

A.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Child Services began the process of analyzing service availability, delivery and perceived effectiveness in September 2009. This planning process culminates in the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan (the Plan). The Plan encompasses the Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan, and Regional Service Plan. The Early Intervention Plan was completed historically to list and summarize child abuse prevention efforts in a county. The Child Protection Plan outlined the policies and procedures surrounding services delivered by the Department of Child Services to assess families after an allegation of abuse or neglect has been made. The Regional Service Plan outlined the intervention services contracted by DCS. The Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan and Regional Service Plan have been all combined into one plan, the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan.

The planning process to develop the Plan involved a series of activities led by a guided workgroup composed of representatives from the community. The activities included a needs assessment survey, public testimony, and review of relevant data. While DCS has several other mediums with which to determine effectiveness of DCS provided services, such as practice indicator reports, Quality Service Reviews (QSRs) and Quality Assurance Reviews (QARs), this process took that information and looked at it through a contracted service lens. The workgroup considered results from the QSR and practice indicators in conjunction with the needs assessment, previous service utilization and public testimony to determine the appropriate utilization of available services and to identify gaps in service. As a result, the workgroup developed a regional action plan to address service needs and gaps. The workgroup completed budget projections by service for the next fiscal year as well as the next biennial budget. It was assumed budget amounts would remain flat lined so the workgroup focused on how funds might be shifted.

Summary of Needs Assessment Survey and Public Testimony

A comprehensive needs assessment survey was conducted of key informants within the region to ascertain the perceived availability and quality of both services funded through the DCS, as well as other child welfare related services that are not funded by DCS. The needs assessment survey was structured to gain two types of information about local services; first, whether a service was available to families who resided in the key informant's county, and second, whether the key informants perceived these services (if available), as effective. A public hearing was also scheduled and held on September 11th, 2009 to ascertain any public input surrounding the provision of child protection services, local service needs, and system change. These two activities represented the DCS's attempt to gain information from sources both in- and outside the agency regarding the service offerings, service needs, provision of services, and suggestions toward system change within each region.

Results from the needs assessment survey indicated a *lack of accessible services* [region-wide] surrounding the following items:

- lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgendered/questioning youth supports,
- inpatient drug treatment for juveniles,
- gang prevention services,
- adult/child mentoring programs,
- family shelter care,
- translation services,
- transitional services for youth aging out of the foster care system (transitional independent living (IL) services),
- multicultural outreach services,
- shelter care for runaway and/or homeless youth, and
- inpatient drug treatment for adults.

Further, the lowest *effectiveness ratings* [region-wide] were found for the following services:

- lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgendered/questioning youth supports,
- gang prevention services,
- services to fathers,
- multicultural outreach,
- inpatient drug treatment for juveniles,
- teen pregnancy/sex education,
- shelter care for runaway and/or homeless youth,
- domestic violence counseling for perpetrators,
- inpatient drug treatment for adults, and
- inpatient mental health counseling for youth.

The public hearing garnered no testimony from attendees. That is, while a number of individuals attended the public testimony, no one chose to testify.

Summary of Services, Prevention and Intervention that are Available in the Region

Comprehensive service array listings for both prevention and intervention services are listed in Section H of this plan. The availability and accessibility of these services was also evaluated by the regional workgroup to identify any barriers that might exist for families in their county. A coding system was implemented for this discussion and those results are also summarized in Section H. The regional workgroup found prevention services satisfactory at this time. Working with the Community Partners for Child Safety provider, the Regional Services Council (RSC) has benefited from the latitude necessary to implement their desired prevention programs. While this satisfaction relates directly to those services that it can fund through allocations specifically designated for prevention services, some action steps (detailed in Section K., item b.) are meant to be preventive in nature. More specifically, services aimed at engaging fathers, as well as strengthening adult/child mentoring efforts within the region will serve as a resource for prevention efforts among families at risk of abuse or neglect, as well as strengthen and be available in cases where intervention services have been warranted.

Findings from the service array discussions that the workgroup held revealed a number of barriers surrounding adoption services, sex offender/victims of sex abuse treatment services, as well as affordable child/day care services. First, adoption services seemed to be used at a fairly low frequency; however, when they are needed it seemed that there was some confusion between what services were to be provided under what DCS-funded service standard, along with which providers are contracted for these services within the region. Next, sex offender/victims of sex abuse treatment was perceived to have barriers related to the target population identified in the DCS service standards. Further, concern regarding the ability for children to receive services

who had been victimized by a non-custodial or out-of-home family member or acquaintance was voiced. Lastly, service array discussions involving affordable child/day care indicated the existence of accessibility barriers. Waiting lists for families wishing to use child/day care vouchers were identified as a common problem within the region. The need for varied hours of operation among child/day care providers also seemed confining for families with variable work schedules.

General regional workgroup discussions uncovered concerns surrounding several areas that mirror findings from the needs assessment survey. More specifically, inpatient drug treatment continues to be a concern within the region, whereas the cost of delivering this service to both adult and juvenile populations, as well as the absence of a local facility was a recurrent theme. With prohibitive funding and cost restraints, along with the absence of a local facility, the problem with delivering these services will require more research for possible alternatives to garner evidence-based outcomes. Also discussed was the degree of follow-along services that families and children can access within the region, once their case has been closed. Much like inpatient drug treatment, the cost and feasibility of these services deem that further information be gathered on possible alternatives (such as mentoring) to reduce the likelihood of families and children re-entering the DCS system past case closure.

Summary of Spending by Budget Categories

Summary of spending that occurred across calendar years 2007 and 2008 (as well as annualized spending projections for subsequent state budget year 2010) is included in Section I., item b. of this report. Budget categories included in this section are: Care of Wards in Foster Homes, Care of Wards in Institutions, Preservation Services, Miscellaneous Costs of Wards, and Medicaid Rehabilitation Option (MRO) costs. All information regarding spending in these budget categories was reported from the DCS Fiscal Department.

Summary of Regional Plan

Regional workgroups assimilated the relevant data as described, and worked to come to a consensus on those areas that require distinct action steps to be carried out over the biennium. The areas identified as priority were services to engage fathers and adult/child mentoring services.

First, services to engage fathers will encompass the region holding a summit that includes relevant service providers and community stakeholders familiar with these services. Once this summit has taken place, a workgroup will be invited to convene (by the Regional Manager) regularly. This workgroup will be charged with the development of a training curriculum that will be made available to both prevention and intervention service providers within region. Regular progress reports will be given to the RSC. This curriculum will be appropriately “packaged” for the community resource or provider (whereas, content will be catered to the appropriate agency (such as schools, probation departments, etc.)) and be made available through the Regional Manager. Also, training on this curriculum will be held for both DCS and probation staff within the Region from a trainer that will be approved through the RSC.

Next, work to strengthen adult/child mentoring services with a strong focus on multicultural issues was identified as a regional priority for the biennium. One Local Office Director will be identified to serve as chairperson, and thus be responsible for constructing a workgroup for this initiative. The stakeholders that comprise this workgroup will focus on multiple populations as they gather and coordinate mentoring resources (maintaining a strong

focus on multicultural issues). This workgroup will then work to compile a listing of the available mentoring supports and networks that are available within the region into a “resource guide.” This guide should address mentoring services for multiple populations (e.g. LGBTQ issues, gang prevention, adult/child mentoring, translation services, and multicultural outreach). Regular progress reports will be given to the RSC. Upon the resource guide’s completion, it will be distributed electronically and made widely available within the region (to DCS, probation, 211 call centers, public schools, etc.).

Summary of Unmet Needs

The Region 7, Regional Service Council will continue to have a standing agenda item for the RSC meetings entitled “Service Gaps/Needs.” Through discussion held under this agenda item, the RSC will continue to monitor the unmet needs and service gaps in Region 7 and will continually assess the manner in which the Council can address these gaps/needs. While several unmet needs were identified through data collection procedures, such as LGBTQ issues, gang prevention, and inpatient drug treatment for juveniles, more information will be required to attempt to address these services directly. The current action steps included in this plan were selected to not only provide the detailed products and services to the region, but also to assess the regional need and feasibility of a more direct approach to these unmet needs.