Okay to generalize from other cases (only if necessary)

- ❖ Ask social worker for a brief summary of their background:
  - ☐ Length of time with San Diego County: _____
  - ☐ Length of time as a case carrying social worker: _____
  - ☐ Length of time as a case carrying social worker in Continuing Services: _____
  - ☐ Current classification: _____
  - ☐ Education background: _____

Case Background

1. The Team has been briefed on the history of the case. Please tell us about the family's demographics:

    ☐ Housing (where was the family living): _____

    ☐ Income (yearly and source): _____

    ☐ Transportation: _____

    ☐ Employment: _____

    Please tell us about how and when this case came to you and the story of the family?

2. Describe the attributes of this family.

    ➢ Strengths

    ➢ Needs

APPLICABLE ONLY, IF THERE WAS A PREVIOUS CASE, THAT WAS A VOLUNTARY CASE		
A. In-Home Services		
1.	If the child was removed and then returned home, were in-home services provided to the family?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.	If the answer to question #1 is "no", state the reason why in-home services were not provided.	

B. Assessment of Needs and Services		
1.	Were the needs of the <u>child</u> assessed and identified while developing and updating the case plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No
1.a	If the answer is "yes", briefly identify the needs and describe the process used to assess: <u>Needs</u> <u>Assessment Process</u> 	
1.b	Were the services accessible and available to the child? (e.g., location, schedule, cost)	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.	Were the needs of the parent(s) assessed and identified while developing and updating the case plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No

2.a	If the answer is "yes", identify the needs and describe the process used to assess: <u>Needs</u> <u>Assessment Process</u> 	
2.b	Were the services accessible and available to the parent(s)? (e.g., location, schedule, cost)	☐ Yes ☐ No
3.	Did the child have any special needs (e.g. mental health, special education, medically fragile etc.) ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, what was the special need and the treatment the child was receiving?	
4.	Did the parent have any special needs (e.g. mental health, medical etc.) ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, what was the special need and the treatment the parent was receiving?	

C. Family Involvement in Case Planning

1.	When appropriate, was the child *involved* in developing case planning activities? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please briefly describe how the child was involved?

2.	Were the parents involved in developing the case plan activities? If yes, please describe how they were involved?
3.	How did you make sure relationships with extended family members and other important persons to the family were involved or addressed in the case plan?
4.	What cultural issues did you consider (e.g., language, ethnicity, poverty, family traditions) in developing the case plan?
5.	Did you encounter any barriers during the development of the case plan? ☐ No ☐ Yes If yes, please describe the barriers to effective case planning development.

6.	Were all the case plan goals met and activities completed when the family reunified? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, please briefly describe which case plan goals were not met and activities not completed? Also, please briefly describe the barriers that prevented the goals and activities from being completed?

I. D. Placement Stability

1.	Did any of the placement changes occur for reasons not directly related to helping the child achieve the goals in his/her case plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No
1(a)	If the answer is "yes", please explain.

E. Family Relationships and Connections

1.	For children not placed in the same region/county as either of their parents' residence, what are the reasons the child was not placed in the same region/county as their parents' residence?
2.	Does the placement location maintain important family connections? If yes, please describe how the placement location maintains family connections.

3.	Does the placement location maintain important community connections (e.g. school, friends)? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please describe how the placement location maintains community connections.

4.	Are the sibling(s) placed together?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

4a.	What were the reason(s) sibling(s) were not placed together?

F. Visitation

1.	What is the most typical pattern of visitation between the minor and his/her family? Mother: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits Father: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits Siblings: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits
2.	Please describe the progression of visits from: ☐ supervised ☐ unsupervised ☐ overnights ☐ trial home visits, and What were the barriers to the progression of visits?
3.	Who was the visitation monitor? ☐ social worker ☐ supervisor ☐ visitation monitor ☐ relative ☐ non-relative extended family member ☐ foster parent ☐ therapist ☐ other

4.	Where did the visits occur?
	☐ Agency office
	☐ Supervised Visitation Center
	☐ Relative home
	☐ Non-relative extended family member
	☐ Foster home
	☐ Other
5.	What challenges did you face trying to visit the child (e.g. parents, location, agency, court orders)?
6.	What challenges did you face trying to visit the parent (e.g. parents, location, agency, court orders)?

SOCIAL WORKER REFLECTIONS

1. What succeeded and what did not when you worked to reunify this family?

2. What current social work practice(s) influenced the reunification of this family?

3. If the case was not reunified within 12 months, please identify barriers that affected your ability to accomplish timely reunification in this case?

4. If the case was reunified within 12 months, please describe the factors that facilitated timely reunification?

5. As a social worker, what are the challenges you face as you work to successfully reunify families?

6. What improvements/changes would be useful to help you reunify families timely more effectively (e.g. training, policy, procedures, resources, practices)

7. What are the kinds of things you do as a social worker that you are especially proud of, or that others can learn from? In other words, what is your secret to your success in reunification cases?

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW

PART III – SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW TOOL

INFORMATION
County Name: San Diego
Date:_____   Supervisor Focus Group: ☐ AM ☐ PM
Names of Reviewers: 7. _____ 8. _____

INTRODUCTIONS & BACKGROUND
Supervisor Background

Introductions:
 	
❖ Review Team: Briefly identify interviewers and their work experience. Explain each interviewer's role (lead interviewer, recorder and time keeper).
 	
❖ Briefly explain purpose of the interview.
  ✓ Anonymity
  ✓ No right or wrong responses
  ✓ Qualitative information about practice
  ✓ Concentrate responses on the focus topic: **Length of time to exit foster care to reunification**
  ✓ Okay to generalize from other cases (only if necessary)
 	
❖ Ask each supervisor for a brief summary of their background:
  ☐ Length of time with San Diego County: _____
  ☐ Length of time as a case carrying social worker: _____
  ☐ Length of time as a case carrying social worker in Continuing Services: _____
  ☐ Length of time as a supervisor: _____
  ☐ Length of time as a supervisor in Continuing Services: _____
  ☐ Current classification: _____
  ☐ Education background: _____

Supervisor Focus Group Questions
1. Please tell us about the program areas that are working well for facilitating timely reunification (e.g. Family-to-Family, SARMS Wraparound, Community Services for Families contract)?
2.   Please describe the top three significant recurring challenges/barriers you experience in working with family reunification cases.
3.   Please describe the top three significant themes you observe in working with family reunification cases.
4. Please tell us the top three most influential social work practices that lead to timely reunification?

5. How does concurrent planning impact family reunification cases?

6. What processes do you use with social workers to help them assess, plan for and monitor cases to ensure timely reunification?

7. What training needs do you believe are needed to accomplish timely reunification?

8. What are the kinds of things you do as a supervisor that you are especially proud of, or that other supervisors could learn from in family reunification cases? In other words, what is the secret to your success in family reunification cases?

9. Is there anything you would like to add?
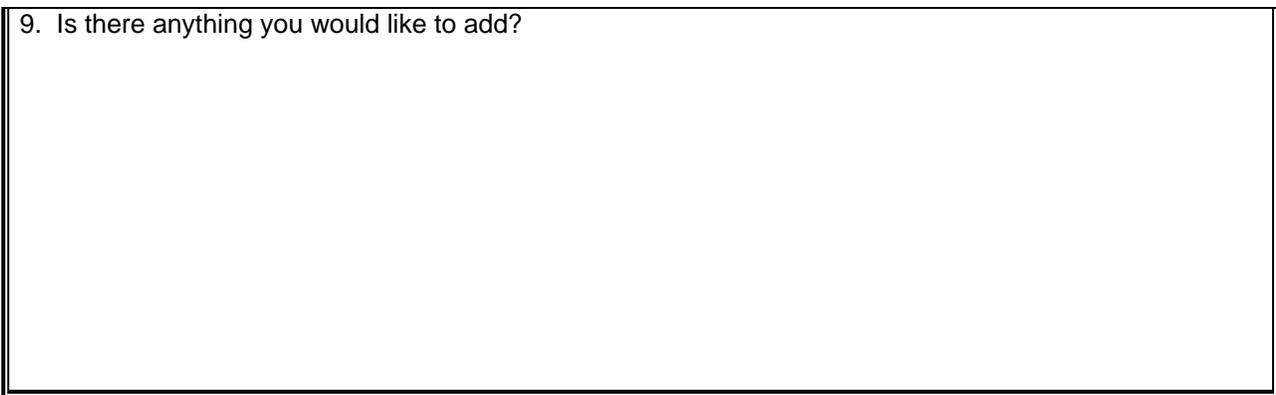
**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW**

CWS SAN DIEGO

PART IV – COURT OFFICER INTERVIEW TOOL

Court Officer Telephone Interview Tool

Introductions:
 	
 ❖ Purpose of interview:
   ✓ Anonymity
   ✓ No right or wrong responses
   ✓ Qualitative information about practice
   ✓ Concentrate responses on the focus topic: <u>Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Reunification</u>.
   ✓ Okay to generalize from other cases
 	
 ❖ Please fill in the blanks regarding your background:
 ☐ Length of time with San Diego County: _____.
 ☐ Length of time as a case carrying social worker (please list what CWS programs):
 	
   _____.
 ☐ Length of time as a Court Officer: _____.
 ☐ Current classification: _____.
 ☐ Education background: _____.

1. What influence do each of the following members of the court have on the outcome of reunification?
 	
   ❖ Judges: _____
   ❖ Attorneys: _____
   ❖ County Counsel: _____
   ❖ CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates): _____

2. What influence does the Agency via the following persons have on the Juvenile Court regarding the outcome of reunification?
 	
   ❖ Managers: _____
   ❖ Supervisors: _____
   ❖ Social Workers: _____

3.   Please describe situations where the Juvenile Court's decision differs from the Agency's recommendation regarding reunification.

 _____

❖   How frequently does this occur? _____
❖   When the court does differ is it most commonly in favor of reunification? _____

4.   How do continuances impact reunification? _____

❖   Reasons for continuances that affect reunification? _____

5.   In general is the court being provided sufficient and adequate information to make informed reunification decisions?

 _____

❖   If not, what changes need to be made to accomplish that? _____

6.   What do you see as the most important factors that contribute to the successful reunification of children with their parent(s)/guardian(s)?

 _____

7.   How often are children returned to their parents without completion of their case plan activities?

 _____

❖   When this occurs how does it relate to the success of reunification? _____

8.   Is there anything that you want to add to this discussion on reunification?

 _____

II. SAN DIEGO

PQCR DAILY DEBRIEF

FOCUS TOPIC: <u>Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Reunification</u>

1. What did you hear today about social work practices(s) that influenced the reunification of families timely AND not timely?

2. What factors encouraged timely reunification?

3. What are the greatest challenges in timely reunification?

4. What are social worker's suggestions for Improvements/Changes that would help reunify families more timely? (Training, policy and procedure changes etc.)

5. What did social workers say was the "secret of their success in reunification cases?

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW

PROBATION

FACE SHEET
Name of County:

Case Name:	Case Number:
Date Case Record Reviewed:	Type of Placement: ☐ Relative ☐ Foster Care
Review Team Names:	

CASE INFORMATION	
Date of minor's first suitable placement order:	Date of most recent suitable placement order: (date minor ordered into current out-of-home placement, if different) ☐ NA
Date minor returned home: (if applicable)	Date probation terminated: (if applicable)

Minor's name: First MI Last	Ethnicity:	Date of birth:

Mother's name & age: In the home? Yes No	Father's name & age: In the home? Yes No

Name of minor's sibling(s) (full, half, step): First MI Last	Age:	In out-of-home placement?
1.		No Yes: 300 600 Other
2.		No Yes: 300 600 Other
3.		No Yes: 300 600 Other
4. *June 2005*		No Yes: 300 600 Other
5.	79	No Yes: 300 600 Other

PART I – CASE REVIEW TOOL

	SECTION I: HISTORY	
	A. General Information	
1.	What was the original charge?	
2.	Did the minor receive additional sustained charges after the suitable placement order? Describe:	☐ Yes ☐ No
3.	Were preventive services provided prior to the suitable placement order?	☐ Yes ☐ No
3a	If YES, what were those services?	☐WIC 236 ☐ WIC 654 ☐WIC 725 ☐ WIC 790 ☐Home on probation ☐Camp ☐Other: _____
4.	Was suitable placement recommended? If YES, date:_____	☐ Yes ☐ No
4a	If NO, what was recommended?	
5.	Was there a prior WIC 300 (Dependency) case?	☐ Yes ☐ No
5a	If YES, what type of case was it? ☐ Neglect ☐Physical Abuse ☐Sexual Abuse ☐ _____	

SECTION III: Case Plan		
A. *Assessment of Needs and Services*		
1.	Were the needs of the <u>minor</u> assessed and identified while developing the case plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No
1a.	If the answer is YES, describe the needs identified:	
1b.	Did the services listed match the needs identified for the <u>minor</u>?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.	Were the needs of the <u>parent(s)</u> assessed and identified while developing the case plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
2a.	If the answer is YES, describe the needs identified:	
2b.	Did the services provided match the needs identified for the parents?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
3.	Were needs of the out-of-home <u>care provider</u> assessed and identified while developing the case plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No
3a.	If the answer is YES, describe the needs identified:	
3b.	Did the services provided match the needs identified for the care provider?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
4.	Does the minor have a mental health diagnosis?	☐ Yes ☐ No
5.	Has the minor had a health examination during the last year? If yes, date of last exam: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No
6.	Has the minor had a dental examination during the last year? If yes, date of last exam: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No
7.	Is the minor on psychotropic medication?	☐ Yes ☐ No

7a	If the answer to question 6 is "Yes", is there a current court authorization on file? If yes, date of the order: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No
	What is the most typical pattern of visits by the DPO? Mother: ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly OR no visits - Why? _____ Father: ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly OR no visits - Why? _____ Minor: ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly OR no visits – Why? _____	

B.	**Case Plan Goal**	
1.	Is there a current case plan on file? Date approved by supervisor? _____	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.	Was the case plan updated every six months as required? Date of initial CP: _____ Date of update: _____ Date of update: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
3.	Is there a concurrent plan in place (working toward adoption and reunification)?	☐ Yes ☐ No

4.	What is the minor's current case plan goal?	☐ Family Reunification ☐ Permanent Planning ☐ Long Term Placement ☐ Guardianship ☐ Adoption ☐ Emancipation
5.	How long has the current goal been in place?	
6.	What factors did the agency consider when making decisions about the case plan goal? ☐ Age ☐ Behavior ☐ Medical ☐ Psychological ☐ Siblings ☐ Relatives ☐ Other: _____	
7a	If yes, what was the compelling reason? ☐ Parents or guardians have maintained regular visitation and contact with the child and the child would benefit from continuing the relationship ☐ A child 12 years of age or older objects to termination of parental rights ☐ The child is placed in a residential treatment facility and adoption is unlikely or undesirable while the child remains in that placement and continuation of parental rights will not prevent the finding of an adoptive home if the parents cannot resume custody when residential care is no longer needed ☐ The child is living with a relative or foster parent who is unable or unwilling to adopt the child because of exceptional circumstances, but who is willing and capable of providing the child with a stable and permanent home and removal from the home of the relative or foster parent would be detrimental to the well-being of the child. (This exception does not apply to a child under six or a child who has a sibling under six who is also a dependent and with whom the child should be placed permanently) ☐ Other (explain)	

C.	**Minor and Family Involvement in Case Planning**	
1.	Did the <u>minor</u> sign the case plan?	☐ Yes　☐ No
1a.	If the answer is NO, is the reason documented? What is the reason documented?	☐ Yes　☐ No
2.	Did the <u>parents</u> sign the case plan?	☐ Yes　☐ No
2a.	If the answer is NO, is the reason documented? What is the reason documented?	☐ Yes　☐ No

D.	**Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)**	
1.	Is there a current TILP on file? Date signed by the minor? _____	☐ Yes　☐ No
2.	Was the TILP updated every six months? Date of initial TILP: _____　Date of update: _____　Date of update: _____	☐ Yes　☐ No ☐ NA

SECTION IV: OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

A. Placement Stability

1.	How many placements has this minor had?	
1a	Of those placements, how many with a relative?	
1b	Of those placements, how many in a group home?	

1c	What factors contributed to the placement changes? ☐ NA	
2.	Were there any incidents of abuse while the minor was in out-of-home placement?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2a	If YES, describe:	

B. Family Relationships and Connections	
1.	What is the proximity of the minor's current placement to: Mother: ☐Same county ☐Out of county ☐Out of state ☐Other: _____ Father: ☐Same county ☐Out of county ☐Out of state ☐Other: _____ Siblings: ☐Same county ☐Out of county ☐Out of state ☐Other: _____	

2.	Is the reason for the location of the placement clearly related to helping the minor achieve the case plan goal?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unable to determine

3.	What is the most typical pattern of visitation between the minor and his/her family?
	Mother: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits
	Father: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits
	Siblings: ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than monthly ☐ No visits

SECTION IV: SUMMARY
A. Issues to follow-up with Probation Officer:

PQCR INTERVIEW TEAM OBSERVATIONS

Use this space to prepare for the debriefing session. Answers need to be specific to the focus topic:

_____

Identify documentation trends:

Identify training needs:

Identify needed systemic/policy changes:

Identify areas needing state technical assistance:

Other:

**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW**

PROBATION

PART II – DPO INTERVIEW TOOL

INFORMATION	
County Name:	Case Name:
Probation Officer:	Date of Interview:
Interviewer's Names:	

INTRODUCTIONS & BACKGROUND
Probation Officer Background

Introductions:
 	
❖ Interviewer Team: Briefly identify interviewers and their work experience. Explain each interviewer's role (time keeper, recorder, and lead interviewer).
 	
❖ Briefly explain purpose of the interview.
   ✓ Anonymity
   ✓ No right or wrong responses
   ✓ Qualitative information about practice
   ✓ Concentrate responses on the focus topic: _____
   ✓ Okay to generalize from other cases
 	
❖ Ask probation officer for a summary of their DPO experience, length of time with the county, and length of time in the foster care placement program:

Case Background

8. The Team has been briefed on the history of the case. Please tell us how and when this case came to you and briefly describe your interaction with the family.

9. Describe the attributes of this family. (Review Risk and Resiliency Checkup

    ➢ Strengths

    ➢ Needs

Delivery of Services

10. How did you connect the minor and the parents to services?

11. Were there any barriers to accessing needed services (location, language, hours of operation, transportation)?

12. What has worked and what has not worked well for this family?

13. What challenges did you face as a DPO trying to visit with the minor at least monthly?

14. What challenges did you face as a DPO trying to visit with the parents at least monthly?

15. How did you assess the family's progress in meeting case plan objectives?

   ✓ Substance Abuse Treatment

   ✓ Mental Health Treatment

PROBATION OFFICER OBSERVATIONS

16. Was there anything about this case that you found especially difficult or challenging?

17. What improvements or changes would be useful to help you do your job more effectively? (training, resources, procedures….)

18. What are the kinds of things you do as a DPO that you are especially proud of, or that others can learn from?

19. Is there anything you would like to add?

PQCR INTERVIEW TEAM OBSERVATIONS

Use this space to prepare for the debriefing session. Answers need to be specific to the focus topic:

_____

Identify documentation trends based on the case review:

Identify promising practices:

 Identify Barriers & Challenges:

Identify Training Needs:

Identify Systemic/Policy Changes:

Identify Resource Issues:

Identify areas needing state technical assistance:

Other:

**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW**

PROBATION

PART III – SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW TOOL

INFORMATION	
County Name:	Case Name:
Supervisor's Name:	Date of Interview:
Interviewer's Names:	

INTRODUCTIONS & BACKGROUND
Probation Supervisor Background

Introductions:

- ❖ Interviewer Team: Briefly identify interviewers and their work experience. Explain each interviewer's role (time keeper, recorder, and lead interviewer).

- ❖ Briefly explain purpose of the PQCR and the interview.
  - ✓ Anonymity
  - ✓ No right or wrong responses
  - ✓ Qualitative information about practice
  - ✓ Concentrate responses on the focus topic: _____
  - ✓ Okay to generalize

- ❖ Ask supervisor for a summary of their experience, length of time with the county, and length of time in the foster care placement program:

County's Self Assessment
(Make sure the supervisor has time to review the SA prior to the interview)

1. Does the county's Self Assessment accurately represent the probation placement activities in your county?

2. What would you add to the Self Assessment?

Out-of-Home Placement

1. Tell us about the county's placement program areas that are working well.

2. As a supervisor, what are the most significant challenges in working in the placement program?

3. Would you consider these challenges to be the same for probation officers? Why?

4.   Describe the challenges of timely reunification?

5.   What are the most important factors that contribute to the successful reunification of a minor with his/her parents?

6.   Describe the challenges of permanency planning?

7.   How do you make sure the court is provided sufficient information to make informed decisions?

Supervision
1. What do you do to help your staff with assessment, planning and monitoring a case?
2. What challenges do you face as a supervisor in the placement program?
3. What changes would be useful to help you do your job more effectively?
4. What are the kinds of things you do as a supervisor that you are especially proud of, or that others can learn from?
5. Is there anything you would like to add?

PQCR INTERVIEW TEAM OBSERVATIONS

Use this space to prepare for the debriefing session. Answers need to be specific to the focus topic:

_____

Identify promising practices:

Identify Barriers & Challenges:

Identify Training Needs:

Identify Systemic/Policy Changes:

Identify Resource Issues:

Identify areas needing state technical assistance:

Other:

V.   Summary of Data

Once the PQCR interviews were completed, the information recorded on the case review and the interview tools was compiled, analyzed and prioritized into major categories. Trends and recurring themes revealed by the data were identified. This information coupled with the Summary of Practice (see Section III), resulted in recommendations for improvement in the area of focus (see Section IV). CWS and Juvenile Probation compiled, analyzed and summarized their PQCR data separately, as detailed below.

CWS: <u>Social Workers</u>
A total of 72 cases were reviewed. 46 of the cases were reunified timely and 26 cases were not reunified timely. The 46 cases reunified timely represented 64% of the sample, which parallels the County's outcomes data reports. The following **countywide** trends were observed.

Trends
➢ Timely Reunification (46 cases)
Case Characteristics
- Unlikely to have a previous case. (3 cases only)
- Substantial risk was the most common abuse allegation. (18 cases)
- Sexual abuse the least common abuse allegation. (2 cases)
- Unlikely to have a second allegation. (8 cases only)
- Mother was likely to be the perpetrator. (24 cases)
- Unlikely that the parents resided in the common address recorded for removal. (27 cases)
- Likely to have an updated case plan in CWS/CMS. (44 cases)
- Cases were likely to involve Hispanic families. (31 cases)
- Families were likely to have some form of housing (e.g. own home, renting an apartment or home, living with relatives or friends). (39 cases)
- Families were likely to either own their own vehicle (22 cases), use public transportation (16 cases) or both (4 cases).
- Families were likely to have some type of employment. (34 cases)

Assessment of Needs and Services
<u>Children</u>
- Needs were likely to be assessed (45 cases)
- Needs were likely to include:
  - therapy (e.g. individual or family),
  - medical care (e.g. health or dental), and
  - a safe, nurturing and structured environment.
- Other needs included,
  - acculturation,
  - school, childcare,
  - housing,
  - food,
  - sexual abuse treatment, and

- funding for extra-curricular activities.
- Likely to be assessed through
  - social worker observations,
  - assessments conducted by non-CWS staff (e.g. developmental assessments, psychological evaluations), and
  - communicating with caregivers, family members, school personnel, and service providers (e.g. therapists, public health nurse).
- Services were likely to be available and accessible. (43 cases)
- Unlikely to have special needs (10 cases)
  - Special needs included:
    - special education,
    - medical (e.g. lung infection, heart murmur, positive toxicology at birth), and
    - psychological.

Parents
- Needs likely to be assessed. (45 cases)
- Needs likely to be assessed through:
  - social worker observations,
  - review of the case file,
  - risk assessments,
  - communicating with service providers, family, collaterals, and family friends, and
  - results of assessments from psychological evaluations, psychiatric evaluations, substance and drug abuse reports, domestic violence reports.
- Needs likely to include:
  - domestic violence treatment, therapy (e.g. individual, family or couples),
  - drug treatment (e.g. drug testing, after care, or treatment)
  - psychological evaluations,
  - parenting skill development,
  - in-home support services,
  - anger management,
  - housing, and
  - transportation.
- Other needs included:
  - sexual abuse treatment,
  - education about how the child welfare system works, and
  - immigration.
- Services were likely to be available and accessible. (43 cases)
- Unlikely to have special needs (7 cases)
  - Special needs were:
    - psychological, and
    - psychiatric.

Case Planning
General
In both timely and not timely family reunification cases:
- *Extended family members* were likely to be involved in the case plan or case by providing a placement for the child (ren), facilitating visitations, reporting the parents' progress, or attending Family Unity meetings.
- *Cultural issues* were considered and likely to include language, poverty, immigration status, and family traditions.
- *Barriers to case plan development* most common were:
  - incarcerated parents,
  - parents' resistance to participating in the case plan,
  - parents' denial of problem,
  - parents being deported,
  - attorneys for children,
  - foster parents not supporting family reunification efforts,
  - difficulty locating service providers (e.g. therapists),
  - lack of interpreters, and,
  - lack of Spanish speaking services (e.g. anger management or psychiatrist, therapists).

Child
- Unlikely to be involved because of age (i.e. too young). (29 cases)
  - If involved, likely was through review of the case plan with the child after it was developed or communication with the child about needs and to help develop the plan.

Parent
- Likely to be involved (27 cases)
  - If involved, likely was through review of the case plan with the parent after it was developed, communication with the parents about their needs to help develop the plan.
  - If not involved, likely was because the social worker did not develop or update the case plan, the parent was incarcerated or the case plan was developed in another county.

Placement Stability
- Children were likely to have at least two to seven placements (34 cases)
  - 12 cases had one placement
  - If multiple placements, it was likely because the child was
    - initially placed in the County's shelter (18 cases)
    - placed in a relative home (19 cases)
    - placed in a foster home (14 cases)
  - Other reasons for multiple placements included:
    - abuse in the foster home,
    - caregivers poor relationship with parents,

- caregivers not facilitating visitations, and
- child had psychological problems (e.g. attempted suicide).
- Children were likely to be placed in the same region as their parents (22-28 cases)
- All or some siblings were likely to be placed together (21 cases)
    - If not placed, together it was likely because
        - there were insufficient adequate foster homes or relative/non-relative extended family member placements who could accept siblings together, or
        - the siblings were not part of the child welfare case.
- Family connections were likely to be maintained while the child was placed in out-of-home care through visitations and regular contact. (43 cases)
    - More likely when the placement was a relative or non-relative extended family member.
- Placement connections were likely to be maintained. (23 cases)
    - Less likely when the child was too young to establish any community connections or the placement was located out of the child's original community.

Visitation

- Applicable to both timely and not timely family reunification cases
- The pattern of visitation was observed to progress from supervised to unsupervised to overnights to trial home visits.
- The timing of the progression of visits varied and no clear trend was identified.
- Barriers to the progression of visits included:
    - parents' lack of progress,
    - parents' resistance to child welfare services,
    - children attorneys objections to progression of visits and needing their concurrence,
    - lack of transportation, and
    - lack of appropriate housing for visitations.
- Social workers were less likely to encounter any barriers when visiting children than when visiting parents.
    - Barriers to visiting parents included:
        - parents' work schedule,
        - parents' incarcerated,
        - parents' transient, and
        - parents' whereabouts unknown.

- ➢ Not Timely Reunification (26 cases)
    Case Characteristics
    - Unlikely to have a previous case. (3 cases only)
    - Emotional abuse and general neglect were the most common abuse allegation. (7 cases each)
    - Sexual abuse was the least common abuse allegation. (1 case)

- 1/3 of the cases were likely to have a second allegation. (8 cases)
- Mother was likely to be the perpetrator. (13 cases)
- Unlikely for the parents to reside in the common address recorded for removal. (17 cases)
- Likely to have an updated case plan in CWS/CMS. (26 cases)
- Cases were likely to involve Hispanic families (9 cases) or Caucasian families. (8 cases)
- Families were likely to have some form of housing (e.g. own home, renting an apartment of home, living with relatives or friends. (17 cases)
- Families were likely to either own their own vehicle (13 cases), use public transportation (10 cases) or both (2 cases).
- Families were likely to have some type of employment. (21 cases)

Assessment of Needs and Services
<u>Children</u>
- Needs likely to be assessed (26 cases)
- Needs likely to be assessed through:
  - social worker observations,
  - assessments conducted by non-CWS staff (e.g. developmental assessments, psychological evaluations),
  - communicating with caregivers, family members, school personnel, and service providers (e.g. therapists, public health nurse), reviewing the case file, and
  - conducting risk assessments.
- Needs likely to include:
  - therapy (i.e., individual or family),
  - medical (i.e., health or dental), and
  - a safe, nurturing and structured environment.
- Other needs included:
  - childcare, regional center services,
  - school,
  - housing, and
  - sexual abuse treatment.
- Services were likely to be available and accessible. (25 cases)
- Likely to have special needs. (11 cases)
  - Special needs included:
  - special education,
  - medical (e.g. failure to thrive),
  - psychological, language development (e.g. speech), and
  - hearing.

<u>Parents</u>
- Needs likely to be assessed (26 cases)
- Needs likely to be assessed through:
  - social worker observations,
  - review of the case file,

- risk assessments,
- communicating with service providers, family, collaterals, and family friends,
- results of assessments from psychological evaluations, psychiatric evaluations, substance and drug abuse reports, domestic violence reports.
- Needs likely to include:
  - domestic violence treatment,
  - therapy (e.g. individual, family or couples),
  - drug treatment (e.g. drug testing, after care, or treatment),
  - psychological evaluations,
  - parenting skill development,
  - in-home support services,
  - anger management, housing, and
  - transportation.
- Other needs included:
  - sexual abuse treatment,
  - education about how the child welfare system works, and
  - immigration.
- Services for parents were likely to be available and accessible. (24 cases)
- Unlikely to have special needs. (9 cases)

Case Planning
<u>Child</u>
- Unlikely to be involved because of age (15 cases)
  - If involved, likely was through review of the case plan with the child after it was developed or communication with the child about needs and to help develop the plan.

<u>Parent</u>
- Likely to be involved (19 cases)
  - If involved, likely was through review of the case plan with the parent after it was developed, communication with the parents about their needs to help develop the plan.
  - If not involved, likely was because the social worker did not develop or update the case plan.

<u>*Placement Stability*</u>
- Children were likely to have at least two to seven placements (25 cases)
  - One case had one placement
  - If multiple placements, it was likely because the child was:
    - initially placed in the County's shelter, and then (18 cases)
    - placed in a relative home (19 cases)
    - placed in a foster home (14 cases)

- ▪ Other reasons for multiple placements included:
  - abuse in the foster home, and
  - social worker not satisfied with the care provided by the caregiver.
- Children were likely to be placed in the same region as their parents (16-18 cases)
- Some or all siblings were likely to be placed together. (14 cases)
  - ▪ If not placed, together it was likely because:
    - there were insufficient adequate foster homes or relative/non-relative extended family member placements who could accept siblings together, or
    - the siblings were not part of the child welfare case.
- Family connections were likely to be maintained while the child was placed in out-of-home care through visitations and regular contact. (22 cases).
  - More likely when the placement was a relative or a non-relative extended family member.
- Placement connections were likely to be maintained half of the time. (11 cases)
  - ▪ Less likely when the child was too young to establish any community connections or the placement was located out of the child's original community.

Visitation
- Applicable to both timely and not timely family reunification cases.
- The pattern of visitation was observed to progress from supervised to unsupervised to overnights to trial home visits.
- The timing of the progression of visits varied and no clear trend was identified.
- Barriers to the progression of visits included:
  - parents' lack of progress,
  - parents' resistance to child welfare services,
  - children attorneys objections to progression of visits and needing their concurrence,
  - lack of transportation, and
  - lack of appropriate housing for visitations.
- Social workers were less likely to encounter any barriers when visiting children than when visiting parents.
  - Barriers to visiting parents included:
    - parents' work schedule,
    - parents' incarcerated,
    - parents' transient, and
    - parents' whereabouts unknown.

Supervisors
Trends
A total of 22 supervisors were interviewed. The following trends and recurring themes were identified.

➢ Best Practices that facilitate timely family reunification
  • Family Unity Meetings – Help locate relatives for placements and conduct quick relative assessments. Also, help identify support system and resources the family has. Lastly, it engages the family in the problem solving process.
  • Family Preservation Program (FPP) – It is a flexible program adaptable to the family's needs. Also, provides feedback to the case carrying social worker because the FPP worker has constant contact with the family. Lastly, the FPP helps the family remain focus and reunified.
  • Community Services for Families – These contract services providers facilitate quicker access to services because they are co-located in CWS offices.
  • Substance Abuse Recovery Management System (SARMS) – It helps address drug treatment and provides drug testing for clients presenting with alcohol and drug issues.
  • Visitation Centers – Provide a venue for families to have supervised visits.
  • Juvenile Drug Court – Monitors parents compliance with drug treatment and rehabilitation.
  • Indian Health Council – Working with this organization helps address the needs of Native American children.

➢ Supervisors processes with social workers that help with timely reunification
  • On-going risk assessments.
  • Focus on protective and safety issues for children.
  • Review of family strengths and progress.
  • Review court reports and narratives.
  • Ask about efforts for reunification.
  • Encourage contact with service providers and attorneys.
  • Joint decision making with community on Native American cases.
  • Monthly meetings
  • An open door policy.
  • Unit case reviews.
  • Case consultation
  • Discuss best practices at unit meetings.
  • Cover duty schedule or paperwork to help free up the social workers time.
  • Mentor new staff with experienced staff.

Recurring Themes

Recurring themes were present when the supervisors were asked about the significant themes they observe when working with family reunification cases.

The themes were as follows:

➢ Timely family reunification occurs when:
  • Social workers spend increasingly more time with the family.
  • The families are engaged via strength-based and non-adversarial interviews and interactions.
  • The family's support systems are identified and used.
  • Everyone involved in the case works as a team with (e.g. family, social worker, foster parents, community, service providers, attorneys, etc.).
  • Case plans are individualized, realistic and focused.
  • Graduated visitations (e.g. supervised to unsupervised to overnights to trial home visits) are facilitated.
  • Services are provided early during the case and the services are specific and individualized to the family's needs and characteristics.

➢ Not timely family reunification occurs when:
  • Parents lack knowledge about how the child welfare system works.
  • Parents lack insight into why they are involved in the child welfare system.

Court Officers

Trends

Seven Court officers completed the interview tool. The information gathered from the court officers revealed trends in the following areas:

➢ Agency's influence on family reunification decision:
  • Social workers have the greatest influence.
  • Supervisors have a low to medium influence.
  • Managers have no or medium influence depending on the manager.

➢ Court influence on family reunification decision:
  • Juvenile dependency judges have the greatest influence.
  • County Counsel and the dependency attorneys have a low to medium influence.
  • Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) have a low influence.

➢ Factors for successful family reunification:
  • The top two factors are (1) parents' compliance with the case plan and (2) parents' willingness and ability to participate in services by

their own initiative and with minimal guidance from the social worker.
- Other factors are (1) a working relationship between the social workers and parents, (2) parents' sobriety, (3) services offered in a timely manner, (4) sufficient visitation and (5) input from service providers (e.g. therapist).

Recurring Themes

The information gathered from the court officers revealed recurring themes in the following area:

➢ Court continuances in family reunification cases:
- Continuances slow down the family's progress towards reunification.
- Continuances delay the progression of visitations and frustrate families.
- Top two reasons for continuances are (1) to obtain more input from service providers and, (2) the bench officer requests additional information.
- The next three reasons are (1) the parents are not present at the hearing, (2) late court reports, or (3) improper notice to parties.
- Other reasons are (1) the child's attorney has not seen the child, (2) case has been set for trial or (3) no court report submitted.

VI.   Summary of Practice

Once the PQCR interviews were completed, the information recorded on the interview tools was compiled, analyzed and summarized. Strengths, barriers/challenges and training needs were identified. This information coupled with the Summary of Data (see Section II), resulted in recommendations for improvement in the area of focus (see Section IV).   CWS and Juvenile Probation compiled, analyzed and summarized their PQCR practice separately, as detailed below.

CWS: <u>Social Workers</u>
Factors that promote timely family reunification
  ➢ Attorneys for Children
    • Positive and trusting relationship with the child's attorney.

  ➢ Case Plans
  • Developing individualized case plans.
  • Reviewing protective issue, case plan and case progress with parents.

  ➢ Foster Parents/Caregivers
    • Foster parents/caregivers assisting and cooperation with family reunification efforts.

  ➢ Parents
    • Compliance with child welfare services.
    • Cooperation with child welfare services.
    • Motivation and determination to reunify.
    • Recognizing protective issue.
    • Making progress in services
    • Engaging in services early.
    • Parents' having appropriate housing.

  ➢ Service Providers
    • Positive working relationship with service providers.
    • Constant communication with service providers.
    • For Spanish cases, working with service provider Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF).

  ➢ Visitation
  • On-going and consistent visitations.

Social Work Practices that promote timely reunification
  ➢ Case Management
    • Engaging in conscientious case management.
    • Conducting on-going risk assessments.

- ➢ Communication
  - Have good communication with everyone involved (e.g. parents, attorneys, foster parents, other support persons).

- ➢ Placement
  - Finding a good placement for the child.

- ➢ Relationship Building
  - Establishing rapport with the family.
  - Treating families with respect, non-judgmental and positive attitude.
  - Helping the parents overcome resistance and frustration.
  - Spending time with the family (e.g. more time in the home).
  - Educate parents about how the child welfare system works.
  - Focusing on family strengths and appropriate support systems.
  - Help eliminate barriers to family reunification.
  - Supporting the parent-child relationship.

- ➢ Services
  - In-home support services.
  - Arranging for appropriate, culturally sensitive and individualized services (e.g. substance/drug abuse treatment, therapy, parenting classes, anger management etc.).

- ➢ Visitations
  - Ensuring visitations occur.

Challenges/Barriers to timely family reunification
- ➢ Agency
  - High caseloads
  - Multiple case transfers
  - Lack of time for social workers to complete all tasks.
  - Lack of support staff (e.g. transportation, word processing).
  - Conflicting opinions between social worker, supervisor and manager.
  - A lot of paperwork

- ➢ Parents
  - Parents' non-compliance with case plan activities.
  - Parents' lack of motivation.
  - Parents' delay in engaging in services.
  - Parents' denial of protective issue.
  - Parents' resistance.
  - Parents incarcerated.

- Parents' sporadic participation in services.
- Parents' lack of knowledge and understanding of how the child welfare system works.
- Unrealistic expectations of parents.
- Deportation of parents.
- Parents' lack of knowledge and understanding of how the child welfare system works.
- Relapses by parents with substance or drug addiction problems.
- Lack of transportation.
- Lack of housing.
- Lack of financial stability.
- A weak parent-child relationship.
- Families with multi-generation abuse.
- Immigration issues.

➢ Foster Parents
- Foster parents' with de facto status.

➢ Juvenile Court and Attorneys
- Court continuances
- Attorneys for children and needing their concurrence.
- Attorneys case managing cases.
- Social worker being second-guessed by the judges and attorneys.
- Legal timeframes too short.

➢ Placement
- Family and social work in different regions.
- Large sibling groups in different placements.

➢ Service Providers
- Vague reports from service providers (e.g. therapists, DIF).
- Lack of appropriate input from service providers (e.g. therapists).
- Drug testing not being random.
- Service providers not helping families (e.g. therapy).
- Insufficient Spanish speaking service providers.
- Having to make multiple requests for reports from service providers (e.g. DIF, therapists).
- Late reports from service providers (e.g. therapists).
- Waiting lists for services (e.g. domestic violence).

➢ Visitation
- Supervised visits lasting a long time.

<u>Supervisors</u>
The information gathered from the supervisors revealed the following:

Practice Strengths

➢ Social Work Practices that facilitate timely reunification
   • Engaging families in a non-adversarial manner.
   • Contact with service providers and collateral persons.
   • Developing good rapport with the attorneys.
   • Social worker going the extra mile to help families and believing in the clients capacity to change.
   • Being consistent with clients.
   • Maintaining and supporting the familial relationships throughout the life of the case (e.g. a lot of visitations).
   • Reviewing case plans with clients.
   • Good placement-matching for the child and foster parent.
   • Good supervision by supervisors.

➢ Impact of concurrent planning on family reunification cases
   • Informs parents of the importance of providing the child with permanency.
   • Works well when the prognosis for reunification is low.
   • Can motivate parents to engage in the case plan activities sooner.

Challenges/Barriers

➢ Agency
   • High social worker caseloads
   • Multiple case transfers
   • Low wages for social workers
   • Hiring social workers that do not have a social work background.

➢ Caregivers
   • Caregivers who have poverty, housing and drug problems.
   • De facto parents involved in a family reunification case.
   • Foster parents that do not believe in family reunification.

➢ Clients
   • Insufficient parent-child interactions.
   • Parents not ready in legal timeframes.
   • Families with complex service needs.
   • Parent's delay in engaging in services.
   • Intergenerational child abuse and chemical dependency issues.

> ➢ Concurrent Planning

- Creates an adversarial relationship between the family and the concurrent planning family placement.
- CSF workers do not want to work on concurrent planning cases because it is very frustrating due to the adversarial relationship between the family and the concurrent planning family placement.

> ➢ Juvenile Court

- Juvenile Court system is adversarial.
- Child attorneys are resistant to the social workers' recommendations.
- Judges make decisions contrary to the Agency's recommendations.
- Judges case managing cases.
- Child attorneys requiring social work staff obtain concurrence.
- Continuances

> ➢ Mental Health

- Clients with dual-diagnosis.
- Lack of culturally competent therapists.

> ➢ Services/Resources

- SARMS program does not really address the clients' chemical dependency/substance abuse problem. There appears to be a lack of in-depth treatment.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of support staff for social workers, especially for social workers working in rural areas.
- Lack of transportation for clients.
- Lack of services for rural areas.
- Lack of resources/services for bi-lingual clients
- Waiting list for services.
- Resistance from Indian reservations for cases involving American Indian families.

> ➢ Training

- Lack of drug education and its impact for social workers.

> ➢ Visitation

- Insufficient visitation centers.
- Non-purposeful visitations.
- Lack of visitation resources (transportation, scheduling).

<u>Court Officers</u>
Practice

➢ Completion of the case plan when the family is reunified

- Rarely is a family reunified without completing all of the case plan activities. There are instances a family may be reunified without all of the case plan activities being completed such as,
  - the parent is non-offending parent and really did not need the services, or
  - where the parent(s) have completed the major activities of the case plan.

➢ Information to the Juvenile Court for family reunification decisions

- Juvenile Court is being provided sufficient and adequate information to make informed reunification decisions.

Recommendations

An advantage of conducting the PQCR is that recommendations for improvement are made by the staff who are directly working with children and families. The recommendations may relate to training, systemic/policy changes and/or needed State technical assistance. The recommendations for CWS and Juvenile Probation are set forth below.

CWS: <u>Social Workers</u>
Training
- ➢ Foster Parents
  - Their role in family reunification cases.

- ➢ Social Workers
  - How to engage and work with parents,
  - Understanding the trauma of abuse, and
  - More on-the-job training during the initial social work training.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- ➢ Agency
  - Decrease caseload size for social workers,
  - Increase the number of social workers, and
  - Increase number of social workers working in the Indian Specialty Unit.

- ➢ Resources
  - Increase resources for housing,
  - Increase financial resources for families,
  - Increase in-home support services for families,
  - Increase number of therapists who accept Medi-Cal, and
  - Increase services for American Indian families.

- ➢ Court/Attorneys
  - Decrease caseload size so they can better understand what is happening in a case,
  - Increase preparedness of attorneys for court hearings, and
  - County Counsel act as stronger advocates for social workers at court hearings.

- ➢ Service Providers
  - Increase timely and consistent feedback from and follow-up by service providers (e.g. therapists),
  - Improve services and delivery of services for clients,
  - Develop services to help clients who are illiterate learn how to read,
  - Increase Spanish speaking providers,

- Improve services to adequately engage clients and improve functioning, and
- Evaluate the Treatment, Evaluation and Resource Management (TERM) team to identify its strengths, areas of need and how to improve the quality of services and therapists.

State Technical Assistance
No State technical assistance was identified.

<u>Supervisors</u>
Training

➢ Agency
- In-house training regionally on how to work together
- Day to day functioning of how CWS operates.
- How does it all fit together (small/big picture).
- Train managers and administration on the responsibilities of social workers and their duties.

➢ Cross Agency
- Cross-agency training with foster parents, attorneys, and social workers on family reunification.
- Training for therapists on what social workers need and parents need.

➢ Foster Parents
- Foster parents' role as a team member in family reunification cases.

➢ Social Workers
- How to communicate about concurrent planning,
- How to conduct effective assessment of a family's progress,
- Regional cross-program training,
- Attachment between the parent and child,
- Promoting positive parent-child interaction during visitations,
- Cultural competency (e.g. American Indian),
- Impact of maltreatment (e.g. domestic violence), and
- Resources available for clients.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- Obtain a grant to create a daycare center for foster parents.
- Obtain taxi vouchers for clients to use to attend services and visitations.
- Institute a mandatory meeting with the family, social work staff and other pertinent persons between the Detention Hearing and the Jurisdictional Hearing.

- Use Family-to-Family to develop relationships with foster parents and parents.
- Institute a conflict resolution process with foster parents and social workers (e.g. mediation) to minimize placement disruptions.

State Technical Assistance
- Same as social workers.

<u>Court Officers</u>
Training
No State technical assistance was identified.

Systemic/Policy Changes
- More timely reports from service providers.
- Reports from service providers that directly address the social workers' recommendations.
- Court reports that address the entire review period and the family's compliance.
- Supervisors' careful and detailed review of court reports to ensure recommendations are appropriate and correct.

State Technical Assistance
No State technical assistance was identified.