



PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SPECIAL MEETING

August 25, 2017

APPROVED

ACTION SUMMARY MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
John Leopold	Chair, First District Supervisor	Present	12:30 PM
Zach Friend	Vice Chair, Second District Supervisor	Present	12:30 PM
Ryan Coonerty	Third District Supervisor	Present	12:30 PM
Greg Caput	Fourth District Supervisor	Present	12:30 PM
Bruce McPherson	Fifth District Supervisor	Present	12:30 PM

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

3. Consider tour of the Lost Childhoods: Voices of Santa Cruz County Foster Youth art exhibit, conduct dialogue with representatives of the foster youth community, and accept and file Human Services Department's brief overview of the County's Child Welfare Program, as outlined in the memorandum of Chair Leopold

ACCEPTED and filed the report, toured the Museum of Art & History *Lost Childhoods: Voices of Santa Cruz County Foster Youth* art exhibit, and conducted dialogue with representatives of the foster youth community

RESULT: ACCEPTED AND FILED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Greg Caput, Fourth District Supervisor
SECONDER: Bruce McPherson, Fifth District Supervisor
AYES: Leopold, Friend, Coonerty, Caput, McPherson

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Four people addressed the Board

**APPROVED AND FILED
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

DATE: _____, 2017

**COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
CARLOS J. PALACIOS
EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE BOARD**

BY: _____, DEPUTY

Approved: _____
JOHN LEOPOLD
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest: _____
SUSAN GALLOWAY
Clerk of the Board

Date: _____
09/12/2017

NOTE: This set of Board of Supervisors Special Meeting Minutes is scheduled for approval by the Board on September 12, 2017



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 500, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4069
 (831) 454-2200 • FAX: (831) 454-3262 TDD: (831) 454-2123

JOHN LEOPOLD
FIRST DISTRICT

ZACH FRIEND
SECOND DISTRICT

RYAN COONERTY
THIRD DISTRICT

GREG CAPUT
FOURTH DISTRICT

BRUCE MCPHERSON
FIFTH DISTRICT

Meeting Date: August 25, 2017
Date: August 18, 2017
To: The Board of Supervisors
From: John Leopold, Chair, Board of Supervisors
Subject: Child Welfare Overview, and Lost Childhoods Art Exhibit Tour and Associated Dialogue

There are 60,000 youth in California's foster care system. They struggle to avoid homelessness, prison, and social stigma. Their stories- of loss and resilience- are often unknown. *Lost Childhoods: Voices of Santa Cruz County Foster Youth and the Foster Youth Museum* showcases the stories, struggles, and triumphs of youth who are aging out of foster care. You will see personal belongings of foster youth, stunning photography by Ray Bussolari, and four different art installations foster youth created with artists Bridget Henry, Melody Overstreet, Elliott Taylor, and Nada Miljkovic. This exhibition was created with the Foster Youth Museum and the Museum of Art and History's Creative Community Committee (C3) - a group of over 100 local foster youth, artists, and youth advocates.

Today's special meeting will reveal what happens in foster care and concrete ways to support child welfare through this exhibit while also creating a powerful platform for discussion and action in Santa Cruz County as Board members converse directly with foster youth.

Included as an attachment is a brief overview of the County's Child Welfare program.

It is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that this Board accept and file the report, tour the *Lost Childhoods: Voices of Santa Cruz County Foster Youth* art exhibit, and dialogue with representatives of the foster youth community.

Submitted by:



John L. Leopold, Chair, Board of Supervisors

8/18/2017

Attachments:

- a Child Welfare Services Overview

Accepted and Fil
08/25/2017 Special Meetir
Board of Supervisors

OVERVIEW OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



Prepared by the Human Services Department
August 25, 2017

Attachment: Child Welfare Services Overview [Revision 1] (DOC-2017-793 : Child Welfare Overview, and Lost Childhoods Art Exhibit Tour and

Overview of Child Welfare Services in Santa Cruz County

The County of Santa Cruz is mandated by state and federal law to provide child welfare services to children who have been, or are at risk of being, abused or neglected, and to operate programs that enable children to remain safely in their own homes. If it is determined that a child cannot safely remain in their home, the County is required to place them with resource families, that include relatives, non related extended family members, or other appropriate placements until the children can be safely returned to their parents, adopted, or placed in the care of a legal guardian who will provide permanency for them.

The Human Services Department works closely with both public agencies (e.g., Juvenile Court, Health Services Agency, County Counsel, Probation Department) and several key community partners to form a system of care in this county and to meet child welfare mandates. The partners work together to provide a variety of services, such as parenting support, mental health, financial support, substance abuse, and educational assistance to children and families. The partners also collaborate to assess the child welfare and probation systems and create a system improvement plan as required by the State. In the most recent self assessment, Santa Cruz County met or exceeded national standards on 16 of 19 performance measures. Some examples of positive outcomes in the past fiscal year include:

- Ninety-four percent of children who experienced maltreatment did not experience a second incident of substantiated maltreatment within 6 months
- Half of all children who were in out-of-home care for 12—23 months were either reunified with their families, were adopted, or attained legal guardianship, compared to the federal standard of 44 percent
- Almost 50 percent of children in out-of-home care were placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members, compared to the Statewide average of 36 percent
- Approximately two-thirds of the children were placed with some or all of their siblings

In FY 2016-17, all child welfare agencies in California began implementing a set of changes known as Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). Established through Assembly Bill 403, authored by Assemblymember Mark Stone and signed by the Governor in 2015, CCR will reshape services for children and youth in the foster and probation systems as a means to achieve improved child well being, placement stability and permanency outcomes. The implementation of CCR reforms began on January 1, 2017 and continues through 2019 when the new reform features will be fully operational. The overarching goal of CCR is to support and improve well being and permanency for children and youth in foster care and in the probation system by 1) decreasing long-term use of group care, 2) expanding capacity of home-based family care, and 3) identifying and meeting children's medical, emotional/behavioral, developmental, and educational needs.

This major effort, to be carried out over the next several years, eliminates long-term group home placements for foster youth and replaces them with several levels of care intended to meet the child's needs including Short Term Residential Treatment Programs, therapeutic foster homes, and wrap around services for relatives and non relatives. CCR also requires a revamped approval process for all families and programs that care for children out of their family of origin.

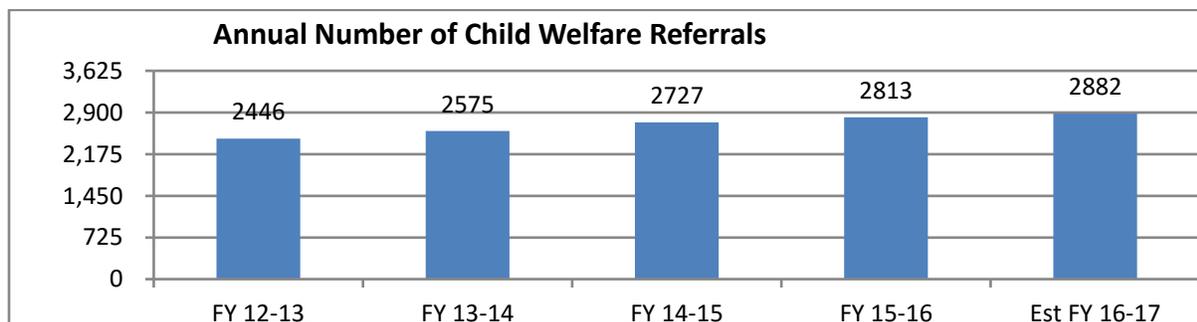
Overview of Child Welfare Services in Santa Cruz County

The Family and Children's Services (FCS) division with the Human Services Department provides child welfare services to children and families with offices located in both North and South County. Child Welfare programs and services in this division include Screening and Investigations (formerly Emergency Response), Ongoing Child Welfare Services, (including Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, and Permanency Planning), Teen/Supportive Adolescent Services, Adoptions, and Resource Family Approval.

Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations

All reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are received by the FCS Investigations Unit. Social workers in the Investigations unit are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to investigate reports of abuse or neglect and determine whether a child is in need of protection. If possible, the social worker provides crisis intervention services to stabilize the family situation and develops a plan with the family to care for the child safely at home. If the social worker determines that it is not possible to maintain the child safely at home, a law enforcement officer takes the child into protective custody and the social worker places the child with an appropriate relative or in an approved resource family home. A Juvenile Court petition must be filed within 48 hours of removal to temporarily detain the child. The social worker must then develop a plan with the parents to remedy the problems that led to the child's removal by working with them to develop supports and a case plan.

The number of total referrals received by the FCS Investigations Unit by year is shown below. On average FCS investigates approximately 60% of these referrals as some do not meet the screening criteria and are not appropriate for child welfare involvement.



Ongoing Child Welfare Services

When it is determined that families need assistance beyond the allowed 30-day investigations period, the ongoing services unit works with families to develop court-approved case plans with the goal of keeping the child safe, maintaining the child in the home when possible, or returning the child to the home as soon as the conditions creating the abuse or neglect are resolved. When reunification with the family is not possible, the child is provided with permanency planning services in order to develop a long-term placement plan that often includes adoption or guardianship.

Family Maintenance Services

The Family Maintenance Services Program assists children at risk of abuse or neglect who remain in their own homes or who return home after residing in an out-of-home placement. The

Overview of Child Welfare Services in Santa Cruz County

Program's goal is to help families remedy the conditions that endangered their child while the child remains at home. Services may include intensive counseling, parenting skills training, and other related services. A successful Family Maintenance program builds the capacity and ability of families to keep their children safe and moves families out of the child welfare system as soon as the family can address their risk factors and ensure the safety of the child.

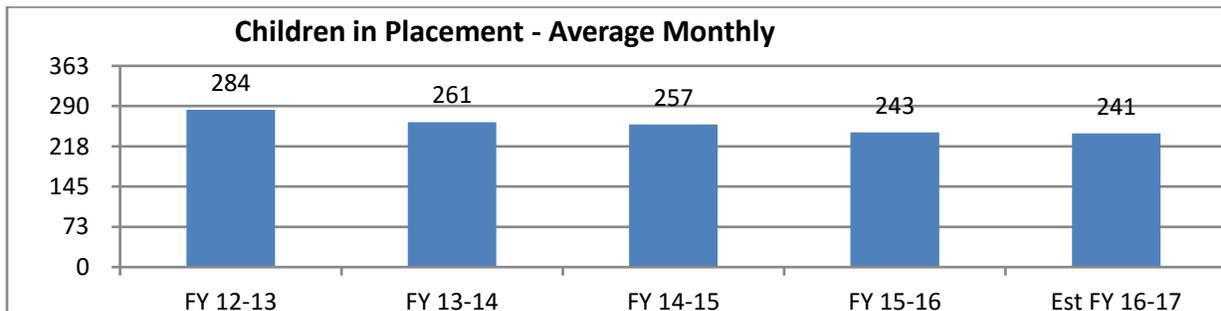
Supportive Adolescent Services

Child Welfare Services provides support services to adolescents, many of whom have been in foster care placement for an extended period. Supportive Adolescent Services is a collaborative program with Children's Mental Health and Encompass Community Services, which prepares older teens for independent living once they leave the child welfare system. This intensive program helps youth establish a relationship with a significant adult to support them as they transition out of foster care. A broad continuum of independent living skills services is provided to assist these adolescents in accomplishing education and employment goals.

Supportive Adolescent Services also offers transitional housing and other housing assistance, both of which provide a supportive environment and specialized services to assist youth in their transition to an independent adult life. Since 2007, the County has provided enhanced housing, case management, and independent living services to former foster youth under the State-funded Transitional Housing Placement Plus program.

Family Reunification and Permanency Planning Services

The Family Reunification program provides services to families with the goal of safely returning children home. If Family Reunification services are unsuccessful and a Judicial determination is made that a child cannot be returned home, then a permanent placement must be made and the child enters the Permanency Planning Program. The chart below shows the average monthly number of children and youth in out of home placements. For children under the age of three or who have siblings under age three, State and federal laws limit the duration of child welfare services to six months in order to reunify children with their families or provide a permanent plan in a timely manner. The Juvenile Court may extend services beyond six months if the parent has made significant progress toward reunification.



HSD contracts with Community Bridges to provide resource parent liaisons at La Manzana and Live Oak Community Resource Centers; these liaisons contact caregivers on a monthly basis to provide support and assistance. Foster parent training and support groups also provide assistance to foster parents and relative caregivers throughout the County. A Placement Review Committee, including staff from HSD, Children's Mental Health, Probation, and

Overview of Child Welfare Services in Santa Cruz County

educational providers, meets regularly to ensure that children in group home placements are receiving the appropriate level of care.

Adoptions

As a licensed adoption agency, the Human Services Department is able to accept relinquishments from parents who wish to give up a child for adoption. The major workload of this program, however, is on behalf of children in foster care. In order for a foster child to be adopted, the Juvenile Court must permanently terminate the parents' rights to the child and order a permanent plan for the child's care. On average for the past few years, approximately 45 children were adopted per year. FCS, in conjunction with the Juvenile Court, holds an Adoption Day each year in November to celebrate and finalize adoptions. This year the event is scheduled for November 3, 2017.

Resource Family Approval Unit

The Resource Family Approval (RFA) Unit approves families and homes to take placement of children in foster care. In addition, the RFA Unit provides support services to resource families, which include relatives, non-relative extended family members (NREFM), and other non-relative families. Department staff makes determinations about the suitability of homes and caregivers, evaluating each home's capacity for meeting the needs of hard-to-place children. Staff also investigates complaints against facilities.

When seeking an appropriate placement for a child entering the Foster Care system, staff first attempts to identify a relative or non-relative extended family member who is suitable and willing to care for the child. Because placement with a relative or NREFM is typically less traumatic to children than placement with a stranger, HSD staff make intensive efforts to find relative/NREFM placements for children. When a relative or NREFM placement cannot be identified, the child is placed in a non-relative approved home. Approximately half of the children in out-of-home care reside in relative placements.

Like other communities in the State, Santa Cruz County continues to experience challenges in recruiting and retaining resource family homes. Although the number of children placed with relatives has increased, significant recruitment efforts are still required to maintain sufficient resource family homes to meet the needs of children in out-of-home placement. In order to address this, FCS is working with MIG, a social marketing consulting firm, to recruit resource families that are willing to take placement of children with high needs. Research on what resource families need in order to care for foster youth has already been completed. Currently, FCS, Juvenile Probation, and MIG are developing a social marketing strategy that will help increase the pool of resource families willing to take placement for the most vulnerable foster youth.

Average Monthly	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	Est FY 16-17
Number of Licensed Foster Homes	106	113	125	130	139