



**HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE**



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Back row: Robert O. Turley, Richard L. Skeate, Thomas Wilkin, Ernesto Armenta
Front row: Marilyn J. Trombetta, Sandra Shahn, Kristen Suzanne Atkinson, Marilyn Tolone,
Dianne D. Tolbert



HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The Human Services Committee of the Grand Jury has the responsibility of investigating and reviewing social services in the County, including:

- Animal Regulations
- County Library
- Economic Department
- Fairgrounds
- Hospital
- Housing & Community Development
- Human Services
- Juvenile Hall
- Mental Health Services
- Nonprofit Corporations
- Parks & Recreation
- Public Health
- School Districts, including County Superintendent of Schools
- Veterans Services
- Weights & Measures

The following departments or agencies were reviewed:

- Department of Aging and Adult Services
- Department of Probation
- Department of Behavioral Health
- Children and Family Services

The Grand Jury examined a citizen issue involving a County department, finding the agency in question was in compliance with County policy.

The following reports are included in this Final Report:

- 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness
- Alternatives to Detaining Juvenile Offenders
- Children and Family Services

10-YEAR STRATEGY TO END HOMELESSNESS

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury investigated the progress to date of the 2007 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness Report.

In part, the contents of this report revealed that a coalition of members came together spearheaded by the Fifth District Supervisor. The Supervisor was able to bring together colleagues, board members, County government agencies, mayors, and a host of faith-based and private organizations to support this mission. The formal name of the group was the San Bernardino County Homeless Partnership 10-Year Planning Committee.

In March 2008, after an exchange of ideas, the committee adopted 25 recommendations which read as follows:

- 1) Implement countywide homelessness prevention strategies to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless.
- 2) Use funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), for supplemental resources including rental assistance and utility assistance.
- 3) Implement a community outreach and education campaign that raises awareness about households at risk of becoming homeless and provides information about resources available through homeless prevention programs. The effort was to leverage the 2-1-1 System (Homeless Resources) for easy access when appropriate.
- 4) Formalize protocols and improve the coordination of discharge planning so that new persons do not find themselves living without social and economic supports.
- 5) Establish a Central Contact Center that would respond to community calls and concerns for traditional street outreach and engagement and/or assertive community treatment.
- 6) Expand Street Outreach and Engagement Services to include multi-disciplinary practitioners and services.

- 7) Expand Street Outreach and Engagement Services to include volunteers from various community groups.
- 8) Establish Regional One-Stop Centers which contain standardized intake and assessment with related protocols to guarantee consistency between regional centers. The social services to be included are: employment, healthcare, housing placement, mental healthcare, substance abuse counseling and treatment with coordination between private and public agencies.
- 9) Use a comprehensive tool that determines potential eligibility for mainstream resources and integrate this tool into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- 10) Appropriate case management services should be available to all homeless persons whether they are on the street, in emergency shelters or transitional housing or receiving permanent supportive services. Also, re-establish new Continuum of Care Programs which link case management with HMIS.
- 11) Develop and execute a rapid exit strategy focusing on early identification and resolution of the barriers to housing through case management services in order to facilitate the return of a homeless person to permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- 12) Implement a Rapid Re-Housing Approach for Households with dependent children.
- 13) Increase the number of emergency and transitional housing units.
- 14) Implement a Housing First Approach which is the belief that homeless families are more responsive to interventions and social services when living in their own housing.
- 15) Obtain more shelter plus care certificates. This housing assists homeless individuals and families with mental illness, chronic substance abuse and/or infected with HIV/AIDS with long-term affordable rental housing, and increases the participants' independent living skills.
- 16) Increase the number of permanent housing units with an emphasis on the development of Safe Havens. This includes apartment buildings, single and multi-family housing, single room occupancy and low-demand units requiring clients to abstain from alcohol and drug use and not to exhibit threatening behavior.
- 17) Encourage all local jurisdictions to adopt an inclusionary housing policy that requires a certain percentage of new housing to be affordable to extremely low and very low income residents.

- 18) Assess the feasibility of a Housing Trust Fund for County and local levels of government. Six counties in the State of California have created housing trust funds which support the production and preservation of affordable housing.
- 19) Expand the capacity of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) so that agencies may make better use of data, decrease time and effort at intake and enhance the planning and development functions of the Continuum of Care. HMIS is a Congressional Housing of Urban Development (HUD) Directive for understanding the homeless and measuring program effectiveness.
- 20) Conduct periodic Homeless 101 Training concerning community issues such as:
 - a) law enforcement policies and homeless persons,
 - b) responses by residents, business employees, and homeless persons,
 - c) appropriate actions and responses by social service providers when contacted by the above-mentioned,
 - d) information distribution concerning resources and referral contacts.
- 21) Increase awareness of the collaborative Justice Courts and alternative sentencing programs for defendants experiencing homelessness. Courts included are: Homeless, Adult Drug, Mental Health and Veteran. This would be for the purpose of reducing state costs and ultimately improving public safety.
- 22) Implement and educate the community on the principles, goals and recommendations of this report.
- 23) Enlist the support of faith-based organizations to help implement the goals and recommendations of this report.
- 24) Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness for San Bernardino County charged with coordinating and evaluating policies concerning these recommendations and related activities within the plan.
- 25) Appoint the partnership members as an advisory body to the Interagency Council and appoint representatives as standing members to the Interagency Council.

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury reviewed the 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness report in its entirety and agreed to follow-up on various components of the Planning Committee, conducting a number of interviews.

FACT 1

The Office of Homeless Services, Department of Behavioral Health (OHS) was created in 2007 as the result of the Board of Supervisor of the Fifth District. Their role is primarily administrative and to support the Homeless Provider Network (HPN), Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), faith-based and non-profit organizations. The agency also promotes, coordinates and ensures that the Continuum of Care encouraged by HUD is carried out by agencies providing homeless services.

Since establishment of the Homeless Services Division, HUD has required this agency to count on a biennial basis, a point-in-time estimate which has resulted in a lower number of the homeless population. Each city in San Bernardino County is now required to account for its own homeless population when requesting funds. The population of the homeless in 2007 was 7,331. This number includes all homeless, sheltered and unsheltered. In 2011, there were 2,876 individuals and families homeless; 1,692 unsheltered; 1,039 sheltered and 145 hotel/motel vouchers.

In an effort to obtain an accurate accounting of the homeless, hundreds of volunteers are solicited to participate in this activity. It requires the agency at least six months to coordinate this event.

The OHS participates with San Bernardino County Homeless Partnership in hosting homeless summits and providing information in bridging the gaps of homelessness. Twice a year, "Homeless Project Connects," a community organization, sponsors free on-site services, resources and referrals for low-income individuals and families. Also, there is no limit to the time that a homeless individual may reside in low-income housing. There is only a permanent housing supply as per HUD rules, especially if a person is disabled.

The OHS indicated that additional housing had increased since inception of the program. Also noted, there had been an increase in the number of emergency and transitional housing units. In addition, the Pettis Memorial Veterans Hospital located in Loma Linda works closely with veterans who have become homeless, servicing most of their needs.

An initial recommendation made by the 10-Year Planning Committee included implementing a management information system (data collected on the homeless). Since 2007, this implementation has been in place and administered by the Community Action Partnership (CAP).

San Bernardino County law enforcement agencies are participating in ongoing training, specifically crisis intervention. The San Bernardino County Sheriff Department has established a

direct line of communication for obtaining assistance for the homeless. There is a button mounted on the dashboard of their vehicles enabling them to contact the 2-1-1 Helpline System. The operators of this system are a part of United Way and provide information about various services available.

Since AB 109 was implemented, homeless individuals are referred to Homeless Court. The court works with the Probation and Sheriff Departments with re-entry providers for assistance.

The Continuum of Care is composed of agencies which apply for federal grant dollars on a competitive basis. Applications are made once a year. The OHS is responsible for contacting and monitoring agencies who submit applications for funding. The OHS is not a pass-through agency; instead the federal government transmits funds directly to the specific agency applying.

The OHS has been successful in receiving over \$8,000,000 during the past three years for the Continuum of Care agencies throughout San Bernardino County. Of the \$8,000,000, \$3,000,000 are for new programs and \$5,000,000 for renewal programs.

In 2009, the President of the United States signed the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition of Housing Act (HEARTH) formerly known as the McKinney-Vento Act established by HUD for Continuum of Care Programs. The funds provided are Emergency Solution Grants (ESG) and Emergency Food and Shelter Programs (EFSP) for food, which are directly from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

In October 2012, the OHS supplied the Grand Jury with a report entitled: Recalibrating for Results: A Three-Year Evaluation of the 2009-2019 San Bernardino County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

The evaluation was overseen by the San Bernardino County Homeless Provider Network Committee chairs in cooperation with the San Bernardino County Office of Homeless Services and the Institute for Urban Initiatives. The evaluation began January 2011 and ended June 2012. The 10-Year Strategy was adopted in 2009.

As a result of the initial recommendations 15 were renewed, expanded upon, folded into new recommendations and others were eliminated.

The amended recommendations included the following:

- 1) Adopt and implement Housing First Model

- 2) Community Outreach, Engagement and Treatment for chronically homeless individuals and families
- 3) Obtain Shelter +Care Certificates
- 4) Increase Permanent Supportive Housing Beds
- 5) Carry out Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (VASH) Vouchers
- 6) Implement Rapid Re-Housing Strategy
- 7) Target Homeless Prevention Resources and Services
- 8) Implement a Community Outreach and Education Campaign concerning those at-risk of homelessness
- 9) Formalize protocols and improve the coordination of discharge planning
- 10) Ensure access to Mainstream Resources
- 11) Expand Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- 12) Conduct periodic Homelessness 101 Training for law enforcement personnel
- 13) Implement Coordinated Assessment and Access system for assessing homeless services and needs
- 14) Increase Permanent Affordable Housing
- 15) Increase opportunities for employment

FACT 2

The Homeless Provider Network (HPN) is composed of non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, community based organizations, and faith-based institutions working together to deliver homeless related services. HPN participates in monthly meetings and operates under established bylaws which are reviewed annually.

HPNs are not specifically monitored; however, any agency participating in the Continuum of Care and receiving funding must be in compliance with the requirements of HUD.

One of the goals of the HPN is to reach out to other agencies and encourage them to become involved in this program. This is accomplished by word-of-mouth, linking into the County's website and networking.

The HPNs have been successful in reaching the homeless. This is demonstrated during their monthly meetings as each HPN showcases its accomplishments and report on the number of homeless they have impacted.

Also, the Grand Jury received information concerning the Point-In-Time Count activity. This was a count of the homeless scheduled to take place on January 24, 2013. The participants involved in this event include: police, code enforcement, services providers, non-profits, county and city employees, faith-based organizations, college students and a host of community volunteers.

FACT 3

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a central database operation wherein demographics and vital information collected by local participating agencies is maintained on the homeless entering the system.

All information the agency collects on the homeless is placed in a database. This information is to be kept current in order to satisfy HUD requirements. HMIS encourages local agencies to refine their use of this data in a timely manner. By doing so, this reduces time and effort in storing and retrieving client information.

HMIS is also responsible for furnishing computers and data equipment to the local agencies for tracking the homeless in the County of San Bernardino. Participating members are trained in the use of this equipment either on-site or at HMIS location in compliance with HUD criteria. HMIS is responsible for providing error record reports, changes it receives from HUD and forwarding this information to the local participating agencies. Although HMIS is the central location for maintaining data records on homeless clients, it is the local agencies responsibility to retain hard copies of this information as well. In addition, agencies are required to collect the following: intakes, assessments, case notes and service provider names. The time limit for maintaining these records at the agency level is seven years specifically mandated by HUD.

As a result of this record-keeping practice, additional housing will be provided. At present, the housing structure is as follows: emergency shelters, 24 hours; emergency housing, 30 days and transitional housing, two years.

FACT 4

In developing a 10-Year Strategy to End Chronic Homelessness political figures came together, including the Board of Supervisors, various county departments, city mayors and a host of other community partners, to support this mission.

In 2004, it was discovered there had not been a comprehensive approach in addressing the homeless issue. The Grand Jury found in the early stages of the process, resistance existed among various counterparts upon attempting to secure funds for homeless programs, and that Community Action Partnership (CAP) was an ongoing resource for providing funding for the homeless programs.

Since 2007, there has been a substantial increase in the homeless population. Today there are more single parents with children and the fastest and largest growing homeless population is single men with children.

2013 Point-In-Time Count

On January 9, 2013, members of the Grand Jury attended a two-hour evening training session conducted by the County of San Bernardino. The session was attended by approximately 45 participants. The attendees were instructed in the do's and don'ts of counting the homeless. Teams consisted of a lead person gathering the data on the homeless using the instrument provided; the counter who observes the numbers and a lookout who is watchful of the surroundings for all parties. The attendees were advised to be polite, respectful and safe in conducting this task.

On January 24, 2013, the Grand Jury braved the cold and rain to arrive at the designated deployment center at 5:30 a.m. After a brief meeting, volunteers were en-route to their assigned areas.

Over 400 volunteers participated in the local region. Once information had been gathered, supplies were provided to the homeless consisting of such items as soap, socks and other toiletries.

The results of this survey required by HUD will help the County of San Bernardino determine how they will be able to help the homeless exit life on the street and better serve the community.

Since 2007, the Grand Jury found a significant amount of information and effort has gone into the 10-Year Strategy Plan to End Homelessness. A number of County agencies and representatives, partners, private and faith-based organizations have provided their support to adhering to the initial 25-recommendations.

ALTERNATIVES TO DETAINING JUVENILE OFFENDERS

BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury conducted an overview of programs provided by the Probation Department focusing on juvenile offenders. The Chief of the Probation Department and management staff have made significant changes to align their system with modern practices in juvenile rehabilitation. Innovative programs designed to target first-time juvenile offenders and those at-risk of becoming an offender have been developed. The Grand Jury found the following juvenile community corrections programs warranted further review:

- Day Reporting Centers,
- Gateway Placement Program,
- Specialty Courts –Drug Court,
- Youth Accountability Boards.

Onsite visits, reviews and interviews with each administrative staff of the programs were conducted.

The County Probation Department supervised 3,593 juvenile offenders during 2011; 594 juveniles committed a new felony or misdemeanor while a current ward of the court (that is a recidivism rate of 8.49% of all wards of the court). In 2009, 13 minors were committed to the State Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). It is projected by the Department the numbers are trending toward a 30% reduction in DJJ commitments for 2012. The average daily population of juvenile detainees is 291.

All juveniles arrested in San Bernardino County and booked into a Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center are given a Correctional Officer-Offender Management Profiling Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) assessment, which is an analysis of the immediate risks and needs of the minor. A probation officer is assigned the juvenile case and conducts a review prior to being processed through the formal Juvenile Justice Court system. This investigation is the basis for determining if the juvenile will be referred to a diversionary program or processed through the formal court. The decision is based upon the level of offense, juvenile history and a desire on the minor's part to change their plight. It is the goal of the department to determine the level of supervision most appropriate for the juvenile. The focus of the Probation Officer investigation is to evaluate the juvenile's risks and needs, including those of the family, in order to assist in preventing the juvenile from reoffending.

FINDINGS

Day Reporting Centers (DRC)

There are three centers in San Bernardino County:

- Montclair DRC,
- High Desert DRC,
- Central DRC.

This program requires the juvenile to report daily to the center for probation oversight and counseling. High school education, with courses approved by the National Curriculum and Training Institute, combined with vocational training is provided. Additional courses in substance abuse, anger management, parenting and life skills are offered. Family and individual counseling is available.

Personal and vocational skills such as cooking, horticulture, home repair and financial management are taught. General Education Development (GED) preparation and testing in lieu of achieving a High School Diploma is also available. Juveniles have been ordered by the Court to attend these centers for a specified period of time under Court identified terms and conditions.

There are two levels of classification at the DRC: Level One means they are not on formal probation. Level Two means they are on court ordered probation, which is further divided into informal and formal. Formal is a Summary Court order and a mandatory six month evaluation. Informal is a low level crisis situation, e.g. shoplifting, marijuana use, or destruction of property/damage for which the minor must pay restitution or serve community service hours. Formal probationary juveniles are usually not able to return to their school/district if they have been expelled from school for any number of reasons, e.g. fighting, weapons, or drugs.

The juvenile probationers must meet with their Probation Officer (PO) every 30 days. Minors who have been arrested for drug use or alcohol violations are required to give daily urine samples. The DRC is connected with the Wraparound Program which is designed to help a minor and family create stability in all areas of their lives and provide services which will fit their needs and culture.

Individuals in the House Arrest Program report to the DRC, helping to reduce the population of juvenile detention centers by providing a supervised in-home program. Both parent and minor agree to abide by the rules for the intensive supervision. These rules include: wearing a Global Positioning System tracking device; mandatory school attendance; and/or completion of behavior modification classes at the DRC.

Gateway Placement Program (Gateway Program)

The program was designed with the passage of SB 81 in 2007, which realigned the juveniles with specific offenses to the Juvenile and Probation Departments of the jurisdictions where the offenses had occurred. The juveniles start in Phase I in a juvenile detention facility where they have been sent by the Court. Phase II, is placement into a comprehensive diversionary program known as the Gateway Program. It has a 24/7 facility with a staff of 35 and a capacity for 40 candidates. The program consists of males only. There are no plans at this time for a program for females.

The participants must be between the ages 16 and 18 but can remain until age 19, if circumstances dictate. An individual can participate if on psychotropic drugs; however, cannot if diagnosed with a serious mental issue. An individual must be recommended by probation staff for the Gateway Program. A potential candidate is evaluated for educational aptitude and psychological readiness. Interviews are conducted by a committee of multi-disciplined staff at the juvenile detention center. This allows for a collective evaluation to determine their juvenile's potential for success in the program; not all juveniles are eligible.

There is a full-time teacher with a fully-equipped classroom for GED, continuation high school and college entrance preparation. It is a locked facility; however, the individuals are able to leave the facility under supervision after they have gone through transitional levels. They may be involved in Regional Occupational Program (ROP) vocational training in landscaping, which has a contract with San Bernardino County to provide landscaping services at various buildings. Earnings from the contract go into a Trust Fund for cultural activities and field trips which would not otherwise be available to the participants. AmeriCorp, the Urban Conservation Corps and the Workforce Development Department are partners with the Gateway Program to provide the participants with options for employment or vocational training.

Through a '*pass system*' and on an '*honor basis*,' participants may leave the Gateway grounds unsupervised to attend college classes or maintain employment. This intensive program is for 18 months. The juvenile is reviewed at 12 months and if all the requirements are met, i.e. GED and vocational training, he can be granted an early release at 15 months. When the program is completed, the juvenile could have additional months to serve out his probationary sentence. Follow-up contact for six months after program completion is performed to ensure the juvenile maintains the lifestyle changes.

The offender must be serious about changing his life to be successful in this program. He must be self-motivated because he will be going back into the same neighborhoods and cultural environments as before.

Specialty Courts – Drug Court

The Juvenile Drug Court is an intervention program for minors who are on probation and require strict monitoring to stay clean and sober. This program is a collaborative effort among professionals in the Juvenile Court, District Attorney’s Office, Probation Department, Public Defender’s Office and community treatment providers. The collaboration is focused on total support of the minor to maintain a drug-free life. Drug Court is designed with “The Drug Court Ten Key Components,” which cover the integration of alcohol and drug treatment services with the justice system, with frequently monitored drug testing. A coordinated strategy with other related treatment and rehabilitation services forges partnerships among the courts, public agencies and community-based organizations.

The Drug Court program was originally developed in 1989 by the Attorney General for the State of Florida. Drug Courts in the State of California are funded by Proposition 36, the Substance and Crime Prevention Act of 2000. It costs approximately \$60,000 per minor to be treated in a drug court versus approximately \$150,000 per year for incarceration. According to a UCLA study released in 2006, Proposition 36 is saving California taxpayers \$1.4 billion over a five year period.

Unique to this program is the active participation of the Drug Court team in the decision-making process regarding the juvenile’s judicial case. Minors are approached from a non-adversarial position and encouraged with moral support and incentives to complete the program. Before the Drug Court hearing, the judge will receive a progress report prepared by the Drug Court team showing drug testing results, school attendance, participation and cooperation in the treatment program. The judge asks questions and talks with the minor about any problems he may be having. Good progress is awarded with an incentive. Common incentives are gift certificates and being praised by the Drug Team. Negative behavior may be sanctioned by warnings, increased court appearances, detainment in juvenile hall or termination from the program.

Drug Court is a program divided into four intervention phases, described in the chart on the next page. The juvenile must successfully complete each phase before transitioning to the next phase.

DRUG COURT INTERVENTION PHASES			
Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
60 days in duration	60 days in duration	60 days in duration	60 days in duration
30 consecutive days of sobriety	45 consecutive days of sobriety	55 consecutive days of sobriety	60 consecutive days of sobriety
Compliance with counseling, family & group treatment	Compliance with counseling, family & group treatment	Compliance with counseling, family & group treatment	Compliance with counseling, family & group treatment
Weekly attendance in Drug Court	Bi-weekly attendance in Drug Court	Attendance every 3rd week in Drug Court	Attendance once a month in Drug Court
Prepare and present to Drug Court & family a thoughtful Proposal of their progress before moving to the next phase	Prepare and present to Drug Court & family a thoughtful Proposal of their progress before moving to the next phase	Prepare and present to Drug Court & family a thoughtful Proposal before moving to the next phase	Proposal presented at graduation ceremony

Source: Juvenile Drug Court Handbook

The final proposal is prepared and presented at a special graduation ceremony describing lessons learned in the program and goals and objectives for their future. The ceremony provides opportunities for the drug team and loved ones to congratulate and celebrate with the juvenile for successfully completing the Drug Court Program and establishing a drug-free life. Graduation from Drug Court provides the juvenile with the eligibility for terminating probation and sealing his record.

Youth Accountability Boards (YAB)

This juvenile intervention program is made up of committed adult volunteers from communities throughout the County. There are 142 active volunteer members who participate on 15 Boards. The Boards are divided into panels of three or four members. The Boards meet on a monthly basis or more often if necessary. Volunteers apply for the Board positions, subject to background checks and fingerprinting protocols. Volunteers consist of retired teachers, counselors, and other professionals. The Probation Department screens, interviews and selects community members who are considered to have the desire and motivation to mentor juveniles within their neighborhoods. YAB is a diversionary program for first time offenders of low level infractions. Is also serves to alleviate caseloads of Probation Officers. During the fiscal year 2010-2011, this program served 661 youth.

The YAB operates on an informal basis with the juvenile and voluntarily with their family. The Probation Officer refers the juvenile to YAB for services, but it is up to the Board to accept the case; rarely are cases not accepted. The Board Member designated as the Social Investigator contacts and interviews the family and juvenile. It is the Social Investigator's responsibility to gather as much information about the case as possible, while getting to know the minor. The interview is the tool used to develop rapport. A date is scheduled for a presentation of the family and minor to the Board or a panel of professionals by the Social Investigator.

The presentation includes mandatory rules to be followed and may include community service hours to be completed in a contract format which is agreed to be the minor, family and YAB. Contracts usually cover a four to six month period of time. Failure to comply with the contract could result in the minor being immediately returned to the Probation Department for processing through the Juvenile Court System. During the contract period, a YAB member, assigned to monitor and mentor the minor's progress, will visit with the minor at least once a month. The visits are to discuss any concerns or situations occurring which are inhibiting the minor from successful completion of the contract. The YAB volunteer encourages and assists in trouble-shooting alternatives to addressing situations productively. These interactions are intended to teach the youth their community cares about them.

A goal of the YAB program is to model to the juvenile that delinquent behavior has consequences and they will be held accountable for their actions. Also, YAB provides the family with resources and guidance in developing productive interactions with their children. Every successful youth who completes the YAB program may be one less offender whom law enforcement may not have to re-arrest. Upon reaching the age of 18, if the minor has had no further violations, he may apply to the Probation Department to have his juvenile record sealed.

YAB is a concerted community-based effort in deferring first-time youth offenders from re-offending. This program assists law enforcement to reduce juvenile crime and lessens Probation Officer workloads for handling more dangerous delinquents. YAB members have the opportunity to participate in resolving juvenile crime within their community. Minors and their families have the opportunity to interact in a positive and constructive manner with other members of the community.

COMMENDATION

The San Bernardino County Probation Department has demonstrated through leadership and innovation bold changes can be made to align the juvenile system with modern practices in diversion and rehabilitation. When faced with limited resources and greater demands for juvenile supervision, the Department has developed and implemented programs which best utilize department staff, multi-disciplinary resources and community partners. The programs are working; juvenile recidivism rates in San Bernardino County have been trending downward since a high of 10.19% in 2008 to 7.47% for the first 10 months of 2012.

To their credit, the Department has been contacted by various agencies from around the world, to discuss, review and conduct on-site visitations, for their award-winning juvenile diversionary programs.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

BACKGROUND

The 2012-2013 Grand Jury chose to revisit Foster Care, which was last visited by the 2005-2006 Grand Jury. Foster Care is the central operation of Children and Family Services (CFS).

A major organizational redesign process is underway at CFS. At the request of CFS, the County Board of Supervisors had commissioned a consultant to conduct a \$250,000, six-month study to redesign CFS. The consultant recommendations report had just been published and the period of guidance for initiating their Business Redesign Project was coming to a close.

Another significant internal development at CFS was the impending 2012 Self-Reassessment, a major measure of accountability for the agency. It is essentially a report of the System Improvement Program (SIP), a three-year effort to improve operations and services of CFS. In 2009, a multi-agency, stakeholder taskforce had selected four SIP goals for CFS to work toward and helped devise a methodology for achieving them.

The Grand Jury also noted two external sources of change imposed on CFS by the State Legislature within the current fiscal year. The first change was the result of Assembly Bills (AB) 118 and 16, which respectively realigned state funding for CFS to the County level and redirected specified tax revenues to fund this effort. The other change resulted from AB 12, which extended CFS services to children 18-21 years of age under specified conditions.

In view of the major changes confronting the entire agency, from within and without, the Grand Jury decided to elevate our look at Foster Care to a more comprehensive investigation of CFS.

The stated mission of CFS is “to protect endangered children, preserve and strengthen their families, and develop alternative family settings.” The agency is funded primarily with federal and state funds. CFS maintains a staff of approximately 800 employees in ten offices in six regions of the County. There are usually about 5,000 children in the system. The average caseload for intake social workers, those who initially screen, assess and recommend placement for referrals, is 25. For carrier social workers, those who monitor the care and treatment of those in foster care is 30. Carrier caseworkers are legally mandated to visit children in their caseload at least once a month.

In its operations, CFS is a partner in a collaborative coalition of related human services, law enforcement, and court agencies. In addition to foster care, CFS conducts adoptions as a permanency option for some foster children. Foster parents are recruited at civic and faith-based

events. Those selected are trained in parenting skills and relevant law and best practices for foster parenting.

CFS is a large and complex public organization. Therefore, the Grand Jury narrowed its focus to three areas: the redesign, agency accountability, and its presentation to the public.

FACTS

1. THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE: CFS REDESIGN PLUS MANDATED CHANGES

In the redesign study, the researchers employed a wide array of social science methods to study employees: surveys, interviews, focus groups, job shadows, and ride-alongs in the field. The consultant observed that 437 responses to the staff-wide survey indicated a high level of interest in the research. The researchers also surveyed foster parents and conducted a Visioning Session for associated agency stakeholders to look into the long-term future for CFS.

The Redesign's comprehensive, structural and operational opportunities for change go to the core of CFS operations. The redesign report, "San Bernardino Business Redesign Final Recommendations," recognizes specific existing strengths, and details opportunities for change in 13 major elements of CFS operations. The first five elements emerged from focus group discussions among CFS employees, which began in 2007. The consultant added the remaining elements. Two pilot programs, in place before the study began, anticipated two major elements. Major recommendations of the redesign include:

- conversion of existing "blended units" consisting of both intake and carrier social workers, into side-by-side intake units and carrier units (A prior pilot study had been conducted.);
- addition of a swing shift from 2:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. to cover the high-demand period after 5:00 p.m. (prior pilot study);
- increased geo-staffing, i.e., distributing cases by zip code;
- smaller caseloads through more effective risk management training;
- rotation in staff between intake and carrier units;
- creation of a Lead Worker position;
- technological improvements such as laptops, cell phones and Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation enabling workers to use their time more productively, particularly in the field;
- increased cross-training of some staff positions;
- changes in support staff responsibilities; and
- more effective communication and use of meetings.

The 147-page Report contains a detailed plan for implementation of the changes to be introduced as time, funding and personnel resources warrant. A CFS attachment to the Report

revealed the initial steps CFS is taking in the redesign. The redesign's summary, as quoted below, reveals as much about the current state of CFS as it does its hopes for the future.

Change has already begun at CFS. Making the decision to implement some of the higher priority recommendations can heighten the ability of San Bernardino County to offer enhanced, sophisticated, practice-oriented services to children and families. It can also ease the workload and number of tasks that programs are responsible for. It should mobilize the workforce toward change, accountability, engagement, commitment and better child welfare outcomes overall. It should move the agency toward becoming a learning agency supported by excellent leadership, aligned goals, enhanced and evidence based practices. It should mean that children achieve more timely response, timelier reunification with their families, and more timely permanency if they cannot go home. It should mean that staff will be happier and even more proud of working for CFS so that they will want to stay and build long careers dedicated to the CFS community.

2. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

CFS views its primary means of evaluating its operations and justifying its budget is through setting and measuring progress toward achieving:

- two goals imposed on itself annually and
- four System Improvement Plan goals selected by a multi-agency oversight group from a federal list to be achieved over a multi-year period.

Regarding SIP goals, the Grand Jury received another major document, "CFS 2012 County Self-Reassessment." It is essentially the SIP report of CFS progress toward achievement of four California Child and Family Review goals selected and set by the agency task force in 2009. They are as follows:

- C1.3 - Reunification Within 12 Months (Entry Cohort) - This measure computes the percentage of children reunified within 12 months or removal for a cohort first entering foster care.
- C3.1 - Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care) - This measure computes the percentage of children discharged to a permanent home prior to turning 18 who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer.
- C3.3 - In Care Three Years or Longer (Emancipation/Age 18) - This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements while having been in foster care for 24 months or more.
- C4.3 - Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months in Care) - This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements while having been in foster care for 24 months or more.

The Self-Reassessment is a 209-page, highly technical document. It includes an extensive plan for achieving the goals in the time allotted in which the four goals became eight, which were expanded into 26 strategies and 85 milestones. In the final analysis, the outcomes were mixed:

- C1.3, a decrease from 41.6 to 39.6%;
- C3.1, a decrease from 24 to 22.9%;
- C3.3: a positive decline from 61.5 to 56.1%; and
- C4.3: an increase from 32.6 to 36%.

The last section of the Self-Reassessment acknowledges the redesign and how it might offer opportunities for improvement in the structure of CFS, its operations, and its service delivery and outcomes.

3. THE PUBLIC FACE OF CFS

The Grand Jury was given an annual report for 2011 and a pocket folder of miscellaneous applications, forms, and other documents utilized by the agency.

CFS publishes two annual reports. One is brief and is prepared as part of the County Human Services Annual Report. CFS indicated that the other Annual Report was “boilerplate” and intended for an internal audience. It also appears on the CFS Intranet. As this investigation was drawing to a close in response to inquiries, the Grand Jury received a final draft of the 2012 Annual Report (to be published at a later date).

The Annual Report contains:

- a listing of independent CFS programs, and those performed in collaboration with other agencies, indiscriminate as to relative importance;
- a recitation of “accomplishments:” numbers of children served in some capacity or activity in that year; and
- a “testimonial,” a narrative account of one child’s experience out of 5,000 in the system.

Although the 2012 draft Annual Report is more attractive and colorful and has more narrative content and pages, conformity to the boilerplate was still evident. Statistics comparing CFS operations over time and with other counties and the State were absent. In its 2011 report to the County, CFS does present a table on referrals over several years, but no outcome measures are reported. The section’s text states, “CFS has the ability to produce reports based on very specific criteria including demographics, program information services provided, and case information.”

Such statistics are not only available, but CFS produces them in-house. One internal document given to the Grand Jury, “Department Assessment Management Reports: August 2012” (DAMR) provides 17 pages of comparative tables on CFS performance on multiple measures over the prior year and regions of the County. The DAMR provides evidence that CFS can compile summary data and present it in more comprehensible terms than the Self-

Assessment. In addition to the DAMR, the Grand Jury was given a loose, single-page line graph showing a decline in the number of children in the system with the successive implementation of new programs from 1999 to the present.

These documents were prepared by CFS' own statistics unit. This unit tracks clients and sends the data off regularly to the University of California at Berkeley. On two occasions, a CFS executive referred the Grand Jury to data from the website of the Center for Social Services Research, School of Welfare, U.C. Berkeley. The website tables do provide extensive data comparing our local CFS performance with other counties, and the statewide figures over time. As informative as this site is as a source for agency accountability, it is not referenced in any CFS publications except for its central role in the outcomes of the opaque Self-Reassessment.

The final element of CFS' public face: in the 21st century, the Internet has become a primary resource of information for a great many people including those seeking information on CFS.

FINDINGS

1. Regarding the evaluation and assessment for accountability to the public

- The one-time-only redesign presents a vivid, revealing and un-retouched candid snapshot of CFS, which stands in contrast to the usual documentation CFS presents. Its pattern of identifying strengths and recommending opportunities for change in 13 elements implies a measure of accountability.
- CFS has an obligation to measure its accountability to the public and express it in terms which can be understood by the public.
- Normally CFS publications include:
 - CFS' brief contribution to the Human Services Annual Report, which is a public document;
 - the bound Annual Report, which contains little in the way of accountability, and the intended audience is CFS, not the public;
 - documents such as the DAMR provide some insight into CFS operations, which are not available to the public; and
 - the Self-Reassessment, based on the SIP results (formerly published after three years, now extended to five years), is clearly intended for a professional audience, not the public.
- Two annual goals are cited in the CFS Report incorporated in the Human Services Annual Report and other publications, yet the Grand Jury was unable to readily find the outcomes for these goals reported in either CFS public documents or on the CFS website. They are cited in the Human Services Department annual budget.
- CFS' current method of reporting evaluation of its effectiveness and accountability to the public is inadequate. It is too dependent on the outcomes of the periodic SIP goals and the unreported outcomes of annual internal goals. This makes it difficult for the public to be able to determine if CFS is operating effectively within its budget.

- CFS has a statistics unit, which can generate data to enhance the CFS image and communication with the public.

2. Regarding the public face of CFS

- Except for the raw numbers, the Annual Reports vary little from year-to-year. This year's delayed and expanded draft still follows the formula.
- CFS reports lack a date of publication and clear attribution as to the person(s) responsible for their publication or whom to contact for further information.
- The Grand Jury finds that the CFS website is lacking in informative value and is out-of-date.

COMMENDATION

The Grand Jury commends the CFS Executive team for having the foresight to establish pilot studies in the field; for seeking employee initiatives since 2007 to develop proposals for change, which eventually were incorporated in the Redesign; and recognizing the need for significant changes in the structure, management, and operations of CFS; and responding with the commission for, and implementation of, the Redesign. (Finding 1-1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

13-9. CFS devise more suitable means of reporting its accountability to the public in an annual publication presented in understandable terminology and easy to access. Go beyond the simple listing of CFS operations and numbers of children served on one hand, and the complexity of the Self-Reassessment on the other, to explain how CFS operates and evaluate how well it functions. (Finding 1)

13-10. Enhance the Annual Report for this purpose. Use available data already compiled by the CFS statistics unit to construct tables to compare the County CFS performance over a period of years, and with other counties and the State averages. In addition, horizontal branching diagrams could:

- track clients, starting with referrals and ending in permanency alternatives;
- summarize operational programs;
- indicate their respective percentages;
- clarify their relative importance; and
- illustrate their interrelationships.

Include the Report's publication date and attribution to the person(s) responsible for its composition and/or a contact person for clarification or further information in this and other CFS documents. (Findings 1, 2)

13-11. Reexamine the actual and prospective uses of, and intended audience(s) for, the CFS Annual Report. (Finding 1)

13-12. Update and enliven the CFS website and maintain it routinely. Post such things as the Redesign, the Annual Reports, goal outcomes, public relations releases and news articles, staff commemorations and vignettes, and other materials to heighten public interest in, and estimation for, the agency. (Finding 2)

<u>Responding Agency</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Director, Children and Family Services	13-9 through 13-12	08/28/13