

**California
Child and Family Services Review
2008 System Improvement Plan**



San Luis Obispo County
March 2, 2009

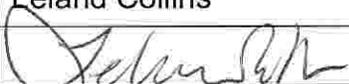
California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan

County:	San Luis Obispo
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency	San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services
Period of Plan	November 1, 2008-October 30, 2009
Period of Outcomes Data	Quarter 4 2007, July 2008 Quarterly Data report
Date Submitted	March 2, 2009

County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan

Name	Belinda Benassi
Title	Program Manager, Child Welfare Services
Address	PO Box 8119 San Luis Obispo, CA 93403
Phone/Email	805-781-1841 bbenassi@co.slo.ca.us

Submitted by each agency for the children under its care

Submitted by	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name	Leland Collins
Signature	

Submitted by	County Chief Probation Officer
Name	Kimberly Barrett
Signature	

Table of Contents

SIP Narrative.....	4
Planning.....	4
Data Collection and Findings.....	6
Summary Assessment from the County Self Assessment.....	7
System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement.....	7
PQCR.....	9
SIP Plan Components.....	11

I. SIP Narrative

A. Planning

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services and Probation Department conducted a joint Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) in October-November 2007. The theme of the PQCR was "How can we improve our rates of re-entry into foster care?" During the series of interviews with Deputy Probation Officers and Social Workers, focus groups with supervisors, public health nurses and foster parents, as well as a final group discussion, the departments were able to gather valuable information regarding the need to improve and strengthen Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation processes, especially around the topic of re-entry in to foster care.

Immediately following the PQCR, in January 2008, the Department of Social Services and the Probation Department began their joint County Self-Assessment (CSA) process. A CSA Advisory Group was formed, comprised of representatives from the Department of Social Services, Probation, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Services, the Independent Living Program and the Children Services Network. The Advisory Group was tasked with overseeing both the planning of the public comment process and the writing of the CSA report.

It was decided to seek public commentary through a series of community forums. These forums were held in each of San Luis Obispo County's three regions: North County, South County and the Central Region. Over 200 invitations were sent out to community partners, foster youth and parents and 82 people participated in the forums. The Advisory Group decided that the focus of these community forums would be on the three areas that the Department of Social Services and the Probation Department needed to work on the most:

- Timely response to child abuse and neglect referrals
- Re-entry of children into foster care
- Establishing permanent connections for youth before they age out of foster care

The Advisory Group developed a series of nine questions designed to garner feedback on these issues:

- #1 What has your experience been regarding the responsiveness and timeliness of the agency's action related to your report?
- #2 Are there areas that you see as a way for the Juvenile Probation Department and/or Child Welfare Services to be more timely?
- #3 How has the timeliness or responsiveness of the agency affected your relationship with the agency?
- #3a How has the timeliness or responsiveness of the agency affected the family you called about?
- #4 What do you believe are important elements or issues facing our families, after they leave Child Welfare Services and/or the Juvenile Probation Department?
- #4a What are the services they might need?

- #5 From your perspective how can the Juvenile Probation Department and/or Child Welfare Services contribute to increase the success rate of families who are involved in reunification services, thereby avoiding re-entry into care?
 - #6 Do you think there are missing services that contribute to children going back into foster care?
 - #6a If so, what are they?
- Achieving successful launching means:
- Preparing the youth with skills for managing adult life
 - Creating a meaningful permanent connection to provide support in the first decade of adult life.
- #7 What can Child Welfare Services and/or Juvenile Probation Department do to support these two important components of successful launching?
 - #8 What can the community do to support these two important components of successful launching?
 - #9 Understanding that the County's Self Improvement Plan process addresses children who are already involved with Juvenile Probation Department/Child Welfare Services, do you have any additional thoughts in how we can improve our processes?

Peggy Cordero, a trainer from the Central California Training Academy, acted as facilitator for all three forums. During the forums, participants were provided with an overview of the Self-Assessment process, as well as an explanation of areas that the Department of Social Services and the Probation Department identified as strengths and areas needing improvement. Participants were then asked the nine questions and given two hours in which to brainstorm responses in small groups. In closing, each group reported their feedback back to the larger group.

Additionally, the same nine questions were posted in English and in Spanish as a survey on the Department of Social Services' website, and the community was encouraged to go on-line to provide feedback. 16 people responded to the on-line survey. The responses gathered at the forums and from the on-line surveys have been incorporated the System Improvement Plan.

The County Self-Improvement Plan (SIP) was developed out of information gathered from the PQCR, the County Self-Assessment, data provided by State and Federal government resources, and input from community partners and Department of Social Services and Probation staff. Recognizing that a variety of perspectives is required if change is to occur in the community's response to vulnerable children and families, input was gathered from both public and private parties.

The County of San Luis Obispo Probation Department and Department of Social Services would like to thank the individuals listed below for their valuable contributions to the County Self-Assessment, the Community Forums and the System Improvement Plan. The process would not have been possible without their expertise and input.

- Matt Aydelott, Cuesta College, Independent Living Program
- Peggy Cordero, Central California Training Academy
- Joyce Fields, Department of Social Services, Program Manager, Information Reporting Team

- Reva Gonzales, Children's Services Network
- Kelly Hartman, Cuesta College, Independent Living Program
- Dennis Johnson, Probation Department, Supervising Deputy Probation Officer
- Jannine Lambert, Department of Social Services, Staff Development
- Katie McCain, Cuesta College, Independent Living Program
- Christopher Monza, Department of Social Services, CWS Program Manager
- Jill Powers, Department of Social Services, Staff Development
- Robert Reyes, Probation Department, Superintendent of Juvenile Services
- Elise Roberts, Department of Social Services, Regional Manager
- Jim Salio, Probation Department, Assistant Chief
- Carol Wagner, Department of Social Services, Staff Development
- Liz Woods, Central California Training Academy
- Kim Wooten, Department of Social Services, CWS Program Manager

B. Data Collection and Findings

Management from both the Department of Social Services and the Probation Department considered all of the feedback gathered during the PQCR and the CSA. Recurring themes included:

- The need for increased services
- The need for improved communication
- The need for increased training, especially mandated reporter training
- Lack of resources (for example, staff, support and equipment)
- Sustainability of services, follow-up, and after-care plans
- The need for additional Wrap-Around services
- Lack of Mental Health services
- Increase in Drug and Alcohol abuse, especially methamphetamine use
- Housing and high cost of living
- The need for more parenting support groups
- Lack of transitional services, after-care plans, and support groups

San Luis Obispo County decided to focus on fewer outcomes for the 2008-2011 SIP, in order to focus on our targeted goals and to utilize our limited resources in a more efficient manner. The information collected from the PQCR and CSA led to the decision to focus on reentry and recurrence of maltreatment. Although current budget constraints may limit the availability and expansion of services, the SIP incorporates these concerns by pledging to continuously look at current practice and ensuring that families receive the most appropriate services. Once the County has met the goals for these selected outcomes, data will be analyzed to determine which outcomes to focus on next.

Additionally, the State requires that all Safety Outcomes for which the County did not meet state standards be included in the SIP. San Luis Obispo County also reviewed and integrated information from the most recent Grand Jury reports, as well as the Family-to-Family and Linkages work plans. Therefore, the targeted outcomes for San Luis Obispo County's 2008-2011 SIP include:

- Timely Response (Immediate Response Compliance and 10-Day Response Compliance) (2B)
- Timely Social Worker Visits with Child (2C)
- No Recurrence of Maltreatment (S1.1)
- Reunification within 12 months (C1.1)
- Reentry Following Reunification (C1.4)
- Exits to Permanency (C3.1)
- Placement Stability (C4)

The System Improvement Plan is a three-year plan with updates to the State due annually. The Department of Social Services and the Probation Department will meet to review progress on the SIP and make any changes needed to insure successful implementation of the plan. Updates will be provided to the County Board of Supervisors, staff, community partners, and the general community.

The Department of Social Services' Information Reporting Team uses Business Objects to create reports and other tools used for tracking progress on outcomes and measures. Additionally, Safe Measures is used to track compliance and identify training needs. The Probation Department will soon be implemented a new case management system, Monitor, and it is anticipated they will also be able to develop tracking systems. These programs, along with data received from UC Berkeley, provide the supervisors and managers with the information needed to assess progress on outcomes and measures.

C. Summary Assessment from the County Self Assessment

1. System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement

San Luis Obispo County's Department of Social Services and the Probation Department continue to perform well on most of the California Child and Family Services Review outcomes; however a few outcomes have been identified as needing improvement. The County Self-Assessment Advisory Group identified three outcomes in which the county will focus on to improve upon; timely response, re-entry and youth emancipating from foster care. As this is San Luis Obispo County's second tri-annual review, the Advisory Group decided to focus on fewer outcomes, in the hope that the County System Improvement Plan will be more realistic, with goals that can be accomplished in a shorter period of time.

Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect

San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services and Probation Department continues to strive to:

- Increase the safety and stability of children within their own families
- Keep children in their homes whenever possible, or in the homes of family or friends
- Keep children in their own community
- Use a collaborative team approach to assist the family
- Limit the amount of placement moves, and
- Reunify children as quickly as possible, often with in-home follow-up services

At this time, this is not an area that has been targeted for improvement. The Department of Social Services and the Probation Department has decided to focus their attention on other areas in greater need of improvement.

Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

For the months of April 2007 to June 2007, San Luis Obispo County had a total of 518 referrals. Of those 518 referrals, 91 Immediate Response referrals were completed timely which resulted in a 92.9% immediate compliance rate; 266 10-day response referrals were completed timely which resulted in a 63.3% 10 day compliance rate.

The Advisory Group has identified timely response as one of the three outcomes to be addressed in San Luis Obispo County's next System Improvement Plan. Timely response was discussed in the community forums, on-line questionnaire, and the Emergency Response/Intake Social Worker survey. The three recurring items that were mentioned by all of the responses received were:

- The need for improved communication
- The need for increased training, especially mandated reporter training
- Lack of resources (for example, staff, support and equipment)

The Department of Social Services has already started discussions with Emergency Response and Intake Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors, and Management on how to improve our compliance rates for immediate, 10-day, and timely monthly Social Worker visits.

Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing re-entry to foster care

As of June 2007, of all the children reunified during the year, 25% reentered foster care in less than 12 months. Increased emphasis continues with PRIDE training for resource families, Family-to-Family, and greater Social Worker engagement. The Advisory Group identified re-entry of children back into foster care as one of the three outcomes that will be addressed in the next System Improvement Plan for San Luis Obispo County.

Re-entry was addressed in the County Self-Assessment Community Forums, on-line questionnaire, and the Emergency Response/Intake Social Worker survey. The following recurring items were mentioned in the community forums and on-line questionnaire, in regards to issues facing families after they leave Child Welfare Services and/or Probation:

- Sustainability of services, follow-up, and after-care plans
- The need for additional Wrap-Around services
- Lack of Mental Health services
- Increase in Drug and Alcohol abuse, especially methamphetamine use
- Housing and high cost of living
- The need for more parenting support groups

The family relationships and connections of the children served by Child Welfare Services will be preserved, as appropriate

San Luis Obispo County continues to have a higher than average rate of initial placements in relative homes. For the month of June 2007, out of 443 children placed in out of home care placed by the Department of Social Services and Probation:

- 235 of the children were placed with a relative
- 81 of the children were placed in a Foster Family Agencies
- 53 of the children were placed in a Foster Family Home
- 55 of the children were placed in a Group Home
- 12 of the children were placed in unspecified homes, and
- 7 of the children were placed with a guardian

San Luis Obispo County strives to place all of the children who are removed from their homes with relatives or non-related extended family members (NREFMs) – close family friends and/or someone already connected to the child, such as the child's best friend's family. In the period from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007, data from the UC Berkeley Center for Social Services (CSSR) shows that 50.5% of children in foster care in San Luis Obispo County were placed with family and friends.

Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood

The Department of Social Services contracts with Cuesta College for the Independent Living Program and additional Permanency Planning Social Workers. San Luis Obispo continues to try new innovative methods to assist the youth in their transition to adulthood. Social Workers are currently being trained on using the 3-5-7 Model of Engagement. Assisting youth to emancipate from foster care was addressed in the community forums and on-line questionnaire. The following recurring items were mentioned in the community forums and on-line questionnaire, in regards to issues facing youth as they prepare to manage adult life:

- Lack of transitional services, after-care plans, and support groups
- The need for additional training in life skills
- Lack of Mental Health Services
- Helping youth identify their strengths and passions and develop them
- Increase in Drug and Alcohol abuse, especially methamphetamine use
- Housing and high cost of living
- Lack of collaboration, communication and coordination of services amongst agencies
- Vocational classes have been cut from high school

2. PQCR

The 2007 San Luis Obispo County Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) process involved collaboration between the Probation Department and the Department of Social Services and focused on the theme of re-entry into foster care. In addition to the interviewing of Social Worker Workers and Deputy Probation Officers, focus groups were held involving supervisors, community partners and stakeholders. This expanded PQCR process

provided richer information from a wider variety of partners and participants. The results indicate that the participants, no matter their origin, were engaged successfully in the PQCR process. Social Workers, Deputy Probation Officers and Supervisors are all passionate about the need to improve and strengthen Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation processes, especially around the topic of re-entry into Foster Care.

San Luis Obispo County Child Welfare services reunifies at a rate higher than the State average, though below the current Federal standard. The predominant contributing factors that lead to a child's removal from the home are mental illness, substance abuse and family violence. Although parents may be fully engaged in reuniting with their children, research in these areas indicates that relapses are the norm, rather than the exception. Given the restricted mental health and substance abuse resources in San Luis Obispo County, many children re-enter care due to on-going family challenges.

The PQCR identified the need for additional funding and support for after-care programs as essential. The creation of family resource centers, recovery programs, and parent leadership programs is needed to develop each community's capacity to provide effective primary prevention and after-care services. Social Workers and Deputy Probation Officers identified the need for more individualized services, particularly in the areas of substance abuse and mental health services. Populations identified as in need of more services include monolingual Spanish-speaking fathers or other male partners in families.

Teaming efforts, such as Wrap-Around Services and Team Decision Meetings, or other case planning and review processes, are effective in helping families reunify successfully. A need to streamline service provision and access was a common theme identified. Multiple Social Workers and Deputy Probation Officers identified Wrap-Around as a promising practice, but also expressed a need for an increase in Wrap-Around slots.

San Luis Obispo County's PQCR revealed valuable ideas regarding the Departments' processes, case practice and services provided to families. This information, together with the feedback received through the County Self-Assessment, will provide direction as San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services and Probation Department develop their next System Improvement Plan.

II. SIP Plan Components

<p>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</p> <p>2B Timely Response (Immediate Response Compliance and 10-Day Response Compliance)</p> <p>These process measures are designed to determine the percent of cases in which face to face contact with a child occurs, or is attempted, within the regulatory time frames in those situations in which a determination is made that the abuse or neglect allegations indicate significant danger to the child.</p>					
<p>County's Current Performance:</p> <p>As of December 2007, San Luis Obispo County's rate of timely response for immediate referrals is 96.3% (77 out of 80 referrals), slightly below the state average of 96.5%. The rate of timely response for 10-day referrals is 62.4% (229 out of 367 referrals), compared to the state average of 90.6%.</p> <p>The Department of Social Services has had several shifts in the rate of response for both immediate and 10-day referrals over the past 3 years. This can partially be explained by vacancies and staff transitions, as well as an increased workload for Emergency Response Workers, as they are adding duties such as Probate Guardianship assessments to an already busy caseload. The Department meets monthly with Intake and Emergency Response Social Workers and Supervisors to discuss concerns and consistency of practice, and is currently re-evaluating processes and developing new strategies to support Emergency Response Social Workers in meeting responses timely.</p> <p>The Probation Department does not receive or investigate abuse/neglect referrals.</p>					
<p>Improvement Goal 1.0</p> <p>Emergency Response Social Workers will steadily improve on the timeliness of response for immediate and 10-day referrals.</p>					
<p>Strategy 1. 1</p> <p>Advocate among internal departments to make changes to ensure Emergency Response Social Workers have the ability to respond timely and effectively to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.</p>		<p>Strategy Rationale</p> <p>Developing strong support systems for Emergency response Social Workers will result in improved response times.</p>			
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Milestone</p>	<p>1.1.1</p> <p>Staff Development will collaborate with the Fiscal Unit to develop and revise guides for Social Workers regarding access to cars, buildings, cell phones, car seats, meal cards and reimbursements necessary to perform Emergency Response Tasks.</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Timeframe</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Assigned to</p>		
	<p>1.1.2</p> <p>Revise and update Community Resource List with current links and upload to DSS Net.</p>			<p>1/09-10/09</p>	<p>Staff Development, Fiscal</p>
	<p>1.1.3</p> <p>Ensure support, in the form of laminated quick guides, TDM coordination, and availability of Community Service Aides, is readily available.</p>			<p>2/09-10/09</p>	<p>Staff Development, Community Partners</p>
<p>Strategy 1. 2</p> <p>Restructure Emergency Response units to sustain a</p>		<p>Strategy Rationale</p> <p>Building communication and teamwork will</p>			
		<p>3/09-10/09</p>		<p>Staff Development, Community Partners</p>	

cohesive team of Intake and Emergency Response Social Workers.		result in improved response times.			
Milestone	1.2.1 Emergency Response Workgroup to meet monthly with all Emergency Response and Intake Social Workers and Supervisors, managers and Staff Development.	Timeframe	11/08-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development, Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors
	1.2.2 Expand Emergency Response Workgroup meetings to include trainings relevant to Emergency Response practice.		11/08-11/09		Staff Development, Central California Training Academy, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.2.3 Staff Development will work with Emergency Response Social Workers and Intake Social Workers to provide an increase in resources and support.		11/08-11/09		Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Ensure Emergency Response and Intake Social Workers and Supervisors are familiar with and utilizing Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools.		Strategy Rationale Ensuring Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors understand the department's philosophy the benefits of SDM will lead to increased usage of the tools.			
Milestone	1.3.1 Provide SDM overview and refresher trainings.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Central California Training Academy, Children's Research Center, Staff Development
	1.3.2 Utilize Monthly Measures tool to monitor the completion of SDM tools. *See page 18 for attached sample of a Monthly Measures log for FM/FR.		1/09-11/09		Assistant Director, Regional Managers, Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.3.3 Provide SDM training and support for Social Worker Supervisors to sustain the quantitative and qualitative value of SDM.		1/09-11/09		Central California Training Academy, Children's Research Center, Staff Development
Improvement Goal 2.0 San Luis Obispo County will expand Linkages practices to our community partners in order to streamline and expand services.					
Strategy 2.1 Provide tools and training to sustain the practice of Linkages internally with staff and externally with community partners.		Strategy Rationale A progressive approach towards prevention will decrease the number of referrals for child abuse and neglect. With fewer referrals, Social Workers will be better able to respond timely.			

Milestone	2.1.1 Evaluate and revise Linkages protocols, desk guides, flow charts and training materials to match current practice.	Timeframe	4/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	2.1.2 Provide refresher trainings on Linkages and Family/Community Engagement for CWS and Participant Services staff and community partners.		6/09-11/09		Staff Development, Central California Training Academy, Stuart Foundation
	2.1.3 Ensure the philosophy of Linkages is integrated into the department's internal and external protocols and MOU's.		1/09-11/09		Assistant Director, Regional Managers, Staff Development
Strategy 2. 2 Outreach to build relationships with community partners to improve prevention services.		Strategy Rationale Developing relationships with community partners will help to expand the network of available resources and engage the community in the well being of children and families.			
Milestone	2.2.1 Continue to outreach by collaborating with the San Luis Obispo County Child Abuse Prevention Council (SLO-CAP) to provide Mandated Reporter trainings in San Luis Obispo County.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	2.2.2 Expand the Department of Social Services' outreach efforts to include prevention services.		3/09-11/09		Staff Development
	2.2.3 Prevention/intervention presentations to be added to the Participant Services' Welfare-to-Work orientations.		6/09-11/09		Staff Development and Employment Resource Specialist IVs
Strategy 2.3 Increase efforts to collaborate with San Luis Obispo County community partners.		Strategy Rationale Increased collaboration will result in less duplication of services and will enhance the provision of existing services.			
Milestone	2.3.1 CWS will show improvement in the number of Path 2 referrals responded to jointly by CWS and a community partner.	Timeframe	9/09-11/10	Assigned to	Staff Development, Community Partners
	2.3.2 CWS will develop a formalized protocol with Law Enforcement on referrals and joint responses.		9/09-11/10		Staff Development

	2.3.3 CWS will invite community providers to interact with Emergency Response and Intake Social Workers to improve collaboration efforts.	1/09-11/09	Staff Development
	2.3.4 Convene staff and community stakeholders quarterly to review the Child Family and Services Review outcomes. (F2F)	6/09-11/10	Staff Development
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. None identified.			
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Structured Decision Making (SDM), Engagement, Linkages, team building with community partners.			
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Ensure that protocols and Memorandums of Understanding with community partners support CWS efforts to increase timely response rates for immediate and 10-day referrals.			
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Incorporating SDM tools into CWS/CMS would increase the accuracy and completion rates of the SDM tools. Increase funding for prevention to decrease the initial/reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect.			
Funding Sources Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT) Allocation, the Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429, and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Allocation.			

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child

This process measure determines if Social Workers are seeing children with an approved case plan on a monthly basis, when required. When monthly visits are not required, for such reasons as "Out of State," it is not included in this measure.

County's Current Performance:

As of December 2007, the Department of Social Services' rate for timely Social Worker visits was 83.1% (505 out of 608), compared to the state average of 89.7%

Effective April 2007, the methodology for determining the rate of timely Social Worker visits was changed from a method that looked at only those children requiring monthly visits, to a method looking at all children with an approved case plan. Using this new method, the Department's rate of timely Social Worker visits dropped below the state average. Additionally, new methodology was adopted by the State that counted cases with expired case plans as non-compliant contacts even if monthly contacts were made, until such time as the case plan was renewed. Thus there may be instances where this outcome is under-represented.

The Probation Department has consistently met the mandated requirements to visit children placed in foster care.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Steadily improve percentage to 93% by December 2009 and maintain at 90-100%.

Strategy 1. 1

Identify if the problem is agency-wide, or unit-specific or worker-attributed by using Monthly Measures.

Strategy Rationale

Providing individualized/customized training and resources will ensure Social Workers are receiving the support necessary to fully understand and carry out their job duties.

Milestone	1.1.1	Timeframe	Assigned to
	On a monthly basis Social Workers, Supervisors, Regional Managers and the Assistant Director will meet at a minimum for three integrated conferences, paying particular attention to timely Social Worker visits and the associated case plan expired measure.		
Milestone	1.1.2	Timeframe	Assigned to
	Program Managers and Program Review Specialists will be dispatched as and when needed to train and support agency, unit or worker(s) with one assignment per week, at a minimum.	2/09-11/09	Social Workers, Supervisors, Regional Managers, Assistant Director
		2/09-11/09	Program Managers, Program Review Specialists, Central California Training Academy Field-Based Trainer

Strategy 1. 2

Ensure adequate staffing of Social Workers by filling five or more Social Worker vacancies.

Strategy Rationale

The Department of Social Services operates at a 25% vacancy rate for case carrying Social Workers. Decreasing the vacancy rate will reduce caseload sizes and improve results for timely Social Worker visits.

Milestone	1.2.1 Of 100+ applications received, 34 applicants will move on to the written test/interview process.	Timeframe	11/08-11/09	Assigned to	Human Resources
	1.2.2 Hire, train and retain newly hired Social Workers.		1/09-11/09		Human Resources, Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors, Central California Training Academy Field-Based Trainer
	1.2.3 Give new Social Workers assignments and caseloads.		3/09-11/09		Social Worker Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Ensure case plans are in effect and approved in timely fashion.		Strategy Rationale Expired case plans count against this measure even if monthly contacts are being made.			
Milestone	1.3.1 Use Monthly Measures to monitor expired case plans. *See page 18 for attached sample of a Monthly Measures log for FM/FR.	Timeframe	2/09-11/09	Assigned to	Social Workers and Supervisors, Regional Managers
	1.3.2 Ensure case plans are current. If expired, update the expired case plan within same month.		2/09-11/09		FM/FR Social Workers and Supervisors
Improvement Goal 2.0 Explore the expanded use of visit exceptions from monthly to quarterly.					
Strategy 2.1 Develop and train on CMS Visit Exception Desk Guide and implement strategy.		Strategy Rationale Fewer required visits (if and when safe and compliant to Division 31 Regulations) would increase the ability to meet this outcome.			
Milestone	2.1.1 Explore visit exception policies for other counties.	Timeframe	11/09-11/10	Assigned to	Staff Development
	2.1.2 Create new desk guide on visit exceptions.		11/09-11/10		Staff Development
	2.1.3 Train on and monitor the visit exception policy		11/09-11/10		Social Worker Supervisors
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Unknown at this time.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Integrated use and application of Monthly Measures among all levels of staff and among all programs					

(already under way). Analysis and application of visit exceptions from program to line.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

None noted.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified.

Funding Sources

Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, and Probation Title IV-E funding.

In 2008 San Luis Obispo County Child Welfare Services supervisors and managers improved CWS supervisor tools. The result was "Monthly Measures".

Below is the Monthly Measures template used by FM/FR supervisors:

CWS Monthly Measures Sample Log

SW:	Date of Review:
Program: Family Maintenance/Family Reunification (FM/FR)	Review Month:
SWS:	SM Extract Date:

FM Cases: Component Time Open	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease
12-18 Months or More						
FM Cases: Case Plan Status	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Plan in Place						
FM Cases: Face-to-Face Contacts	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Contact Recorded						
FR Cases: Component Time Open	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease
12-18 Months or More						
FR Cases: Case Plan Status	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Plan in Place						

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. From "Main Menu" screen go to...
 2. "Menus" box (to left of screen).
 3. Select "Cases by Service Component".
 4. Go to "Family Maintenance" box.
 5. Select "Component Time Open".
 6. Filter to your unit then worker.
 7. Add all results that are 12-18 mos. or more.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Family Maintenance" box.
 3. Select "Case Plan Status".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Plan in Place" for results.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Family Maintenance" box.
 3. Select "Face-to-Face Contacts".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Contact Recorded" for results.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Family Reunification" box.
 3. Select "Component Time Open".
 4. Filter to your unit then worker.
 5. Add all results that are 12-18 mos. or more.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Family Reunification" box.
 3. Select "Case Plan Status".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Plan in Place" for results.

FR Cases: Face-to-Face Contacts	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Contact Recorded						
Open Cases: Relative/NREFM Home Assessments	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Standards Met						
No Current Assessment						
PP Cases: Component Time Open	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease	Total	% Decrease
12-18 Months or More						
PP Cases: Case Plan Status	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Plan in Place						
PP Cases: Face-to-Face Contacts	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
Contact Recorded						
SDM for Open Cases FM/FR	How Agency Did		How Unit Did		How You Did	
	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase	Total	% Increase
FSNA Timely to Plan						
Risk Timely to Plan						

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Family Reunification" box.
 3. Select "Face-to-Face Contacts".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Contact Recorded" for results.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Menus" box to left of screen and select "Main Menu".
 3. Scroll down to "Open Cases - All Service Components" box.
 4. Select the last category, "Relative/NREFM Home Assessments".
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select the categories listed here for results.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select the "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Menus" box (to left of screen).
 3. Select "Cases by Service Component".
 4. Go to "Permanent Placement" box.
 5. Select "Component Time Open".
 6. Filter to your unit then worker.
 7. Add all results that are 12-18 mos. or more.

Source: Safe Measures:
 1. Select "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Permanent Placement" box.
 3. Select "Case Plan Status".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Plan in Place" for results.

Source: Safe Measures:
 1. Select "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Permanent Placement" box.
 3. Select "Face-to-Face Contacts C-3".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Contact Recorded" for results.

Source: SafeMeasures:
 1. Select "Main Menu" tab in upper left corner of page.
 2. Go to "Menus" box (to left of screen).
 3. Select "SDM Measures".
 4. Scroll down to "SDM for Open Cases" box.
 5. Select "FSNA Timeliness Prior to Case Plan".
 6. Select "Compliance" view option.
 7. Filter to your unit then worker.
 8. Select category "FSNA Timely to Plan" for results.

1. Select "Main Menu" tab to upper left of page.
 2. Go to "SDM for Open Cases" box.
 3. Select "Risk Reassessment Timeliness Prior to Case Plan".
 4. Select "Compliance" view option.
 5. Filter to your unit then worker.
 6. Select category "Risk Timely to Plan" for results.

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment

This safety measure reflects the percentage of children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated child maltreatment allegation within a specified 6 month period for whom there was no additional substantiated maltreatment allegation during the subsequent 6 months.

Only allegations with a disposition are included (per federal guidelines). Follow-up substantiated allegations must be at least 2 days after the first one to be counted. Allegation codes: 5001, "At risk, sibling abused" and 5624, "Substantial risk" are excluded. Incoming ICPC children are also excluded.

Allegations within secondary (or associated) referrals have been removed from the analysis using the following hierarchy:

- If the primary referral contains a substantiated allegation for a child it is selected and allegations in secondary referrals are ignored.
- If the primary referral does not contain a substantiated allegation (or only contains at risk allegations) for a child, and the secondary referral contains a substantiated (but not at risk) allegation for the same child, then the allegation in the secondary referral is selected and the allegation in the primary referral is ignored.

County's Current Performance:

As of December 2007, the Department of Social Services' rate of no recurrence of maltreatment had risen to 86.8% (217 out of 250), below the federal goal of 94.5%. The Department has struggled with how to determine and assign duplicate referrals. Once again, duplicate reports are to be treated as one referral handled by the worker already working with the family, and the current statistics have decreased back below the state and federal standard.

Substance abuse continues to be a prevalent issue in San Luis Obispo County and a major cause of referrals, both initial and subsequent. Although a parent may seek and successfully complete treatment, there always exists the possibility of relapse, and a subsequent referral to the Department of Social Services. Also, although substance abuse treatment options are available in the county, there is a need for a greater variety of treatment models and services, especially for monolingual individuals and fathers.

Children who remain in the home constitute the vast majority of children in Probation's population. Those children receiving child welfare services through Probation are already removed from the home; therefore, Probation does not monitor child welfare services in the home. Additionally, Probation does not receive or substantiate referrals on abuse. The safety of children allowed to remain in their homes falls under the breadth of observations made by Probation and they do a child abuse check on every minor placed. Probation Officers are trained to respond to situations where children may be at risk for abuse and they will ensure the provision of a variety of services where needed to assist a child remaining in a home.

Note: While Probation is not responsible for this measure, they have agreed to collaborate with DSS on many of the strategies identified for this measure. Probation has experience with relapse plans, and will share their experience and knowledge with DSS and DSS works to develop their own after-care plan.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Determine the actual number of children who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of reunification.

Strategy 1. 1

Utilize Safe Measures to generate a report of the names and number of children who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of reunification.

Strategy Rationale

Rather than relying on percentages, San Luis Obispo County will look at the actual numbers to determine how widespread the recurrence of maltreatment is.

Milestone	1.1.1 Staff Development will obtain first data report from Safe Measures.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	1.1.2 (for information purposes only) In 2009, Probation to implement Monitor, their new case management system.		N/A		N/A
	1.1.3 Probation and DSS will collaborate to identify and track any children with recurrence of maltreatment.		6/09-11/09		Probation, Staff Development

Improvement Goal 2.0

Of the number of children who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of reunification, review the cases to determine if appropriate tools and strategies (such as Team Decision Meetings, Structured Decision Making tools) were used, analyze the results and identify any training needs, and provide necessary training and support.

Strategy 2.1

CWS and Probation will collaborate to create inventories of current tools and strategies used to ensure safe reunification and use this inventory to review cases.

Strategy Rationale

Determine what resources are available and used in CWS case plans in order to identify the most effective strategies for working with families. By working together, CWS and Probation will be able to gain a better understanding of county resources, as well as what strategies are the most effective.

Milestone	2.1.1 Staff Development and Probation will research and create a comprehensive inventory of tools and strategies used in case practice to ensure safe reunification.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development, Probation
	2.1.2 Conduct case review by applying inventory to cases of children who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of reunification in order to identify tools and strategies used.		3/09-11/09		Staff Development, Probation
	2.1.3 Create report or matrix summarizing what tools and strategies were or were not used on reviewed cases.		6/09-11/09		Staff Development, Probation

Strategy 2. 2

Analyze the results of the case review and strategize to develop or access any additional needed tools and resources.

Strategy Rationale

Determine what resources are available and in use in order to maximize available resources.

Milestone	2.2.1 Consider creating a scale or means to weight the different types of abuse.	Timeframe	6/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	2.2.2 Identify gaps in services and work to expand resources, such as working with foster parents and mentors.		9/09-11/09		Staff Development, Probation
	2.2.3 Establish working relationships with faith-based organizations in targeted communities, initially increasing the number of regional contacts from zero to three or more. (F2F)		9/09-11/09		Staff Development, Cuesta Independent Living Program
	2.2.4 Develop more comprehensive case plans to prepare families and provide support systems after CWS and/or Probation close the case.		12/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors, Probation
	2.2.5 Develop the role of the Employment Resource Specialist IV so that they are responsible for ensuring collaboration between Participant Services and Child Welfare staff. (Linkages)		3/09-11/09		Staff Development, Central California Training Academy, Employment Resource Specialist IVs
	2.2.6 Increase the use of coordinated family plans to provide families with more support and reduce the duplication of services. (Linkages)		6/09-11/09		Social Workers, Employment Resource Specialists, Employment Resource Specialist IVs
	2.2.7 Review and refine Intake Unit procedures and practice.		6/09-11/09		Regional Managers, Staff Development, Intake Unit
Strategy 2.3 Based on results of case review, identify training needs and offer appropriate trainings and tools needed to support staff.		Strategy Rationale By identifying where the training need is, Staff Development and Social Worker Supervisors can better train and support staff in order to ensure job duties are correctly performed.			
Milestone	2.3.1 Identify if the training need is at an individual caseload level, unit level or regional level.	Timeframe	6/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development, Probation
	2.3.2 Develop and/or provide necessary trainings and tools needed by staff, such as Structured Decision Making (SDM) advanced training.		7/09-11/09		Staff Development, Probation

	2.3.3 Provide supervisors with Monthly Measures, SDM and Safe Measures reports, as well as training necessary to support staff, such as SDM supervisor training.		8/09-11/09		Staff Development, Probation
Improvement Goal 3.0 Ensure continuous quality improvement.					
Strategy 3.1 Determine if trends are the result of department practice or if external factors are contributing to recurrence of maltreatment.			Strategy Rationale By identifying where the training need is, Staff Development and Social Worker Supervisors can better train and support staff in order to ensure job duties are correctly performed.		
Milestone	3.1.1 Design Business Objects report to determine the recurrence of maltreatment.	Timeframe	6/09-11/09	Assigned to	Information Reporting Team
	3.1.2 Staff Development to share findings from report and Monthly Measures with Regional Managers and supervisors.		6/09-11/09		Staff Development
	3.1.3 Provide support, training and resources to assist staff in reducing recurrence of maltreatment.		7/09-11/09		Staff Development, Central California Training Academy
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Weighting of types of abuse.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Probation and DSS to engage in reciprocal on the job shadowing.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Foster parents, mentors, mandated reporters, school advocates, Cuesta College, potential Path 2 responders.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. State and Federal outcomes could be in opposition to each other. The faster reunification of families may have a negative impact in the rate of recurrence of maltreatment.					
Funding Sources Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT) Allocation, the Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429, the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Allocation, Probation Title IV-E funding, the CalWORKs Mental Health and Substance Abuse Allocation and the Independent Living Program Allocation.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

C1.1 Reunification within 12 months

This measure computes the percentage of children discharged to reunification within 12 months of removal.

The 12-month cutoff to reunification is based on the latest date of removal from the home with children in care for less than 8 days excluded. Children with a current placement of "trial home visit" are included in the count of children reunified in less than 12 months if that visit lasted at least 30 days, its start date fell within 11 months of the latest removal date, and it was the final placement before the child was discharged from foster care to reunification.

Discharge to reunification is defined as an exit from care to parents or primary caretaker(s) and includes the following placement episode termination reason types [CWS/CMS codes in square parentheses]:

- Reunified with Parent/Guardian
- Reunified with Parent/Guardian
- Child Released Home

County's Current Performance:

For the Department of Social Services, of the children reunified between January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, 6934%, or 68 out of 98 children, had been removed from their parents within 12 months of reunification. This is below the Federal target of 75.2%. Additionally, the Department of Social Services Reunification Composite score is 113.8, below the federal goal of 122.6.

For the Department of Social Services, the number of children in placements in county-licensed foster homes, court-specified homes and group homes were much smaller than placement with relatives and Foster Family Agency homes. The Department of Social Services continues to work on decreasing placement moves through Family-to-Family and improve performance toward permanency and stability.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Emphasize Family Maintenance at an earlier time in a Child Welfare Services case.

Strategy 1. 1

Improve preparation with the family prior to reunification.

Strategy Rationale

Improved pre-reunification efforts better prepares families for reunification and reduce the amount of time children spend in foster care.

Milestone	1.1.1	Timeframe	Assigned to
	Ensure Structured Decision Making (SDM) Reunification Reassessment is done prior to the 6-month recommendation to court in order to better determine readiness for reunification.		
Milestone	1.1.2	Timeframe	Assigned to
	Utilize Team Decision Meetings (TDM) at time of reunification to establish aftercare plans for every child returning home.	1/09-11/09	Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors

Strategy 1. 2

Lengthen trial visits with parents to last 30 or more days.

Strategy Rationale

Longer trial visits provide families with a longer adjustment period and Social Workers with a greater amount of time for observation and provision of supportive services.

Milestone	1.2.1 Train staff on the importance of trial visits lasting 30 or more days.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Central California Training Academy, Staff Development and Social Worker Supervisors
	1.2.2 Develop and implant tracking of length of trial visits.		1/09-11/09		Regional Managers, Staff Development, Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Expand the number of foster homes that work with families in mentoring for reunification.		Strategy Rationale Foster families who work together with birth parents provide additional support for families and better prepare them for reunification.			
Milestone	1.3.1 Educate the community on Family-to-Family principles and the necessity of keeping children in their own schools and the benefits of working with birth families toward reunification.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development, Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors
	1.3.2 Collaborate with existing family/parent mentor programs.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Family Care Network, Foster Parent Association, Parents Anonymous, SLO County Child Abuse Prevention Council and Positive Opportunities for Parenting Success
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. None identified.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Refresher trainings on philosophy and practice of TDMs and advanced SDM training on the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment and Reunification Reassessment.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Team Decision Meetings partners, Family Care Network, Foster Parent Association, Parents Anonymous, SLO County Child Abuse Prevention Council and Positive Opportunities for Parenting Success (POPS).					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified.					
Funding Sources Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636 and the Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

C1.4 Reentry Following Reunification

This measure computes the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a reunification discharge.

Discharge to reunification is defined as a discharge to parents or primary caretaker(s) and includes the following CWS/CMS subcategories:

- Reunified with Parent/Guardian (Court)
- Reunified with Parent/Guardian (Non-Court)
- Child Released Home

County's Current Performance:

For the Department of Social Services, of the children reunified from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006, 17.9%, or 17 out of 95 children, reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of reunification. This exceeds the federal goal of 9.9%. Additionally, the Department of Social Services Reunification Composite score is 113.8, below the federal goal of 122.6.

Probation had 17 children reunify during the period April 2006 to March 2007. Of these 17 children, 0 reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of reunification.

Re-entry was chosen as the focus for San Luis Obispo County's joint 2007 Peer Quality Case Review. Both the Probation Department and the Department of Social Services interviewed Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors, Participant Services Supervisors, Public Health Nurses, and foster parents about this issue. During the County Self-Assessment Community Forums, re-entry was also a focus.

The following factors were frequently noted as barriers to reunification:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of access to youth therapeutic psychiatric services
- Lack of Mental Health services
- Lack of Drug & Alcohol services
- Lack of resources/further development of support services
- Lack of after-care services

Improvement Goal 1.0

Determine the actual number of children who reentered foster care within 12 months of a reunification discharge and analyze factors that may lead to reentry.

Strategy 1. 1

Utilize Safe Measures to generate a report of the names and number of children who experienced a recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months of reunification.

Strategy Rationale

Rather than relying on percentages, San Luis Obispo County would like to look at the actual numbers to determine how widespread the recurrence of maltreatment is, and to then isolate potential practice issues.

Milestone	1.1.1	Timeframe	2/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	1.1.2		6/09-11/10		Probation, ITD, Loryx (case management vendor)
	1.1.1				Obtain first data report from Safe Measures.
	1.1.2				Probation to implement Monitor, their new case management system. Monitor will assist the Probation Department in promoting increased efficiency, enhanced communication and agency effectiveness necessary to manage the criminal offender population.

	1.1.3 Probation will track and monitor children who reenter foster care within 12 months of a reunification discharge.		8/09-11/10		Probation
	1.1.4 The data gathered by Monitor will be measured and evaluated by Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo State University's School of Psychology and Child Development to determine the effectiveness of the department's case management practices and treatment intervention programs in reducing recidivism.		11/09-11/10		Probation and Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo State University
	1.1.5 Probation and DSS will review and analyze data to determine factors that may lead to reentry.		11/09-11/10		Staff Development, Probation
Improvement Goal 2.0 DSS and Probation will be proactive in the prevention of reentry following reunification by ensuring families have after-care plans before reunification occurs.					
Strategy 2.1 Using Safe Measures, identify reasons for reentry. Then, develop training for staff on how to provide relapse plans for Probation and after-care plans for CWS to support reunification.			Strategy Rationale An after-care plan is an informal plan to assist families in linking with community partners, such as Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol, before they reach the stage of CWS intervention. Additional support and prevention plans for families will increase reunification success.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Identify top ten reasons for reentry following reunification.		10/09-11/10		Staff Development, Probation, Information Reporting Team
	2.1.2 Identify triggers. CWS will work with community partners to develop training and tools, such as after-care plans.		3/10-11/10	Assigned to	Staff Development, Probation
	2.1.3 Report back to the state in the SIP Update for 2010 on the top ten reasons for reentry following reunification and the triggers.		11/10		Staff Development
	2.1.4 Audit of CWS cases will show an increase of after-care plans and resources available.		6/10-11/10		Staff Development, Probation
Strategy 2.2 Identify and focus on the top two reasons for reentry.		Strategy Rationale Increase training support resources for top ten reasons for reentry.			

Milestone	2.2.1 Identify triggers and develop an after-care/relapse plan to prevent reentry.	Timeframe	3/10-11/10	Assigned to	Staff Development, Probation
	2.2.2 CWS will evaluate Probation's relapse plan model and develop a CWS after-care plan.		6/10-11/10		Staff Development, Probation
	2.2.3 Provide trainings and follow-up to ensure after-care plans are created at exit Team Decision Meetings.		9/10-11/11		Staff Development, Probation
Improvement Goal 3.0 Build on Team Decision Meetings (TDM) – exit strategy					
Strategy 3.1 Include foster parents in exit TDMs and create a family relapse plan.			Strategy Rationale Engaging families and building a plan for support and success will lead to lower rates of re-entry.		
Milestone	3.1.1 Appropriate community partners will be invited to TDMs to provide after-care services.	Timeframe	6/09-11/10	Assigned to	Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
	3.1.2 50% of children being reunited will have exit TDMs.		6/09-11/10		Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
	3.1.3 75% of children being reunited will have exit TDMs.		9/09-11/10		Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
Strategy 3.2 Continue monitoring and re-evaluating current processes for continuous improvement.			Strategy Rationale Ensure that the strategies and resources are successful in reducing the rates of re-entry.		

Milestone	3.2.1 Administer TDM satisfaction surveys at all TDMs. Address dissatisfaction.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors, Staff Development, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
	3.2.2 Complete Structured Decision Making reunification and risk reassessments on all cases prior to closure.		6/09-11/10		Regional Managers, Social Workers and Supervisors,
	3.2.3 Safe Measures and internal reports will be utilized to monitor the use of Team Decision Meetings as an exit strategy.		6/09-11/10		Regional Managers, Staff Development
	3.2.4 CWS will continue to work with community partners to increase prevention/intervention resources.		6/09-11/10		Information Reporting Team. Regional Managers, Social Worker Supervisors and Staff Development
Strategy 3.3 Connect family with resources at reunification.		Strategy Rationale Engaging families and building a plan for support and success will lead to lower rates of re-entry.			
Milestone	3.3.1 Ensure families and community partners are familiar with TDM before meeting.	Timeframe	6/09-11/10	Assigned to	Social Workers and Supervisors, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
	3.3.2 Ensure appropriate feedback and follow-up is provided to support reunification.		6/09-11/10		Social Workers and Supervisors, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides

	<p>3.3.3 Provide resources for families during reunification to prevent reentry.</p>	6/09-11/10	Social Workers and Supervisors, Social Workers and Supervisors, Supervising Administrative Clerk and Community Service Aides
<p>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Supervisors will review case for after-care and relapse plans to ensure that Social Workers are utilizing community resources.</p>			
<p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Training on relapse and after-care plans.</p>			
<p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Family-to-Family technical assistance, Mental Health and Probation</p>			
<p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Court Stakeholders advocating for safety, as well as relapse and after-care plans, at reunification.</p>			
<p>Funding Sources - CWS Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, the Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429, Probation Title IV-E funding, the CalWORKs Mental Health and Substance Abuse Allocation and the Independent Living Program Allocation.</p> <p>Funding Sources – Probation Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) - used to reimburse parents for the cost of visiting their child in placement and to offset the cost for a Probation representative's involvement in the PQCR process and attending the regional Central Coast Placement committee meetings in Bakersfield.</p>			

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

C3.1 Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care)

This measure computes the percentage of children discharged to a permanent home by the last day of the year and prior to turning 18, who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer. The denominator consists of all children in foster care for 24 continuous months or longer on the first day of the year; the numerator includes those children with a placement episode termination date that occurred by the last day of the year and before the child's 18th birthday, and a placement episode termination reason coded as reunification with parents or primary caretakers, discharge to guardianship, or discharge to adoption.

County's Current Performance:

As of December 2007, Department of Social Services foster children exited to permanency after 24 months of care at a rate of 21%, or 21 out of 100 children. This was lower than the Federal average of 29.1%. Foster youth placed with relatives or non-related extended family members had the highest number of reunifications and adoptions.

Sometimes the Department recommends the denial or termination of family reunification services to the court. If this occurs, the court sets a 366.26 hearing date to determine the permanent plan for the child. Adoption and Legal Processing staff is responsible to pursue 366.26 hearings and their timeliness. Every effort is made to identify an adoptive home prior to termination of parental rights (TPR); however the permanent plan may also be guardianship or a planned permanent living arrangement. At the hearing, the Department must present an adoptability assessment and recommend adoption, except in some situations. When the recommendation is adoption, TPR is recommended at the 366.26 hearing. If for some reason the child is not in an adoptive home, the court can put off TPR for 180 days. It is the goal of the Department for a child to make the fewest moves; therefore, it is the hope that by the 366.26 hearing the child is in the home that will keep them permanently. In order to prevent the creation of legal orphans, the Department follows the Welfare and Institutions codes regarding these hearings, ensures accountability of the codes, and utilizes and stresses the importance of concurrent planning.

Additionally, the Department and the Independent Living Program recognize the importance of long term and meaningful adult connections in the lives of the youth they serve. It is the Department's belief that every foster youth deserves a permanent and lifelong attachment to a caring and trusted adult. The Department has begun to implement many new programs to help achieve foster youth permanency, which include advocating for fewer placement changes and more guardianships and adoptions.

The Probation Department did not have foster children exit to permanency after 24 months of care.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Determine if current performance on exits to permanency (24 months in care) is affected by incorrect or incomplete data entry or tracking.

Strategy 1.1

Identify and resolve any data entry issues.

Strategy Rationale

Since San Luis Obispo County is meeting the Federal composite goal for permanency, the low percentage for this particular measure could be a result of incomplete data entry.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
1.1.1 Identify data entry trends.	1/09-11/09	Staff Development, Information Reporting Team
1.1.2 Train and support Social Workers on correct codes and data entry.	1/09-11/09	Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors

	1.1.3 Ensure appropriate codes are accurately entered into CWS/CMS.				Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors, Regional Managers
Improvement Goal 2.0 Reevaluate San Luis Obispo County's current concurrent planning policy and procedures.					
Strategy 2.1 Compare goals of concurrent planning to the current practice in San Luis Obispo County and identify any needed changes.			Strategy Rationale Strengthen concurrent planning practices in order to improve exits to permanency.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Identify current Social Worker practice in regards to concurrent planning.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development
	Refine concurrent planning procedure and practice.		1/09-11/09		Adoptions and Dependency Investigation Units, Staff Development
	2.1.2 Train staff on new concurrent planning policy and procedure.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors
	2.1.3 Educate foster parents and community on the importance and goals of concurrent planning.		1/09-11/09		PRIDE, Social Workers, Staff Development
Strategy 2.2 Expand and strengthen the role of the Independent Living Program to increase awareness and the practice of permanency within the department and in the community.			Strategy Rationale DSS and the Independent Living Program recognize the importance of long term and meaningful adult connections in the lives of the youth they serve. This renewed emphasis on permanency will, in turn, affect the Department of Social Services' outcome on this measure.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Independent Living Program (ILP) staff to outreach to DSS staff and community.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	ILP, Staff Development
	2.2.2 ILP to Permanency Resource Handbook.		1/09-11/09		ILP, Staff Development
	2.2.3 ILP to increase connection to DSS by regularly participating in workgroups and CWS unit meetings.		1/09-11/09		ILP, Staff Development
	2.2.4 Create Heart Gallery website.		1/09-11/09		ILP, Staff Development

2.2.5	Implement monthly Matching Meetings between Adoptions/Licensing Social Workers and staff from local adoptions agencies.	1/09-11/09	ILP, ILP, Staff Development, Adoptions and Licensing Social Workers and Supervisors, Family Connections, Aspira and Kinship Center
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. None identified.			
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Concurrent planning (noted above).			
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. ILP, Family Connections, Aspira, Kinship Center.			
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified.			
Funding Sources Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, the Adoptions Allocation, the Independent Living Program (ILP) Allocation, the Kinship Supportive Services Program (KSSP) Allocation and the Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429.			

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

C4 Placement Stability

C4.1 8 Days to 12 Months in Care

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements in foster care for 8 days or more, but less than 12 months. Time in care is based on the latest date of removal from the home. The denominator is the total number of children who have been in care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months; the numerator is the count of these children with two or fewer placements.

C4.2 No more than two placements within 12 months

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements in foster care for at least 12 months, but less than 24 months. Time in care is based on the latest date of removal from the home. The denominator is the total number of children who have been in care for at least 12 months and less than 24 months; the numerator is the count of these children with two or fewer placements.

C4.3 No more than two placements within 24 months

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for 24 months or more. Time in care is based on the latest date of removal from the home. The denominator is the total number of children who have been in care for 24 months or more; the numerator is the count of these children with two or fewer placements.

County's Current Performance:

Of the Department of Social Services' 213 children served in foster care during the year who were in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, 85.4 % (182 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

Of Probations' 18 children served in foster care during the year who were in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, 94.4% (17 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

Of the Department of Social Services' 138 children served in foster care during a year who were in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, 56.5% (78 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

Of the 23 Probation children served in foster care during a year who were in foster care for at least 12 months but less than 24 months, 60.9% (14 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

Of the Department of Social Services' 172 children served in foster care during the year that were in foster care for at least 24 months, 32% (55 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

Of the 9 Probation children served in foster care during the year who were in foster care for at least 24 months, 22.2% (2 children) had two or fewer placement settings.

San Luis Obispo County has a policy in place requiring a Team Decision Meetings (TDM) be held before a child will be moved from the home or a placement. Structured Decision Making is also utilized to determine safety factors when moves are considered. Both of these policies, combined with Family-to-Family goals, have been instrumental keeping San Luis Obispo County's placement moves low.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Decrease the number of placement moves for children in foster care, as well as the number of placement disruptions.

Strategy 1. 1

Identify alternatives to shelter care, for both initial removals and when placement disruptions occur.

Strategy Rationale

Decreasing the use of shelter care would improve the results for placement stability.

Milestone	1.1.1 Outreach to the community to provide education on the importance of relative care.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.1.2 Work toward the concurrent planning goal of the first placement being final placement.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.1.3 Develop back-up plans at Team Decision Meetings for children who runaway from their placement, in order to decrease the number of children who are placed into shelter care or the Juvenile Services Center when they are picked up.		1/09-11/09		Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.1.4 Increase the number of Team Decision Meetings held within 48 hours.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
Strategy 1. 2 Identify and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions.		Strategy Rationale Increased support and strategies for dealing with placement disruptions will lead to fewer placement moves, and thereby increase placement stability.			
Milestone	1.2.1 Implement use of the SDM Substitute Care Provider assessment.	Timeframe	1/09-11/09	Assigned to	Assistant Director, Regional Managers, Staff Development, Social Worker Supervisors, Social Workers
	1.2.2 Develop strategies and back-up plans at Team Decision Meetings to deal with placement disruptions.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
	1.2.3 Increase support for foster families and intervention prior to placement disruption.		1/09-11/09		Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors, Regional Managers
	1.2.4 Increase awareness of availability of respite care for foster parents and ensure respite care is being utilized.		1/09-11/09		Staff Development, Social Workers, Social Worker Supervisors
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. None identified.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. None identified.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.					

None identified.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified.

Funding Sources

Funding to support these strategies will come from the Child Welfare Services Allocation, the Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project (CWSOIP) Grant AB636, Stuart Foundation Grant for Family-to-Family Initiative AB 429, Specialized Training for Adoptive Parents (STAP) and Probation Title IV-E funding.