

California – Child and Family Services Review

County of San Luis Obispo

2025 County Self-Assessment

Plan Period: 2025 – 2030



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CSA Signature Sheet

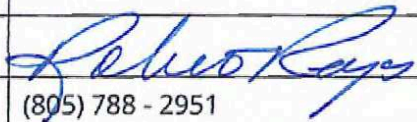
County Self-Assessment

County	San Luis Obispo
SIP Period	2025 - 2030
Outcome Data Period	Q3, 2023


County Child Welfare Agency

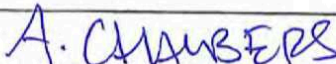
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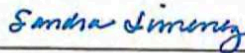
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Introduction

Effective January 2004, California implemented the Child Welfare Services (CWS) Outcome and Accountability System under Assembly Bill 636 (Chapter 678, The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001). This system was designed to improve child welfare outcomes for children and families in each of California's 58 counties. The primary evaluation mechanism for counties under this system is the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR).

The C-CFSR process includes the County Self-Assessment (CSA), which evaluates a county's performance on critical child welfare outcomes in the areas of child safety, permanence, and well-being. The CSA is completed every five years as part of a continuous improvement and evaluation cycle. Once the CSA process is complete, a comprehensive report is generated that incorporates stakeholder feedback, data analysis, and outcome performance assessments.

In preparation for the 2024 CSA, the County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) CFSR Core Team worked collaboratively, adhering to an established timeline to ensure a thorough and inclusive process. The team's responsibilities included conducting a comprehensive analysis of CWS and Probation outcome performance, coordinating stakeholder engagement activities, and identifying focus outcome measures for the 2024 System Improvement Plan (SIP). Key activities included:

- Analyzing outcome performance for Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation.
- Coordinating Community Stakeholder Forums and Focus Groups to gather feedback from diverse perspectives.
- Identifying peer counties for collaborative reviews and scheduling a Peer Review event with Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Ventura, Merced, Yuba, San Joaquin, and Kings counties.
- Selecting cases for the Peer Review event.
- Compiling the CSA report to guide the next steps in the improvement process.

Stakeholder feedback was obtained through a variety of forums and focus groups, including:

- **Community Stakeholder Forums:**
 - June 17, 2024, from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM at Family Care Network Inc. (FCNI) in San Luis Obispo.
 - June 17, 2024, from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM virtually via Zoom.
- **Focus Groups:**
 - Parent Focus Group on November 4, 2024, in a Department of Social Services conference room in San Luis Obispo.
 - Resource/Adoptive Parent Focus Group on November 12, 2024, in a Department of Social Services conference room.
 - Youth Focus Group on December 4, 2024, at Family Care Network Inc. (FCNI).
 - Social Worker Focus Group on November 1, 2024, in a Department of Social Services conference room.

- Social Worker Supervisor Focus Group on November 1, 2024, in a Department of Social Services conference room.
- Probation also sent questionnaires to resource parents.
- **Peer Review:**
 - Conducted from August 26–29, 2024, at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in San Luis Obispo.
 - Included three review teams with a total of nine peers.
 - Each team consisted of two Child Welfare Services (CWS) peers and one Probation peer.
 - A total of 18 cases were reviewed across all teams.
 - Each team reviewed at least one Probation case as part of the process.

The CSA process allowed the county to identify successes and challenges in existing practices, programs, and resources across the continuum of CWS and Probation placement services. This process also provided the framework for evaluating service needs, including the justification for the use of Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Treatment (CAPIT), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP), and/or Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) funds to support C-CFSR outcomes. These funds are used to enhance or implement services and strategies that help divert children and families from entering the child welfare system, aligning with the county's long-term goals for improving outcomes.

List of Core Representatives

The success of the CSA process relied on the diverse perspectives provided by stakeholders. The stakeholder meetings and community forum involved representatives from various county departments, education, public health, behavioral health, and tribal organizations. These participants provided critical insights into existing services, system challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Their diverse perspectives informed the development of the CSA report and helped identify focus areas for the System Improvement Plan (SIP).

Participating agencies included:

Stakeholder and Community Forum Participants	
5Cities Homeless Coalition	Juvenile Law Group of SLO
Baywood Elementary School	Lucia Mar Unified School District
Big Brothers Big Sisters of SLO County	Lumina Alliance
CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection	Mastodon, LLC; Octavia
CASA of San Luis Obispo	MZR Fitness, Inc.
Cayucos Elementary School	Nipomo High School
California Department of Social Services (CDSS)	North Fork Rancheria Tribal TANF
CenCal Health	Parent Connection of San Luis Obispo
City of Arroyo Grande-Recreation Department	Pleasant Valley Joint Union Elementary School District
City of Morro Bay Recreation Services	Promotores Collaborative of SLO County

City of San Luis Obispo	Rising Phoenix Behavioral Services
County of SLO Behavioral Health	Salinan Tribe Of Monterey and SLO Counties
County of SLO Child Welfare Services	Santa Lucia Middle School (CUSD)
County of SLO District Attorney's Office	Santa Margarita Elementary School
County of SLO Homeless Services	San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
County of SLO Participant Services	San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE)
County of SLO Probation Department	SLO Legal Assistance Foundation
Cuesta College	SLO County Quality Counts
Cuesta Foster Care Kinship Education (FCKE)	Templeton Unified School District
Dignity Health	The Link Family Resource Center
Eckerd Connects	Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA)
Family Care Network, Inc.	Templeton High School
Center for Family Strengthening (CFS)	UCCE - Agriculture and Natural Resources
First 5 SLO County	

This list highlights the breadth of collaboration that informed the CSA process, reflecting the shared commitment of local stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in San Luis Obispo County.

C-CFSR Planning Team & Core Representatives

The California Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process is a collaborative effort involving representatives from County of San Luis Obispo Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and local community stakeholders. These participants play a vital role in analyzing system performance, identifying areas for improvement, and developing strategies to enhance outcomes for children and families.

The following sections outline the key participants and their roles and responsibilities in the CFSR and County Self-Assessment (CSA) processes:

CFSR Core Planning Team Representatives

Child Welfare Services

- Deputy Director: Nancy Kuster
- Division Manager: Ben King
- Office of Child Abuse and Prevention (OCAP) Program Manager: Sandra Jimenez
- Program Managers: Sandra Jimenez, Julie Kadis, Roxi Selck, and Stephany Slade
- Program Review Specialist: Mikayla Anderson

Probation

- Assistant Chief Probation Officer: Thomas Milder
- Chief Deputy Probation Officer: Jeremiah Malzhan
- Supervising Deputy Probation Officer: Adam Chambers

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

- Analyst: Trang Do
- Analyst: Elizabeth Johnson

Central CA Training Academy (CCTA)

- Workforce Development Specialist: Sydney Matlock-Pettus, MSW
- Workforce Development Training & Technical Lead: Amanda Weeks
- Implementation Project Manager: Shanel K. Moore
- Assistant Director: Donna M. Lutz, MSW

CFSR Core Planning Team Responsibilities

The CFSR Core Planning Team is responsible for leading and coordinating the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) process within San Luis Obispo County. This includes identifying and maintaining the Core Planning Team, comprising representatives from Child Welfare Services (CWS), Probation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the Central California Training Academy (CCTA).

The team collaborates with stakeholders, CDSS, CCTA, and the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to complete the County Self-Assessment (CSA) process. Key activities include planning and executing

the Peer Review, organizing Community Stakeholder Meetings and Focus Groups, and ensuring all aspects of the CSA are conducted with integrity and alignment with federal and state guidelines. Additionally, the team is tasked with developing and submitting required reports, including the CSA and the System Improvement Plan (SIP), to CDSS.

CDSS provides critical technical assistance and oversight throughout the C-CFSR process to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. Their role includes monitoring adherence to federal guidelines, ensuring Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Treatment (CAPIT), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) requirements are met, and maintaining the overall integrity of the review process.

Demographic Profile

General County Demographics

San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, one of California's 27 original counties, was established in 1850. Located on the Central Coast of California, SLO County is a semi-rural area bordered by Monterey County and Kings County to the north, Kern County to the east, Santa Barbara County to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The county occupies approximately 3,300.8 square miles, much of which is unincorporated (see Table 01).

This report provides an assessment of SLO County, focusing on its demographics, regional characteristics, key industries, and challenges faced by its residents. Additionally, it highlights opportunities for improving services and addressing critical issues impacting the community.

According to the US Census Bureau's 2023 estimates, SLO County had a population of 281,639 (see Table 02). Most residents live in towns along Highway 101 or on the coast, reflecting the county's semi-rural nature. SLO County is composed of three distinct regions, each with its own unique characteristics:

1. **North County:** Historically an agricultural area, North County is the fastest-growing region, with the city of Paso Robles as a major hub.
2. **Central Region:** Home to San Luis Obispo, the county seat and largest city, this region is the center for many service providers and major employers.
3. **South County:** Though growing quickly, South County remains less populous than North County but is undergoing development in key areas.

The county is served by seven cities, each with its own police department. The unincorporated areas are under the jurisdiction of the SLO County Sheriff's Office.

SLO County's economy is driven by several major industries:

- **Agriculture:** A significant part of the county's rural economy, especially in the North County.
- **Education:** Home to California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and Cuesta College, education is a major employer in the region.
- **Tourism:** The county's scenic coastline and wine country attract visitors year-round, making tourism a vital industry.
- **Energy:** The region is also involved in energy production, though this sector is smaller compared to others.
- **Government:** Public sector employment plays a substantial role in the county's economic stability.

SLO County promotes active and healthy lifestyles by encouraging public use of open spaces, enacting local bans on smoking in public places (such as beaches and parks), and implementing unique regulations like the prohibition of drive-through restaurants in San Luis Obispo. These efforts reflect the county's commitment to improving public health and environmental quality.

Despite its strengths, SLO County faces several challenges:

- **Affordable Housing:** Housing costs remain a significant concern for many residents, with limited access to affordable options.
- **Employment:** Although the county boasts major industries, well-paying job opportunities remain a challenge for many, particularly in more rural areas.
- **Access to Resources:** Residents, especially those in unincorporated and rural regions, often struggle with limited access to social services and critical resources.
- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** IPV continues to be a leading cause of involvement with Child Welfare Services (CWS), reflecting ongoing social and family stressors in the county.
- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse:** Described as a countywide epidemic, these issues impact residents across all socioeconomic backgrounds and are frequently cited as primary concerns. There is a pressing need for more comprehensive mental health services and substance abuse interventions.

San Luis Obispo County Cities and Unincorporated Areas by Region

Table 01. Cities and Unincorporated Areas by Region		
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		
Central Region	North Region	South Region
Avila Beach	Adelaida	Arroyo Grande
Baywood Park	Asuncion	Bromela
Cambria	Atascadero	Grover Beach
Cayucos	Bee Rock	Halcyon
Chorro	Bern	Huasna
Harmony	California Valley	Nipomo
Los Osos	Cholame	Oceano
Morro Bay	Creston	Pismo Beach
San Luis Obispo	Paso Robles	Shell Beach
San Simeon	Pozo	
	San Miguel	
	Santa Margarita	
	Shandon	
	Templeton	
	Whitley Gardens	

The Department of Social Services (DSS) maintains offices across all regions of the county. However, certain critical services and providers, such as the Juvenile Court, are centralized in the city of San Luis Obispo. The Probation Department maintains offices in San Luis Obispo but provides services to residents throughout the county. This centralized structure can create logistical challenges for families, DSS workers, and probation officers, particularly for those families residing in more remote areas. For instance, families in the far northern regions of the county, such as Bradley or San Miguel, experience significantly reduced access to services compared to those living within or near the city of San Luis Obispo. These disparities highlight the need for improved service accessibility for underserved communities.

San Luis Obispo County Demographics

Table 02. San Luis Obispo County Demographics by Age, July 1, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Basic Demographics	County	Percentage	State	Percentage
County Population	281,639	100%	38,965,193	100%
Male	141,833	50.3%	19,450,698	49.9%
Female	139,806	49.7%	19,514,495	50.1%
Median Age	41	-	38.2	-
Persons under 18 years	48,394	17.2%	8,437,329	21.7%
18 to 24 Years	42,591	15.1%	3,558,215	9.1%
25 to 34 Years	31,248	11.1%	5,384,014	14.5%
35 to 44 Years	31,248	11.1%	5,460,310	14.0%
45 to 54 Years	29,807	10.6%	4,846,002	12.5%
55 to 64 Years	33,753	12.0%	4,680,789	12.0%
65 to 74 Years	37,995	13.5%	3,662,353	9.4%
75 Years +	26,301	9.3%	2,649,566	6.8%

SLO County has a notably higher proportion of residents aged 65 and older (22.8%) compared to the statewide average in California (16.2%). Conversely, the county's population of children under 18 (17.2%) is lower than the state average (21.7%). These trends may reflect declining birth rates and the presence of a significant retiree population in the county.

Table 03. San Luis Obispo County Demographics by Race, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Basic Demographics	County	Percentage	State	Percentage
White	192,900	68.5%	14,999,252	38.5%
Black or African American	3,359	1.2%	2,103,252	5.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,031	0.7%	546,952	1.4%
Asian	10,892	3.9%	6,146,851	15.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	67	0.0%	150,781	0.4%
Some other race	25,852	9.2%	7,619,295	19.6%
Two or more races	46,538	16.0%	7,398,273	19.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	71,053	25.2%	15,760,437	40.4%
Foreign born	26,721	9.5%	10,442,880	26.5%
Speaks English less than very well (population 5 years and over)	14,600	5.4%	6,358,142	17.1%

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2023, an estimated 68.5% of San Luis Obispo County's population identified as White, 25.2% as Hispanic or Latino, 3.9% as Asian, 1.2% as Black or African American, 0.7% as American Indian and Alaskan Native, and 0.0% as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Additionally, 16% of the population identified with two or more races, and 9.2% identified as some other race (see Table 03). Compared to California as a whole, SLO County has a higher percentage of White residents (statewide 38.5%) and lower percentages of Hispanic/Latino (statewide 40.4%), Asian (statewide 15.8%), and African American residents (statewide 5.4%). The county also has slightly lower percentages of individuals identifying as American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and those reporting two or more races. These demographic differences highlight the importance of cultural diversity awareness training for child welfare services (CWS) and probation staff.

Recent data from San Luis Obispo Health Counts shows changes in language use in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. From 2018 to 2022, about 16.8% of county residents aged 5 and older spoke a language other than English at home, compared to 80.5% who spoke only English. Spanish remains the most spoken non-English language, followed by smaller proportions speaking Asian, Pacific Islander, and other languages. This reflects slight changes compared to 2016 data, where 15.4% spoke Spanish and fewer residents reported speaking other languages.

According to 2023 Census Reporter data, Latino residents in SLO County are most concentrated in the northern and southern regions of the county. These areas include communities such as Paso Robles and San Miguel in the north, and Oceano and Nipomo in the south. These locations have consistently shown higher proportions of Latino populations compared to other areas in the county, reflecting historical and socioeconomic patterns of settlement and demographic distribution.

SLO County has a lower percentage of Spanish-speaking residents and individuals identifying as Hispanic/Latino compared to the state of California. However, this does not diminish the critical need for improved access to Spanish-language and culturally sensitive services in the county. A significant gap exists in bilingual capacity within Child Welfare Services (CWS), with only 11 CWS Social Workers, 7 CWS Administrative Assistants, and 3 CWS Social Worker Aides bilingual in English and Spanish as of October 7, 2024. This limitation poses communication challenges for Spanish-speaking clients engaging with Child Welfare.

Although the County of SLO CWS provides translation services, Spanish-language parenting programs, and bilingual vendors, the overall availability of these resources remains limited relative to the needs of Spanish-speaking clients. Current efforts include utilizing translation services, hiring bilingual staff (including clerical staff who assist with translation), offering stipends for bilingual workers, and providing resources and materials in both English and Spanish. Expanding these services and improving accessibility will remain a priority for the county.

Regarding Native American communities, SLO County does not have federally recognized tribes. However, three tribes—the Salinan, Chumash, and Yokut—are acknowledged as local by the Native American Heritage Commission. Efforts to engage and collaborate with these communities should continue to respect and address their cultural and historical significance in the region.

San Luis Obispo County Income

Table 04. Income, 2023

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

Information	County	Percentage	State	Percentage
Median Income	\$90,152	-	\$91,905	-

Per Capita Income	\$47,390	-	\$45,591	-
Poverty Level (of all people)	33,728	12.6%	4,685,272	12.1%

According to JobsEQ® data from 2023, the median income in San Luis Obispo County is \$90,152, slightly below the statewide median for California (see Table 04). Despite this relatively high median income, affordable housing remains a significant challenge for many residents in the county, underscoring ongoing economic disparities and the need for targeted housing solutions.

San Luis Obispo County Unemployment

Table 05. Unemployment, 2023

Source: *Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division and **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Unemployment rate – San Luis Obispo County*	7.8%	5.3%	3.1%	3.5%
Unemployment rate – California*	10.1%	7.3%	4.3%	4.8%
Unemployment rate – U.S.**	8.06%	5.35%	3.65%	3.63%

Unemployment rates in San Luis Obispo County have shown consistent improvement over the past four years, decreasing from 7.8% in 2020 to 3.5% in 2023. This trend aligns with broader economic recovery patterns observed across California and the United States. However, the county's unemployment rate has consistently remained below both the state and national averages, which were 4.8% for California and 3.63% for the United States in 2023.

These figures highlight San Luis Obispo County's relatively strong labor market performance compared to broader state and national levels, although ongoing economic challenges may still affect specific sectors and populations. (See Table 05 for detailed year-over-year unemployment rates.)

Recent data from the Employment Development Department (EDD) shows variations in unemployment rates across San Luis Obispo County as of September 2024. The overall unemployment rate in the county was 4%, lower than California's rate of 5.3% and comparable to the national rate of 3.9%. San Luis Obispo City had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the county, while smaller areas such as San Miguel reported higher rates, consistent with trends seen in previous years.

Detailed regional breakdowns for unemployment by city or smaller localities, such as Paso Robles or Atascadero, were not explicitly listed in the recent data; however, the county remains one of the better-performing areas in California in terms of employment stability.

San Luis Obispo County Housing

Table 06. Housing, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>

Information	County	Percentage	State	Percentage
Total Housing Units	123,968	-	14,392,140	-
Median House Value (of owner occupied units)	\$726,700	-	\$659,300	-
Owner occupied housing units	67,031	62.0%	7,407,361	55.6%
Median gross rent	\$1,800	-	\$1,856	-
Homeowner Vacancy	1,520	2.2%	70,748	0.9%

Rental Vacancy	2,050	4.7%	250,250	4.0%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of occupied units)	41,068	38.0%	5,908,461	44.4%
Households	110,283	-	13,699,816	-
Persons per household	2.47	-	2.89	-

One of the barriers that families continue to have been the high cost of housing and lack of available units in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. Based on the most recent data from the United States Census Bureau, the percentage of available units in rental properties in SLO County is 4.7% and the average rent is \$1,800 per month (see Table 06.). Due to the high rental costs and low rental unit availability, the department has put into practice two housing programs to assist families in participant services and child welfare services.

The CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP) is a rapid rehousing program that provides services to eligible families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in SLO County. HSP is for eligible CalWORKs families to receive financial assistance and non-financial services for housing. HSP families work with a case manager from the Department of Social Services and the contracted agency, Family Care Network Inc (FCNI), to address their needs and outline steps for obtaining and sustaining permanent housing. To be eligible for HSP services, at least one member of a family must be CalWORKs eligible and meet the definition of homelessness based off WIC § 16523. Since 2023, the Department has been able to house 126 families in permanent housing. If a family becomes homeless again, participants may re-enter HSP after 12 months from the initial exit date if they continue to meet the HSP eligibility criteria.

The Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program targets families involved with the child welfare services (CWS) who are experiencing homelessness. BFH is designed to offer housing support for families to successfully reunify and to support housing retention. The goal of BFH is to decrease the amount of time children spend in foster care and increase the number of families being able to successfully reunify. Additionally, the goal of BFH is to provide short-term support for post-reunification to families and reduce the reentry rate into CWS. BFH components include housing barrier assessments, housing identification and placement assistance, property owner recruitment and engagement, rent and moving assistance, housing-related focused case management, and additional services based on individual participant needs. BFH families work with a case manager from DSS and the contracted agency, FCNI, to address their unique needs and outline steps for obtaining and sustaining permanent housing. Currently demographics are not being tracked for BFH, however, if we consider the population as CWS families, then it is safe to assume that the demographics would be like CWS demographics of White and Latino families primarily being served as this is consistent with the demographics for SLO County as well as CWS demographics. However, this does not mean that BFH does not provide services to all CWS families of the minority demographics.

Homelessness in San Luis Obispo County

Table 07. Number of Homeless Persons Enumerated

Source: *SLO County Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), ** Applied Survey Research (ASR), and ***SLO Homeless Point-In-Time Census Produced by Thurmond Consulting

	2020*	2021*	2022**	2023***
Total	251	297	1,448	322
Sheltered	251	297	292	322

Unsheltered	Unavailable	Unavailable	1,156	Unavailable
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The 2023 San Luis Obispo County Point-In-Time (PIT) Count was conducted in compliance with the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements. The count identified 322 individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness in the county, a 10.3% increase from the 2022 count of 292 individuals. Information was unavailable for the number of unsheltered individuals.

Unsheltered includes individuals residing in locations such as streets, cars, vans, recreational vehicles, encampments, abandoned buildings, or other unsuitable places for habitation. Sheltered settings include individuals living in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities (see Table 07).

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2022 PIT Count identified 1,448 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. This represents a decrease of 2% from the count conducted in 2019.

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable insights into the San Luis Obispo County homeless population from the data collected in this report, including:

- The Point-in-Time Homeless Count identified a total of 1,448 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County in 2022, a decrease of 2% from the count conducted in 2019.
- Four out of five (80%) persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County were unsheltered, living in places not intended for human habitation.
- Homeless survey respondents also reported having these health conditions: alcohol or drug use (35%), a psychiatric or emotional condition (43%), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (46%).
- The estimated counts of the four HUD-identified subpopulations in San Luis Obispo County were: chronically homeless individuals with one or more disabling condition (282 persons), homeless veterans (16), members of homeless families with children (428), and unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth (77).

Table 08. Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness (included in the count in Table 07)

Source: *SLO County Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), ** Applied Survey Research (ASR), and ***SLO Homeless Point-In-Time Census Produced by Thurmond Consulting

2020*	2021*	2022**	2023***
99	100	428	161

Since the 2020 County Self-Assessment, there was an increase in families experiencing homelessness by 61.4%. In 2020, there were 99 households with children experiencing homelessness. In 2023, the number of households with children experiencing homelessness increased to 161 households. While there is an increase from 2020 to 2023, it is important to note that from 2022 to 2023 there was a decrease of 37.6% from 428 households to 161 households (see Table 08). It should also be noted that this definition of family homelessness excludes people whose primary shelter is a hotel or motel. The Department utilizes programs such as Bringing Families Home and Housing Support Program to help families find permanent housing, which has helped lower these numbers. Low paying wages and higher housing costs contribute to local families' difficulty in paying for housing.

Table 09. Number of Youth and Young Adults, (included in the count in Table 07)

Source: *SLO County Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), ** Applied Survey Research (ASR), and ***SLO Homeless Point-In-Time Census Produced by Thurmond Consulting

Youth and Young Adults	2020*	2021*	2022**	2023***
Unaccompanied Children	0	0	7	10
Transitional-Age Youth	6	12	57	16
Total	6	12	64	26

In 2023, the Point-In-Time (PIT) Count identified 10 unaccompanied children and 16 transitional-age youth, making up 1.8% of the unhoused population. In the state of California, many foster youths are eligible to receive extended care benefits as they transition into adulthood, up through their 21st birthday. Extended Foster Care was implemented in 2012 to assist foster youth with the transition into independence and prevent them from experiencing homelessness.

Table 10. Jurisdiction Breakdown of the Population

Source: 2022 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-In-Time Census & Survey Produced by ASR

Cities	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
San Luis Obispo	248	137	385
Unincorporated	492	5	497
Paso Robles	174	60	234
Atascadero	51	42	93
Morro Bay	76	3	79
Grover Beach	56	34	90
Arroyo Grande	39	11	50
Pismo Beach	20	0	20
TOTAL:	1156	292	1448

In 2022, of the 1,448 total homeless individuals, 497 (33.4%) were in the unincorporated areas of the county. The second largest area in the county for homelessness was in San Luis Obispo city with 385 (26.6%) individuals. Additionally, the breakdowns of the following cities include Paso Robles with 234 (16.2%) individuals, Atascadero with 93 (6.4%) individuals, Morro Bay with 79 (5.5%) individuals, Grover Beach with 90 (6.2%) individuals, Arroyo Grande with 50 (3.5%) individuals, and Pismo Beach with 20 (1.4%) individuals. Homelessness among families presents unique challenges for child welfare services and can be a barrier to reunification when children cannot be returned safely.

The 2022 point-in-time survey captured those who were involved with the foster care system, 15% stated they had been involved with foster care and 85% said no. The survey also captured the length of time in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. Of the 1,448 individuals, 52% lived in SLO County for ten or more years, 21% for five-nine years, 19% for 1-4 years and 8% less than a year. Of the 1,488 individuals, 55% were male, 44% female, and 1% gender non-conforming. 14% had some form of employment and of those who were unemployed, 27% were unable to work, 32% were looking for work, and 41% were not looking for work.

The 40 Prado Homeless Services Center, opened in October 2018 and is managed by Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO). The center combines the services previously provided at the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter and the Prado Day Center. 40 Prado provides a cost-effective, safe, and central location for homeless families and individuals as they embark on the path to self-

sufficiency. 40 Prado provides the essentials of food, shelter, and personal care: counseling, job training, tutoring, and healthcare for medically fragile individuals, veteran's services and assistance with finding permanent housing. 40 Prado provides services to approximately 90 to 100 homeless men, women, and children every day.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) continues collaborating with various housing resources in the community, such as HomeShare SLO, 50 Now, Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA), Veteran's Services, CAPSLO, 5 Cities Homeless Coalition, and Friends of 40 Prado Homeless Services Center. Additionally, DSS's utilizes internal programs, such as Housing Shelter Program (HSP) and Bringing Families Home (BFH) Programs.

Federally Recognized Active Tribes

San Luis Obispo (SLO) County does not have any federally recognized tribes. However, the Native American Heritage Commission identifies the Salinan, Chumash, and Yokut tribes as local. While not federally recognized, these tribes play a significant role in the community, and Child Welfare Services (CWS) actively engages with them in cases involving Native American children.

CWS complies with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), Senate Bill 678, Bureau of Indian Affairs guidelines, and California Rules of Court 5.480 to 5.487 to ensure proper handling of cases involving Native American children who may be eligible for membership in federally recognized tribes. CWS also works with non-federally recognized tribes and collaborates with non-local federally recognized tribes, including the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, in cases involving children with tribal affiliations outside the county and state.

Additionally, CWS partners with local service providers and Native American organizations, such as Indian Health Services and cultural educators, to support the cultural and emotional needs of Native American children. These efforts ensure compliance with ICWA while preserving the cultural identity and heritage of Native children and families.

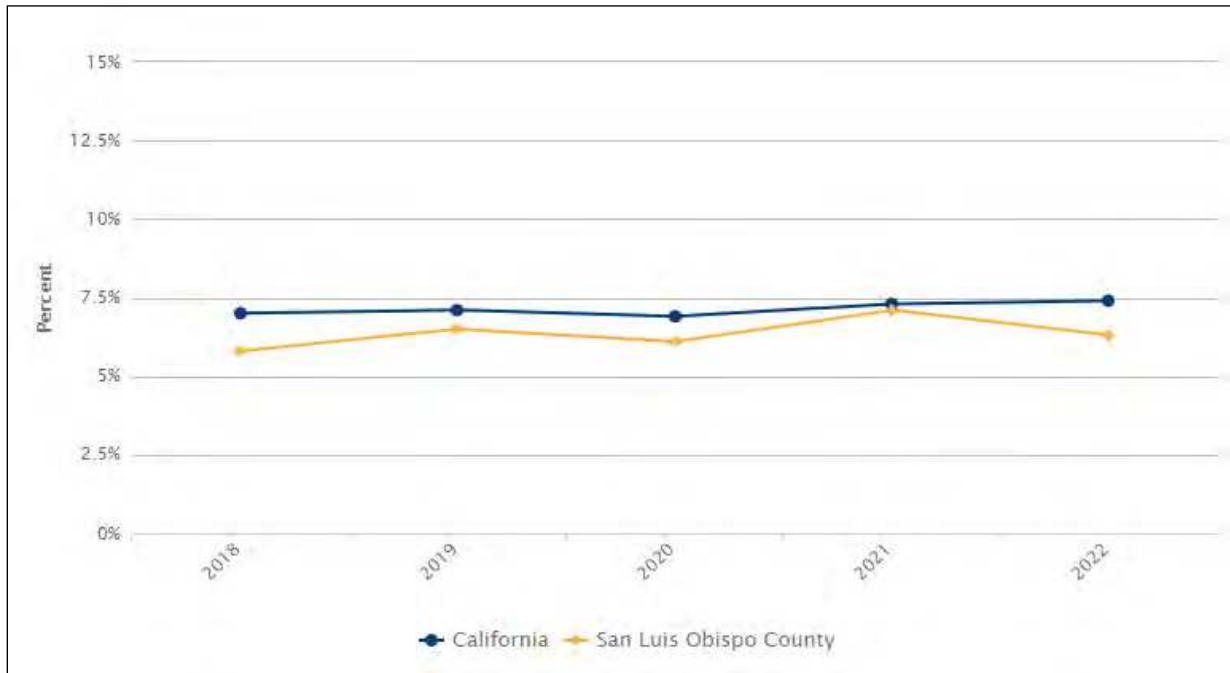
The Probation Department rarely has cases involving Native American youth but is aware of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), Senate Bill 678, Bureau of Indian Affairs guidelines, and the California Rules of Court 5.480 and 5.487 to ensure proper handling of cases involving youth with Native American ancestry. Probation is also in the process of developing working relationships with the local tribes and has included this as one of the strategies aimed at improving outcomes for youth in care.

Child Maltreatment Indicators

[Reference page 24 of the instruction manual]

Number of Low-Birth Weight Newborns

Table 11. Low Birth Weight (%) in California and San Luis Obispo County



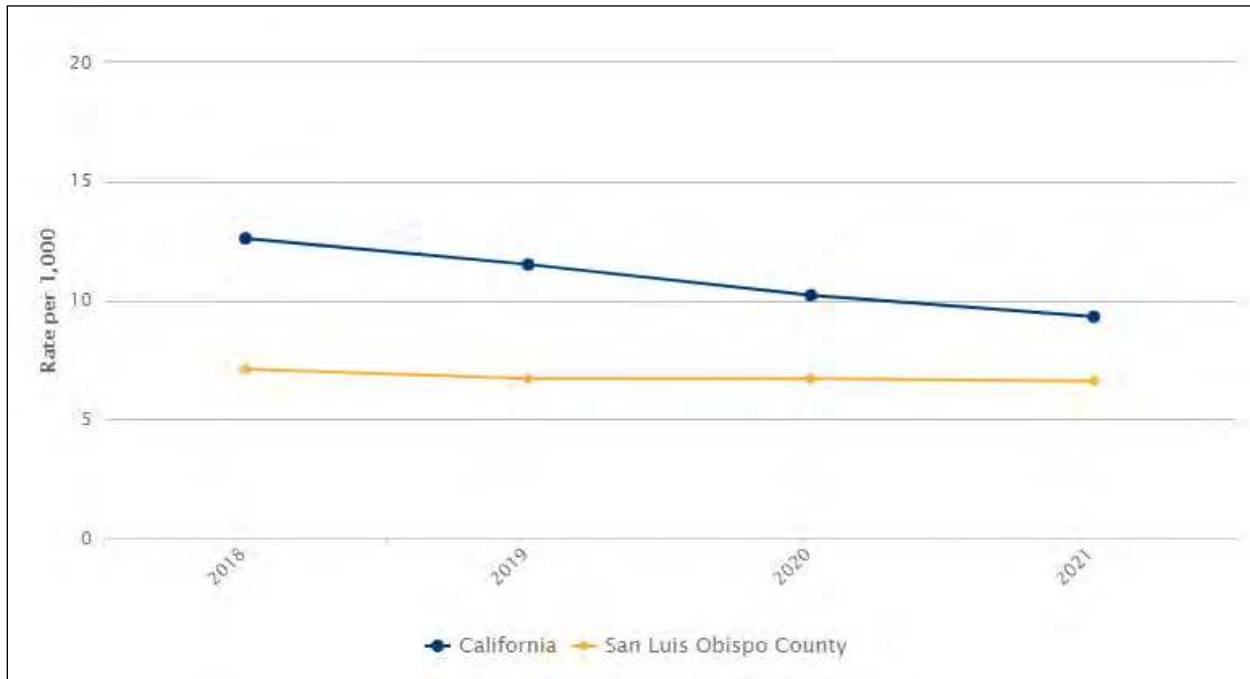
Definition: Percentage of infants born weighing less than 2,500 grams (approximately 5 lbs., 8 oz). (E.g., in 2022, 7.4% of infants born to California mothers were born at low birthweight.)

Data Source: [As cited on kidsdata.org](#), California Dept. of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master Files (Mar. 2020); CDC WONDER, Natality Data (Mar. 2024).

In 2022, San Luis Obispo County reported a total of 153 infants born with low birth weight, compared to 31,114 statewide. Between 2018 and 2022, the county saw a slight decrease of 0.8% in low-birth-weight births. In 2017, the highest rates of low-birth-weight births were observed among White mothers, with a rate of 5.3%, followed by Hispanic/Latina mothers at 4.8%.

Number of Children Born to Teen Parents

Table 12. Rate of Children Born to Teen Parents in California and San Luis Obispo County



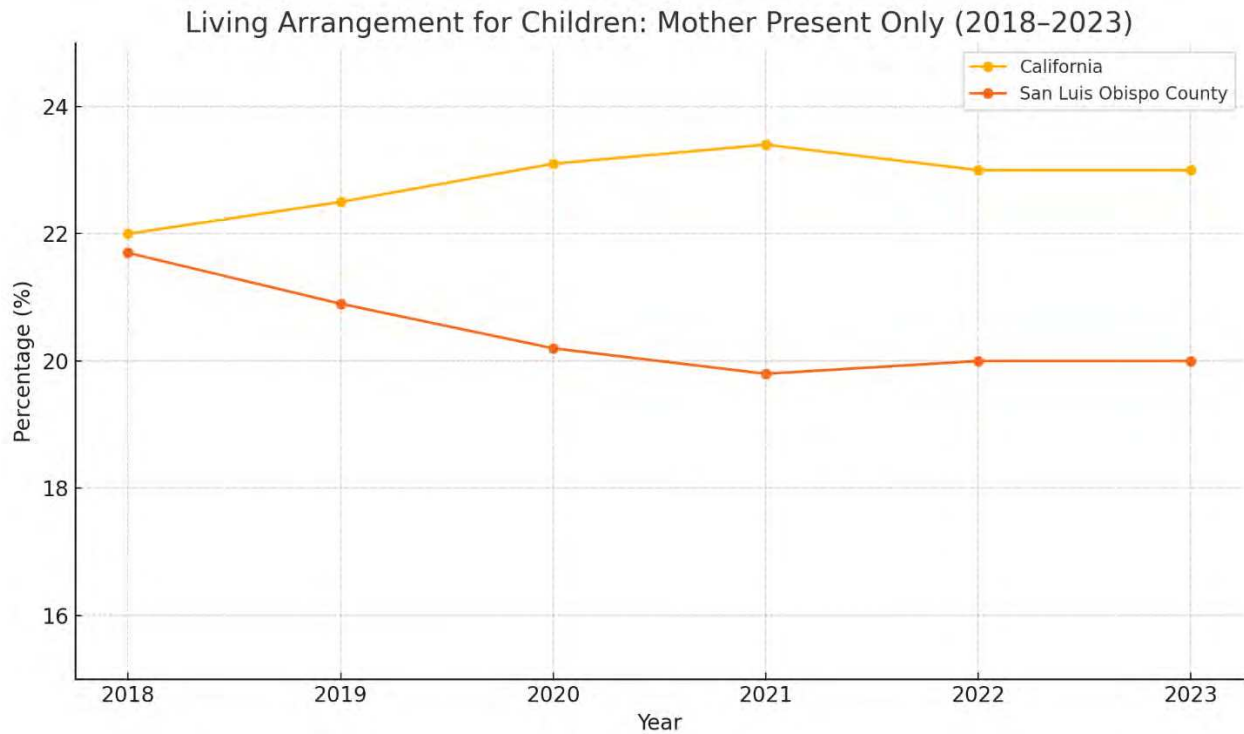
Definition: Number of births to mothers ages 15-19, per 1,000 young women ages 15-19 (e.g., in California in 2021, the teen birth rate was 9.3 births per 1,000 young women ages 15-19).

Data Source: [As cited on kidsdata.org](https://kidsdata.org), California Dept. of Public Health, Birth Statistical Master Files (Mar. 2020); CDC WONDER, Natality; California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections (Jun. 2023).

Over a four-year period, the number of births to teen mothers aged 15-19 in San Luis Obispo County has declined from 7.1 births per 1,000 females in 2018 to 6.6 births per 1,000 females in 2021. In comparison, the state of California reported rates of 12.6 in 2018 and 9.3 in 2021. This decline in teen births may be attributed to increased education and outreach efforts by organizations such as Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO), Public Health, and Behavioral Health, which have focused on promoting abstinence, safe sex practices, and improving access to birth control. These initiatives, alongside ongoing community support and health services, have likely contributed to the reduction in teen pregnancies within the county.

Living Arrangement for Children, Mother Present Only

Table 13. Living Arrangement for Children, Mother Present Only (%) in California and San Luis Obispo County

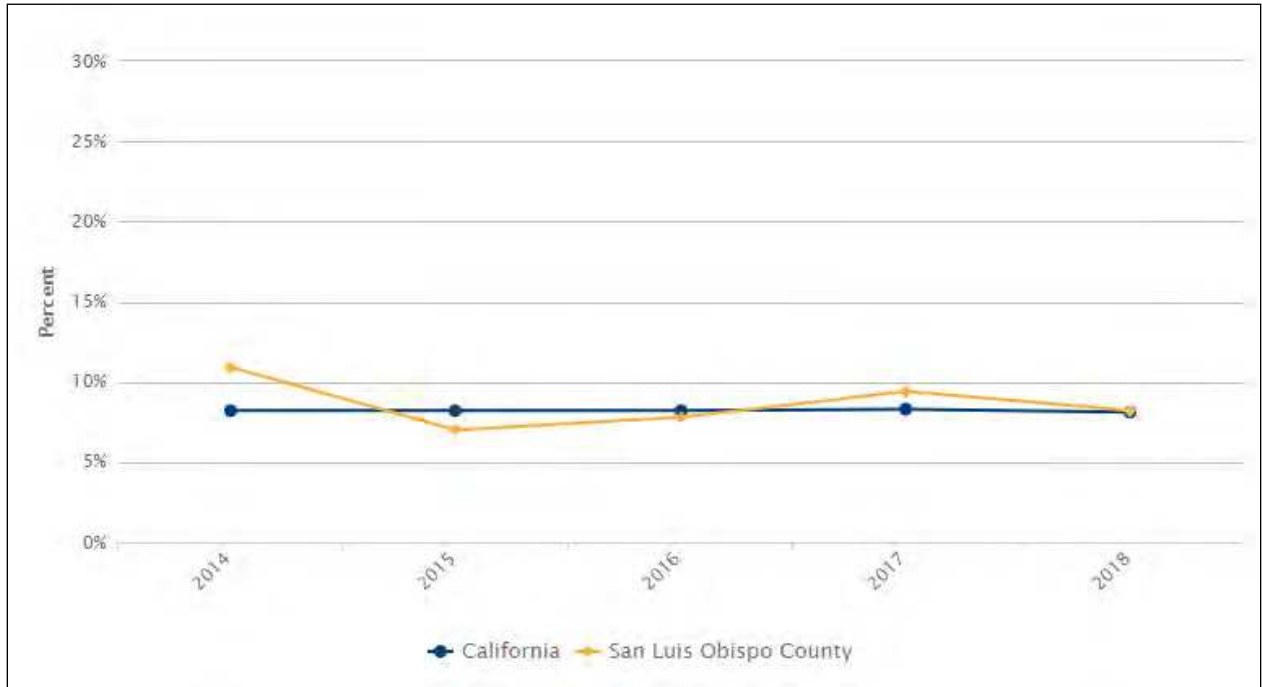


Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates, 2018–2023. Table B09005 – Children Under 18 Years in Households by Presence of Parents. Data reflects the percentage of children under age 18 living in households with their mother only. County-level data for San Luis Obispo and state-level data for California were obtained via data.census.gov and supplemented with trend analysis based on historical ACS data as reported by [Kidsdata.org](https://kidsdata.org) (Population Reference Bureau, 2019).

From 2018 to 2023, the percentage of children living in female-headed households in San Luis Obispo County decreased from 21.7% in 2018 to 20.0% in 2023, representing a 1.7% decrease.

Living Arrangement for Children, Father Present Only

Table 14. Living Arrangement for Children, Father Present Only (%) in California and San Luis Obispo County

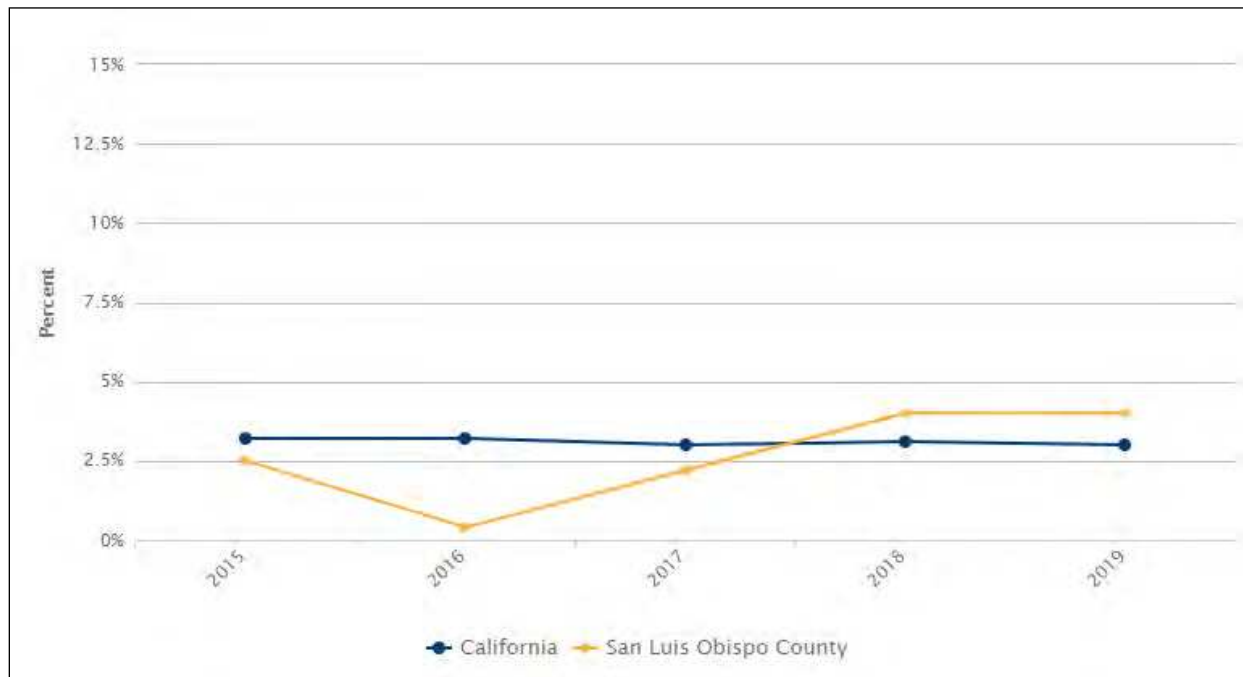


Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey summary files and public use microdata (Dec. 2019).

From 2014 to 2018, the percentage of children in a Male-Headed Household decreased from 10.9% in 2014 to 8.2% in 2018. This is a 2.7% percent decrease. The county's rates have not always been consistent with the percentage of children in care of a Male-Headed Household in California, which remained in the 8% range for the same period. Since the last County Self-Assessment, San Luis Obispo County has had limited father specific support groups, which may have impacted this decrease in male-headed households.

Children in Care of Grandparents

Table 15. Children in Care of Grandparents (%) in California and San Luis Obispo County



Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, Population Reference Bureau, analysis of U.S. Census Bureau American Community

An estimate percentage of children aged 0-17 living with a grandparent householder who is responsible for the care of grandchildren in the household.

From 2015-2019, the percentage of children in the care of grandparents in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County has increased from 2.5% in 2015 to 4.0% in 2019. This is a 1.5% percent increase. California had a slight decrease from 3.3% to 3.0% for this period.

As of recent data from 2021, SLO County had an estimated child population of approximately 49,397 children aged 0-17 (kidsdata.org). The average household size in the county is approximately 2.55 individuals, with an average family size of 3.07 (Census Reporter). Family households in the county predominantly care for school-aged children, with 57.8% of family households having children aged 6-17 (Census Reporter). While most family households with children under 18 are headed by married couples (51,862), female-headed family households (5,013) significantly outnumber male-headed family households (2,153). Additionally, among unmarried households, 7% are comprised of unmarried opposite-gender couples, and 0.5% are same-gender couples (Census Reporter). This data reflects a trend of smaller household sizes, potentially influenced by the area's high cost of living.

Housing Cost and Availability

San Luis Obispo (SLO) County continues to face significant challenges related to housing affordability and availability. As of November 2024, the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the county is approximately \$2,700, reflecting a substantial increase from the 2018 average of \$1,219.

This escalation in rental costs underscores the growing financial burden on residents. In terms of housing availability, the rental vacancy rate in SLO County was reported at 7.5% in 2019, up from 2.8% in previous years.

However, more recent data indicates a tightening market, with a reported vacancy rate of 0.9% as of 2020.

This low vacancy rate highlights the scarcity of available rental units, further exacerbating housing challenges for local families.

In response to these issues, the Department has implemented housing assistance programs within Participant Services and Child Welfare Services (CWS) to support families in securing stable housing. These initiatives aim to alleviate the pressures of high rental costs and limited housing availability, providing critical support for those in need.

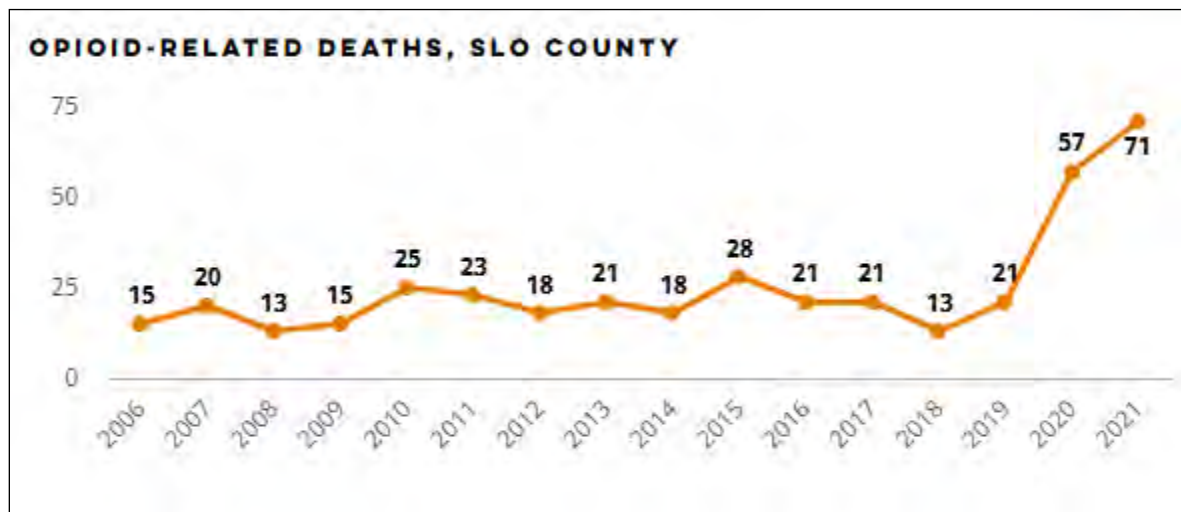
2-1-1 Calls

The United Way of San Luis Obispo County administers the 2-1-1 helpline, offering residents 24/7 access to health and human services information and referrals via phone, text, and online platforms. In 2022, the helpline received 3,611 contacts, including calls, texts, and online interactions.

Most of these contacts originated from the North and Central regions of the county, with fewer from the South region. The top needs identified countywide included homeless shelters, comprehensive information and referrals, out-of-county resource inquiries, food pantries, rent payment assistance, and low-income/subsidized rental housing. Regionally, the North's primary needs were rent payment assistance, homeless shelters, and electric service payment assistance; the Central regions were homeless shelters, food pantries, and general legal aid; and the South's were homeless shelters, rent payment assistance, low-income/subsidized rental housing, and food pantries. These findings highlight a significant demand for affordable housing across the county. Currently, 2-1-1 contact data is tracked annually rather than monthly.

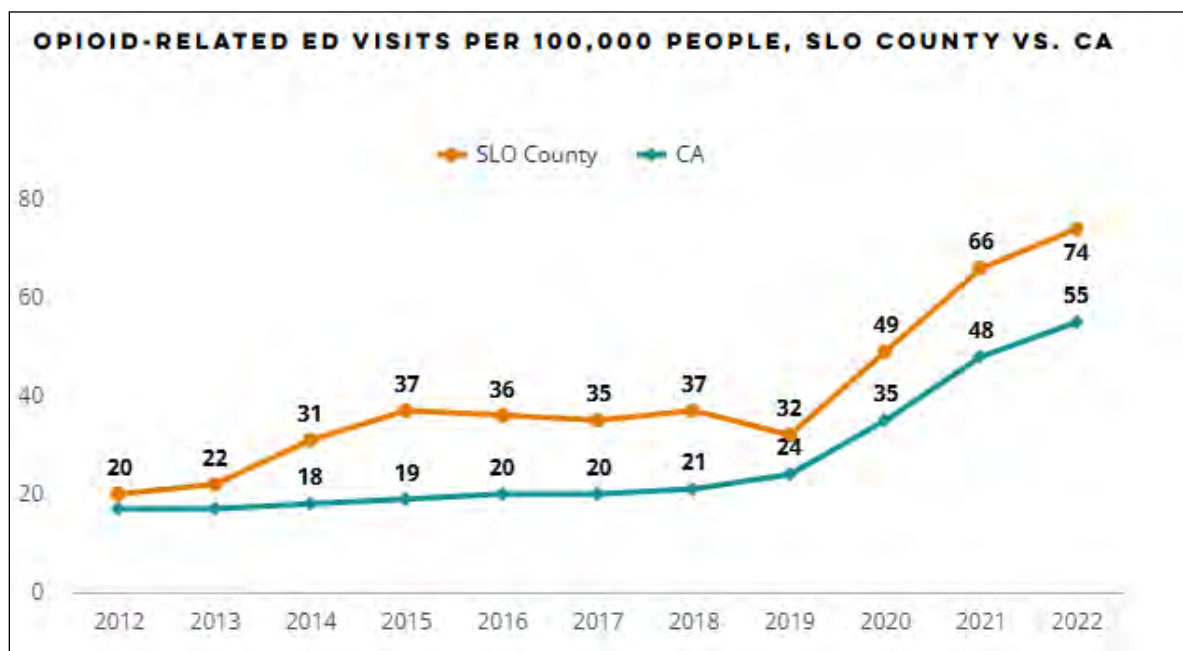
Substance Abuse

Table 16. Number of Opioid Related Deaths, County of San Luis Obispo



Source: California Department of Public Health. [California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard](#).

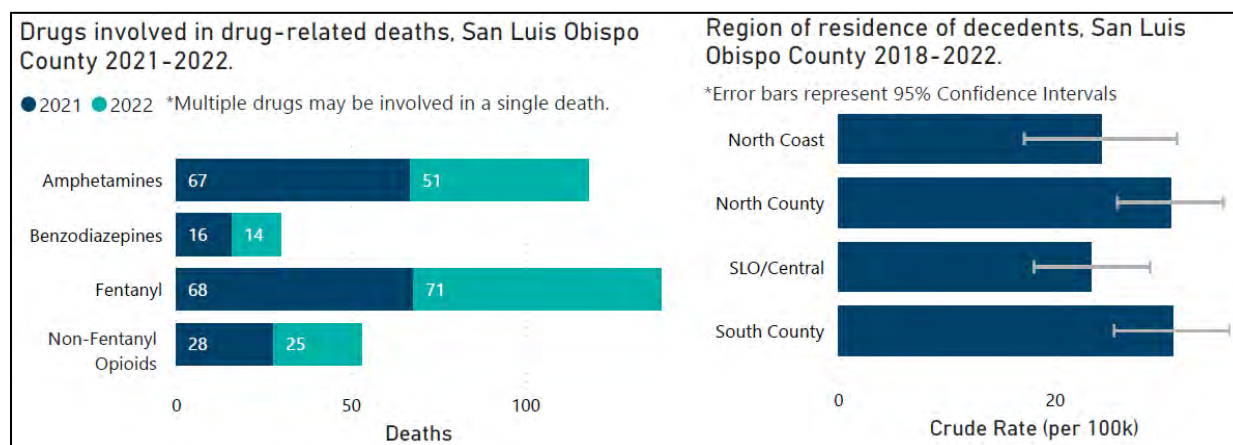
Table 17. Rate of Opioid Related Deaths, County of San Luis Obispo and California



Source: California Department of Public Health. [California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard](#). Data shows Quarter 2 12-Month Rolling Rates.

Emergency department visits caused by non-fatal acute poisonings due to the effects of all opioid drugs, regardless of intent (e.g., suicide, unintentional, or undetermined). Emergency department visits related to late effects, adverse effects, and chronic poisonings due to the effects of drugs (e.g., damage to organs from long-term drug use) are excluded from this indicator.

Table 18. Drug Related Deaths (N)



Data source: County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency Drug-Related Deaths 2024 fact sheet prepared by the Public Health Department in consultation with the Behavioral Health Department.

Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) remains a critical public health concern in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, with drug-related deaths and opioid misuse posing significant challenges. Since 2020, the county's drug-related death rate has exceeded the California state average. Opioids contribute to 75% of drug-related fatalities, often involving multiple substances. Adults aged 25-64 experience the highest death rates, while young and older adults show lower rates.

Despite a decline in opioid prescriptions—360 per 1,000 residents in 2021, down 4% from the previous year—opioid-related deaths have risen dramatically. Deaths increased from 21 in 2019 to 55 in 2020 and peaked at 88 in 2021 before dropping to 77 in 2022 and 2023. Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for opioid overdoses also remain high. Methamphetamine and heroin use persist as significant concerns, with methamphetamine and heroin accounting for the majority of treatment admissions.

Among youth, the 2021-2022 California Healthy Kids Survey reported that 13% of 11th-grade students had used prescription opioids, tranquilizers, or sedatives recreationally, with 6% using them in the past 30 days. Additionally, 22% had used marijuana, and 38% had consumed alcohol in the past month.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated SUDs, increasing stress, isolation, and substance misuse. Local efforts, such as the "Naloxone Now SLO" program and the San Luis Obispo County Opioid Safety Coalition, have focused on harm reduction and education. However, the county lacks inpatient treatment and detox facilities, requiring individuals to seek services outside the area.

San Luis Obispo County offers a range of inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services for adults and youth, though critical service gaps persist—particularly for youth. For adults, the county operates a Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), outpatient mental health clinics, and mobile crisis teams. Between 2017 and 2019, law enforcement referrals to the PHF dropped by 48%, from 218 to 114. In 2023, the county opened its first sobering center to reduce strain on emergencies and inpatient services. Youth outpatient services include therapy, psychiatric care, and school-based crisis intervention, but inpatient resources remain limited. As of 2023, approximately 97% of youth experiencing psychiatric crises were transported out of the county due to the lack of local inpatient beds. The Transitions-Mental Health Association continues to operate the Youth Treatment Program (YTP), a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program, as the only in-county residential option for youth. The Behavioral Health Department also reported receiving an average of 35 crisis calls per month for youth under 18 in 2023. While progress has been made, such as increased access to naloxone and preventive programs, continued efforts are essential to address rising opioid-related deaths and expand access to treatment for SUDs.

Mental Health

Mental health remains a significant concern in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, with disparities in self-reported well-being and high rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide compared to state averages. In the 2023 [SLO County Community Health Survey](#), only 32% of residents earning under \$50K rated their mental health as "very good" or "excellent," compared to 58% of those earning over \$130K. Anxiety is prevalent, with 21% of respondents reporting daily feelings of worry or nervousness, particularly among those under 65 (25%) and those earning less than \$50K (33%). Major concerns include affordable housing (27%) and earning enough to meet basic needs (26%). Youth mental health is also a growing issue, with 38% of 11th-grade students reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness, up from 29% in previous years, and 16% considering suicide. Suicide rates in SLO County are notably higher than the state average, with an average of 15.5 deaths per 100,000 people from 2020-2022, compared to California's rate of 10.3 per 100,000.

Mental health services are available countywide, with the city of San Luis Obispo offering the most resources, but disparities persist across income levels, age groups, and ethnicities. SLO County has seen increased mental health service referrals for adolescents aged 11-17, and organizations like CenCal Health and Help Me Grow provide tailored services, especially for children. The Child Welfare System also screens children for mental health issues and generates referrals. Despite efforts to

address these concerns, challenges such as housing affordability and income inequities continue to impact mental health outcomes, underscoring the need for sustained action to improve overall well-being in the county.

Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities

For the years 2015-2017, [Kidsdata.org](https://kidsdata.org) shows SLO County's child/youth death rate at 23.2 per 100,000, which is lower than the state rate of 29.8 deaths per 100,000 children/youth. In both 2017 and 2019, SLO County experienced 11 deaths of children under one year of age in 2017, which is an increase from what was reported in the 2014 County Self-Assessment of seven child deaths. The following years had less than 10 or less deaths reported, therefore data was suppressed to protect confidentiality: 2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

San Luis Obispo County tracks child fatalities and near fatalities that are determined to be the result of abuse or neglect, in alignment with state reporting requirements. From 2015 to 2017, the county's child and youth death rate were 23.2 per 100,000—lower than the statewide rate of 29.8 per 100,000. In 2017 and 2019, the county reported 11 infant deaths each year, up from seven in 2014. For 2018, 2020, 2021, and 2022, fewer than 10 deaths were reported annually, and data was suppressed to protect confidentiality. According to the April 2025 CIOU Newsletter, statewide trends in fatality case reviews from Calendar Year 2020 indicate several key factors contributing to child deaths, including confirmed abuse, delayed or incomplete documentation of allegations, pending or inconclusive autopsy results, and cases with unreported perpetrators. These trends highlight the critical need for early identification of risk, thorough assessments, and clear documentation practices to support effective interventions and prevent future fatalities.

Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are of particular concern to child welfare services due to their increased risk of maltreatment. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018) article titled, *The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. Children with disabilities are at least three times more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012), and they are more likely to be seriously injured or harmed by maltreatment (Sedlak et al., 2010). Even among children with disabilities, the risk of maltreatment varies by disability type (Jones et al., 2012; Lightfoot, 2014; Turner, Vanderminden, Finkelhor, Hamby, & Shattuck, 2011)

Awareness of the characteristics of different disabilities in relation to the risks of maltreatment and the supports each child needs may help child welfare professionals provide services that assist children in meeting their cognitive, behavioral, social, and daily living needs. Promising strategies are available to prevent the maltreatment of children with disabilities, and opportunities exist to improve collaboration between child welfare and disability agencies to respond more effectively to children and families in this population. Child welfare professionals can play a key role in developing networks of support for children with disabilities and their families, identifying and addressing family strengths and needs so children with disabilities can live in safe and supportive homes, and educating children about abuse and neglect so they are better able to protect themselves.

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) has implemented key strategies to help reduce this risk and support child welfare efforts. These include specialized child abuse prevention curricula, mandated reporter training for staff, and robust policies for identifying and reporting suspected abuse. Through the San Luis Obispo SELPA, students with disabilities receive individualized educational and behavioral supports. Additionally, SLOCOE collaborates with local agencies such as

the Center for Family Strengthening to strengthen prevention efforts across the community. These coordinated actions help ensure children with disabilities are supported in safe, stable, and nurturing environments, aligning with child welfare's goals to promote safety and well-being for this high-risk population.

Domestic Violence

According to kidsnow.org the county of San Luis Obispo experienced a rate of calls for assistance pertaining to domestic violence at 4.2 per 1,000 adults, almost half of the state's rate of 6.1 for 2020.

County rate per 1,000 adults:

- 2016 rate of 3.3
- 2017 rate of 3.2
- 2018 rate of 3.3
- 2019 rate of 3.2
- 2020 rate of 4.2

State rate per 1,000 adults:

- 2016 rate of 6.2
- 2017 rate of 6.4
- 2018 rate of 6.3
- 2019 rate of 6.1
- 2020 rate of 6.1

This could be the result of increased incidents; or, more favorably, the result of increased reporting of a stable occurrence rate due to community education, public outreach, and service provision.

Child Welfare Population

[Reference pages 24-26 of the instruction manual]

In 2023, a higher percentage of referrals were received for the SLO County children (5.06%) than for children in the state overall (3.27%). SLO County also had a higher percentage of children with substantiated referrals (7.2%) than the state (5.6%). Additionally, the County had a higher number of first-time foster care entries (2.7%) than the state (1.7%). These trends were noted during the 2020 County Self-Assessment and have continued. Interestingly, the number of children in foster care is lower in SLO County than in the state, though it is just slightly (4.3 % versus 4.4%).

The information contained in this section below was pulled from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project website http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare a joint venture of the California Department of Social Services and the University of California at Berkeley California. The source for program data is the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) administrative data system used by all counties in the State of California.

Placement Population Participation Rates

Table 19. Placement Population (General) Age 0-17 (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

	SLO County		Statewide	
Placement Population (N)	Total	Per 1,000	Total	Per 1,000
Number of children <18 in population	47,449		8,852,264	
Number of children with referrals	2,402	50.6	289,824	32.7
Number of children with substantiated referrals	344	7.2	49,661	5.6
Number of foster care first entries	129	2.7	15,114	1.7
Number of children in foster care (Point in Time July 1, 2023)	205	4.3	39,055	4.4

The County of San Luis Obispo has 47,449 children under the age of eighteen. Of the child population, 2,402 have had referrals to child welfare services, which is 5.06% of the child population. The number of children with substantiated referrals is 344, which is .72% of the child population. There were 129 children with first time entries into foster care, which is .27% of the child population. According to the point in time data from July 1, 2023, there were 205 youth in foster care, which is .43% of the county's child population.

Table 20. Reason for Initial Placement of Children in Foster Care (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 11/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Substantiated Allegation	Number	Percent
General Neglect	292	84.9%
Caretaker Absence / Incapacity	M	2.3%
Physical Abuse	M	0.3%
Sexual Abuse	13	3.8%
Emotional Abuse	M	2.3%
Severe Neglect	22	6.4%
Other	M	0%
Total	344	100%

General neglect continues to have the highest substantiation rate within the County of SLO at 84.9% (N=292). After general neglect is severe neglect at 6.4% (N=22). Followed by sexual abuse at 3.8% (N=13), emotional abuse at 2.3% (N=8), caretaker absence/incapacity at 2.3% (N=8), and lastly physical abuse at 0.3% (1).

Table 21. CWS- Children with Child Maltreatment Allegations, Substantiations, by Age Group (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Total Child Population	Children with Allegations	Allegations per 1,000 Children	Children with Substantiations	Substantiation per 1,000 Children	% of Allegations Substantiated	Children with Entries	Entry per 1,000 Children	% of Substantiations leading to entry
Under 1	2,489	173	69.5	47	18.9	13.7%	32	12.9	68.1%
1-2	5,022	286	56.9	46	9.2	13.4%	17	3.4	37.0%
3-5	7,506	479	63.8	68	9.1	19.8%	22	2.9	32.4%
6-10	13,217	985	74.5	85	6.4	24.7%	39	3.0	45.9%
11-15	13,496	1,046	77.5	74	5.5	21.5%	29	2.1	39.2%
16-17	5,719	404	70.6	24	4.2	7.0%	M	1.2	29.2%
Total	47,449	3,373	71.1	344	7.2	100%	146	3.1	100%

The largest proportion of children for whom allegations of abuse and neglect are received pertaining to children between the age of 11-15 (77.5 per 1,000 children) and children between the ages of 6-10 (74.5 per 1,000 children). The highest percentage of allegation substantiations is the 6-10 age group with 24.7% and 11-15 age group 21.5%. The highest rate of entries were children under the age of one with 12.9 per 1,000 children, followed by children between the age of 6-10 with 3.0 per 1,000 children. The highest percentage of substantiations leading to entry are for children under the age of one at 68.1%, followed by children between the ages of 6-10 at 45.9%

Table 22. CWS Children with Child Maltreatment Allegations Substantiations, by Ethnicity (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Ethnic Group	Total Child Population	Children with Allegations	Incidence per 1,000 Children	Children with Substantiations	Incidence per 1,000 Children	% of Allegations	Children with Entries	Incidence per 1,000 Children	% of Substantiations
Black	378	65	172	5	13.2	1.9%	1	2.6	1.5%
White	26,003	1,420	54.6	171	6.6	42.1%	90	3.5	49.7%
Latino	16,744	1,243	74.2	126	7.5	36.9%	44	2.6	36.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,386	33	23.8	M	0.7	1.0%	M	0.7	0.3%
Native American	155	14	90.3	M	19.4	0.4%	0	0	0.9%
Multi-Race	2,783	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%
Missing	0	598	.	38	.	17.7%	M	.	11.0%

Total	47,449	3,373	71.1	344	7.2	100%	146	3.1	100%
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In 2023, allegations were received for 7.1% of the total child population in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, which is consistent with the 2018 rate (from the 2020 County Self-Assessment (CSA)) where allegation were received for 7.2% of the population. In 2023, Black children had the highest allegation rate of 17.2%, making these children by far the largest population for whom allegations of abuse and neglect are received, at the time of the 2020 CSA the substantiation rate of Black children was 19.2%. The next highest rate is for Native American children at 9.3%, which is an increase from the 2020 CSA data which reflected an allegation rate of 7.4%. Latino children have seen an increase in allegation rates from 6.7% at the time of the 2020 CSA to 7.4% in 2023.

Of the 3,373 allegations received, the highest number of allegations were received for White and Latino children followed by Missing data. 1,420 were White, 1,243 were Latino, and 598. Of the 3,373 allegations 344 (10.2%) were substantiated. Substantiated allegations are highest among White children at 49.7%, followed by 36.6% for Latino children and 11.0% for children missing ethnicity information. Of substantiated allegations leading to entry to care, Black children were at 20% (1 of 5), White children at 52.6% (90 of 171), Latino children at 34.9% (44 of 126), Asian/Pacific Islander 100% (1 of 1), Native American 0% (0 of 3), and missing 26.3% (10 out of 38).

Table 23. CWS Number of Children with Allegations by Type (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)							
Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website							
Age Group	Under 1	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-17	Total
Sexual Abuse	0	M	42	88	146	73	356
Physical Abuse	17	24	71	194	241	82	629
Severe Neglect	M	18	19	23	11	M	88
General Neglect	111	153	261	499	489	178	1,691
Exploitation	0	0	0	0	M	0	M
Emotional Abuse	28	71	63	120	106	41	429
Caretaker Absence/Incapacity	M	M	0	0	M	M	15
At Risk, Sibling Abused	M	12	23	61	45	15	163
Substantial Risk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	173	286	479	985	1,046	404	3,373

Of the 3,373 children for whom allegations were received, 27.8% (N=938) were received for children ages 0-5, 29.2% (N=985) were received for children 6-10, and 31.0% (N=1,046) were received for children 11-15. The rate drops slightly for children ages 16-17, at 12.0% (N=404).

Of allegations by type, general neglect was the highest at 50.1% across all ages (N=1,691), highest among children ages 6-10, accounting for 29.5% of general neglect allegations. General neglect allegations are lowest for children under the age of 1 at 6.6% of those with a general neglect allegation. After allegations of general neglect, the next highest allegation type is physical abuse at 18.6% across all ages (N=629), highest among children aged 11-15 accounting for 38.3% of all physical abuse allegations.

Table 24. CWS Number of Children with First Entries Stratified by Age and Ethnicity (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Ethnic Group							
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Native American	Multi- Race	Missing	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Under 1	0	18	M	M	0	0	M	32
1-2 yr	0	M	M	0	0	0	3	15
3-5 yr	0	12	M	0	0	0	0	19
6-10 yr	0	22	12	0	0	0	M	35
11-15 yr	0	M	M	0	0	0	M	22
16-17 yr	0	M	M	0	0	0	0	M
Total	0	75	43	M	0	0	M	129

White children experienced the highest rate of first entry at 58.1%, followed by Latino at 33.3%, and missing at 7.8%, and lastly Pacific Islander at .8%, there were no Black children in 2023 that experienced a first entry to foster care.

Children ages 6-10 experienced the highest percent of first entry at 27.13%, with 62.9% of the children being White, followed by Latino with 34.3%, and lastly missing ethnicity at 2.9%. Children under the age of 1 experience the next highest percentage of first entry at 24.8%, with 56.3% of the children being White, followed by Latino with 31.3%, missing with 9.4% and Pacific Islander with 3.1%.

Table 25. CWS Number of Children with Subsequent Entries in Less than 12 Months Stratified by Age and Ethnicity (July 2022 – June 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 12/6/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Ethnic Group						
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/P.I.	Native American	Missing	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
< 1 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-2 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3-5 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6-10 yr	0	M	0	0	0	0	M
11-15 yr	0	M	0	0	0	0	M
16-17 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	M	0	0	0	0	M

Exits to permanency during the following period (July 2022-June 2023) then reentered in less than 12 months.

Children aged 11-15 experienced the highest rate of re-entry at 66.7%, followed by children aged 6-10 at 33.3%. 100% of the children in the re-entry population were White. It is important to note that there was only a total of three children who experienced re-entry in 2023, resulting in data that cannot accurately determine trends.

Table 26. CWS Number of Children in Care Stratified by Age and Ethnicity (Q3, 2023 – July 1, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 12/4/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Ethnic Group						Total	
	Black	White	Latino	Asian /P.I.	Native American	Missing		
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Percent
< 1 yr	0	13	M	M	M	M	26	12.7%
1-2 yr	0	22	11	0	0	M	34	16.6%
3-5 yr	0	15	12	0	0	0	27	13.2%
6-10 yr	0	30	16	M	0	M	49	23.9%
11-15 yr	M	24	M	0	0	M	38	18.5%
16-17 yr	M	13	13	M	M	0	31	15.1%
Total	M	117	69	M	M	M	205	100%

Children between the ages of 6-10 comprise the largest age group in care at 23.9%, followed by the age of 11-15 18.5%, age 1-2 at 16.6%, age 16-17 at 15.1%, 3-5 at 13.2%, and under 1 at 12.7%. Across all age groups White children are consistently in care at a higher rate than other ethnic groups. The second highest rate amongst children in care is Latino children.

White children comprise the largest ethnicity group in care at 57.1%, followed by Latino at 33.7%. Ethnicity data was missing for 3.9% of all children in care. Black children represent 2% of children in care, followed by 1.5% of Native American children and 2% of Asian/Pacific Islander children. As there are very few Black, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, the numbers are impacted significantly by small changes.

Table 27. CWS Children in Care with Open Cases by Service Component (July 1, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 12/4/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Service Component Type							
	ER	No Placement FM	Post-Placement FM	Family Reunification	Permanent Placement	ST	Missing	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
< 1 yr	M	M	M	14	M	0	0	35
1-2 yr	M	M	M	18	14	0	0	51
3-5 yr	M	M	M	14	12	0	0	39

6-10 yr	M	14	M	27	21	0	0	73
11-15 yr	M	18	12	16	27	0	0	79
16-17 yr	M	M	M	M	30	0	0	47
18-21 yr	0	0	0	0	0	54	0	54
Total	22	53	43	96	110	54	0	378

Point in time data from July 1, 2023, shows that the service component for children in care was highest for permanent placement are at 29.1%, followed closely by 25.4% of children who have a service component of family reunification. 14.3% of youth are receiving supportive transition services, 11.4% are in post-placement family maintenance, 14.0% of youth are in Family Maintenance (no previous placement), and a small number at 5.8% were in Emergency Response component.

The highest service component type for children between the age of 0-5 was family reunification at 35.9%. The highest service component type for children between the age of 6-10 was family reunification at 37.0%. The highest service component type for children between the age of 11-15 was permanent placement at 34.2%. The highest service component type for children between the age of 16-17 was permanent placement at 63.8%. All young people between the ages of 18-21 were in supportive transition.

Table 28. Number of Children in Care with Tribal Affiliations of ICWA Eligible Children (July 1, 2023)									
Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 12/4/24 from UCB CCWIP website									
Placement Status	Age Group								Total
	Under 1	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-17	18-21	Missing	
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	n	
Relatives	M	M	0	M	0	0	0	0	M
Non-Relatives, Indian SCPs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCPs	0	M	M	0	0	0	0	0	M
Non-Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Group Homes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SILP	0	0	0	0	0	0	M	0	M
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	M	M	M	M	0	0	M	0	M

According to point in time data from July 1, 2023, there were nine Indian Child Welfare Act eligible children in foster care with tribal affiliations. As there are very few children within the demographic, the numbers are significantly impacted by changes. One child is in a Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP) of their own choosing, bringing the total of children down to eight. Six of the eight eligible youth are in the care of a relative. The final two are in the care of non-relatives, non-Indian substitute care providers. This is an improvement in youth placed with relatives, at the time of the

2020 County Self-Assessment there were six minors and all six were placed with non-relative, non-Indian care providers.

Probation Population

Table 29. PROBATION – Number of Youth with First Entries Stratified by Age and Ethnicity (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Age Group	Ethnic Group							
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Native American	Multi- Race	Missing	Total
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Under 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-2 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3-5 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6-10 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11-15 yr	0	M	M	0	0	0	0	M
16-17 yr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	M	M	0	0	0	0	M

Over the past five years (Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19 – FY2022-23), the number of referrals submitted to Juvenile Probation has declined by 32.9%. There were 177 youth supervised throughout FY2022-23 compared to 122 youth as of June 30, 2022. The average age of youth supervised by Probation in FY2022-23 was 17.0 years old; 14.7% were female, 85.3% were male, 40.0% were White, 47.4% were Latino, 2.1% were Black, 2.1% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8.4% were Other or Missing.

The number of youth entering foster care is consistent with this trend as well as the trends identified in the last County Self-Assessment (CSA) and past System Improvement Plans (SIPs); specifically, the number of youth has decreased over the past five years and is generally less than ten. As such, masking is performed to protect the privacy of individuals served by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and comply with CDSS data de-identification guidelines. Nevertheless, the typical Probation involved youth is between 11-15 years of age or older of White or Latino descent, not Indian Child Welfare Act eligible, and have a first placement type of either a home based setting, such as with a Relative or Non-Related Extended Family Member (NREFM) or in a resource home either through Child Welfare Services or a Foster Family Agency (FFA). However, some probation involved youth require a higher level of care, such as in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP).

Table 30. PROBATION – Number of Youth with First Entries Stratified by Placement Type (Jan 1, 2023 – Dec 31, 2023)

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 1/26/24 from UCB CCWIP website

First Placement Type	Jan2019- Dec2019	Jan2020- Dec2020	Jan2021- Dec2021	Jan2022- Dec2022	Jan2023- Dec2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Relative/NREFM	0	0	M	M	0
Foster	M	0	M	M	0
FFA	0	M	0	M	M
Court Specified Home	0	0	0	0	0
Tribally Approved Home	0	0	0	0	0
Group/STRTP	0	0	0	M	M
Shelter	0	0	0	0	0
Guardian	0	0	0	0	0
SILP	0	0	M	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Public Agency Characteristics

Political Jurisdictions

The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors (BOS), each elected to represent one of the county's five supervisorial districts. The BOS is responsible for setting policies, enacting ordinances and regulations, and overseeing the activities of all county departments. The county's organizational structure includes 25 departments, five of which are led by elected officials:

- Assessor
- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector-Public Administrator
- Clerk-Recorder
- District Attorney
- Sheriff-Coroner

The remaining department directors are appointed by the BOS. The BOS typically convenes regular sessions on Tuesdays at the County Government Center located at 1055 Monterey Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408. These meetings are open to the public and provide a platform for community members to engage with county governance.

The Director of Social Services reports directly to the BOS, ensuring that the department's activities align with the county's policies and objectives. The Child Welfare Services (CWS) division is managed by a Deputy Director, who oversees four Division Managers. Each Division Manager is responsible for specific programs and supervises Social Service Supervisors within their division. Additionally, the Social Services Operations and Support Division provides comprehensive program support, including fiscal oversight, data analysis, policy development, contract management, quality assurance, and continuous quality improvement (CQI).

The Chief Probation Officer (CPO) is appointed by the Board of Supervisors, pursuant to California Government Code 27770, subdivision (b), in accordance with San Luis Obispo County's Civil Service ordinance. The Probation Department is responsible for providing community corrections services, which are mandated by law. The Department consists of a Juvenile Services division, a Juvenile Custody division, and an Adult Services division, each managed by a Deputy Chief Probation Officer (DCPO). A Supervising Deputy Probation Officer (SDPO) is assigned to each unit within the divisions, who oversee services across the different regions of the county.

Collaboration between Child Welfare Services (CWS), Probation, and other county agencies, as well as local jurisdictions such as schools, law enforcement, and tribal representatives, is essential for the effective delivery of services. Strong relationships and open communication among these entities are vital to ensuring timely and coordinated support for children and families.

Both CWS and Probation have their positions allocated and their budgets approved through the BOS. The heads of these agencies regularly report to the BOS on data and statistical outcomes, trends within each agency, and projections for the future. The relationship between the BOS and these agencies directly impacts on their overall functioning and, consequently, affects the continuum of care for children and youth involved in each system.

For a visual representation of the county's organizational structure, including the Board of Supervisors and its relationship with various departments, please refer to the organizational charts below.

Table 31. CWS Organization Chart

Board of Supervisors (BOS) (5)					
Department of Social Services (DSS) Director (1)					
CWS Deputy Director (1)					
Division Manager (3)					
Program Manager (4)		Sup. Admin. Clerk (2)		Social Worker Sup. (11)	
Sup. Legal Clerk (1)					
Program Rev. Specialist (9)	Student Intern (2)	Admin. Assistant (17)	Social Worker Aid (17)	Social Worker (71)	Legal Clerk (7)

The CWS organization chart represents the number of allocations for each position within the Children Services branch. Some allocations may be held vacant based upon the budget and needs of the Department.

Within the social worker aid allocation there are two dedicated parent partner positions. Both positions are full-time employees (FTE). The parent partner program is officially eliminated effective Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Within the legal clerk allocation are two dedicated Indian Child Welfare Act legal clerk positions. Both are FTE.

Student interns work within staff development and may be assigned administrative tasks within the Foster Family Support unit, such as supporting the Parent Empowerment Newsletter (PEN).

Table 32. Probation Department Organization Chart

Board of Supervisors	
Chief Probation Officer (1)	
Assistant Chief Probation Officer (1)	
Chief Deputy Probation Officers (3)	
Assistant Chief Deputy Probation Officers (2)	
Supervising Deputy Probation Officers (15)	
Senior Deputy Probation Officers (16)	Senior Juvenile Services Officers (6)
Deputy Probation Officers (52)	Juvenile Services Officers (34)

The table shown above lists allocated sworn position in the Probation Department. However, the Probation Department is also staffed by 37 non-sworn positions, including Department Administration, Probation Assistants, Account Technicians, Legal Clerks, Information & Technology, and Program Mangers.

Board of Supervisors

The County of SLO is governed by an elected Board of Supervisors (BOS) comprised of five members. Each elected to represent one of the county's five supervisorial districts. Supervisors are elected by districts of approximately equal population to overlapping four-year terms. The BOS sets policy enacts ordinances and regulations and oversees activities of all County of SLO Departments. The BOS serves as the county's legislative body, setting policies and priorities to enhance the community's economic, environmental, and social quality of life.

The current supervisors and their respective districts are:

- District 1 Supervisor: John Peschong
Communities Represented: Adelaide, Cholame, Lake Nacimiento, Oak Shores, Paso Robles, San Miguel, Shandon, Templeton, and Whitley Gardens.

- District 2 Supervisor: Bruce Gibson

Communities Represented: Baywood Park, California Men's Colony, Cal Poly State University (portion), Cambria, Cayucos, Cuesta-by-the-Sea, Cuesta College, Harmony, Los Osos, Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo (portion), and San Simeon.

- District 3 Supervisor: Dawn Ortiz-Legg

Communities Represented: Avila Beach, Country Club, Edna-Los Ranchos, Edna Valley (portion), Grover Beach, Pismo Beach, Rolling Hills Estate, San Luis Obispo (portion), Shell Beach, Squire Canyon, and Sunset Palisades.

- District 4 Supervisor: Jimmy Paulding

Communities Represented: Arroyo Grande, Black Lake Canyon, Callendar-Garrett, Cuyama, Edna Valley (portion), Halcyon, Huasna-Lopez, Los Berros, Nipomo, Nipomo Mesa, Oceano, and Palo Mesa.

- District 5 Supervisor: Heather Moreno

Communities Represented: Atascadero, Cal Poly State University (portion), California Valley, Creston, Garden Farms, Pozo, San Luis Obispo (portion), and Santa Margarita.

Federally Recognized Tribes

There are no federally recognized tribes in San Luis Obispo County. However, there are three tribes considered local by the Native American Heritage Commission: Salinan, Chumash, and Yokut.

School Districts/Local Education Agencies

San Luis Obispo County serves approximately 34,000 students across over 75 schools within its 10 school districts. The largest district, Lucia Mar Unified, has over 10,000 students, while the smallest, Pleasant Valley Joint Union Elementary School District, has around 125 students. The districts range geographically from Nipomo to Parkfield, illustrating the diverse educational landscape of the county.

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) supports these schools by providing services such as professional development, financial oversight, and special programs like arts education and support for foster and homeless youth. Programs like dual enrollment with Cuesta College and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives also help prepare students for higher education and careers. The county is notable for having the highest dual enrollment rate in California for high school students.

A cornerstone of SLOCOE's mission is its Homeless and Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, which provides crucial educational advocacy and support for at-risk youth. This program employs dedicated school liaisons who work throughout the county to ensure that homeless and foster students are enrolled in school and placed in the most appropriate educational settings. Liaisons also participate in Child Welfare Services (CWS) case staffing, ensuring that education plans are a key consideration in placement decisions. By addressing the unique challenges faced by these vulnerable populations, SLOCOE helps pave the way for their academic and personal success, underscoring its commitment to educational equity and inclusion.

Law Enforcement

Child Welfare Services (CWS) works closely with various law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and protection of children in San Luis Obispo County. Law enforcement partners with Emergency

Response Social Workers (ER SWs) to address high-risk abuse allegations, complete investigations against minors, and assist in situations requiring protective custody for children. Additionally, CWS and the Probation Department collaborate with law enforcement to prevent and respond to cases of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). Law enforcement serves as a vital stakeholder and active participant in local collaborative initiatives focused on the prevention, intervention, and response to child maltreatment.

Public Health

The Child Welfare Services (CWS) and the Probation Department work with the Public Health Department to ensure that all children in out-of-home care receive comprehensive health care through early identification, assessment, intervention, and treatment of medical, dental, mental health, and educational needs. These agencies are dedicated to achieving these objectives through coordinated communication and collaboration in implementing the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPFC).

At the initial court hearing, parents are required to provide CWS with complete health and education records for each child placed into custody, including the "Health and Education Questionnaire" (Judicial Council of California Form JV-225). This documentation should include medical histories for both the child and biological parents, if available. The completed form must be submitted to the Foster Care Public Health Nurse (PHN) within 72 hours of the child's placement.

The Foster Care PHN, stationed within the CWS agency, will support program implementation by providing consultation to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services (DSS). This includes advising on policies related to the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program as part of the HCPFC, ensuring that foster children's health needs are consistently addressed and met.

Child Welfare Services Infrastructure

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is overseen by an Agency Director who reports directly to the County Administrator and the Board of Supervisors. In addition to providing local Participant Services, Child Welfare Services (CWS), and Adult Services programs, DSS is responsible for managing the San Luis Obispo County Leadership Network for Children and Families, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Program, and the Homeless Services Oversight Council. The agency's leadership includes three Deputy Directors, with one specifically overseeing CWS and managing three CWS Division Managers.

SLO County is comprised of seven cities and nineteen unincorporated areas, each with its own unique population, characteristics, and politics. Ethnic and cultural issues differ depending upon the individual community. Atascadero and Paso Robles require more bi-lingual staff to serve the needs of Spanish-speaking population. To serve the different regions of SLO County, DSS has six regional offices. These include the San Luis Obispo Central and Morro Bay Coastal locations, North County offices in Paso Robles and Atascadero, and South County offices in Arroyo Grande and Nipomo. There are Emergency Response (ER) Units located in the Paso Robles and Arroyo Grande offices. Family Maintenance/Family Reunification (FM/FR) Units are in the Nipomo, Atascadero, and San Luis Obispo offices. The Intake, Court, Adoption, and RFA units are centrally located in San Luis Obispo. All offices, but Morro Bay, which only has Participant Services, have staff working together to better serve the families in their regions.

The CWS Deputy Director has direct oversight of three CWS Division Managers. Two of the CWS Division Managers manage all the CWS Programs and staffing. One CWS Division Manager has direct oversight of Staff Development which includes four CWS Program Managers, nine Program Review Specialists, one continuous quality improvement social worker, one family finding social worker and

two administrative assistants. In addition, the agency contracts with Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) to provide Path 1 prevention services.

Probation Infrastructure

The Probation Department is led by a Chief Probation Officer (CPO) who reports to the County Administrator and the County Board of Supervisors. The Probation Department is responsible for providing community corrections services, which are mandated by law and structured into three divisions, each managed by a Deputy Chief Probation Officer (DCPOs).

The Juvenile Services Division is responsible for the supervision of youth placed on probation and home detention by the Court, school-based prevention and intervention services, and making dispositional recommendations to the Court. This division is also responsible for the staffing and operation of the 30-bed County Juvenile Hall, the 30-bed Coastal Valley Academy, and the 5-bed Secure Youth Treatment Facility. The Juvenile Hall is a 24-hour detention center, housing youth awaiting court proceedings, awaiting out of home placement into foster care, or serving a time limited period of commitment. The Coastal Valley Academy provides educational and residential treatment services for wards of the court who cannot be safely maintained in the community. The Secure Youth Treatment program provides long-term treatment and housing for the population of youth with serious and violent offenses previously committed to the state Division of Juvenile Justice prior to the enactment of Senate Bill 823 in 2021.

The Adult Services division is responsible for the supervision of offenders placed on probation by the Court or released from prison under Post-Release Community Supervision and for making sentencing recommendations to the Court, providing Court Services, collaborating with the Court on the Pretrial Services, and providing monitoring and support for the Mental Health Diversion Program.

The Professional Standards Unit provides administrative, clerical, and training services as well as overseeing employee hiring and personnel management. Supervising Deputy Probation Officers (SDPOs) are assigned to each unit within the divisions, who oversee services across the different regions of the county.

Each unit is also supported by a Senior Deputy Probation Officer (DPOIII) who assists the SDPO with overseeing the unit. Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) provide direct services to adult offenders and youth placed on probation. Juvenile Services Officers (JSO) oversee youth placed in the Juvenile Hall, the Coastal Valley Academy, or the Secure Youth Treatment program. JSOs are supported by a Shift Leader (JSOIII), who reports to SDPOs, and an Assistant Chief Deputy Probation Officer (ACDPO).

Staff Recruitment and Selection

CWS

The County of San Luis Obispo's Department of Social Services (DSS) follows established hiring guidelines to recruit qualified employees. Recruitment efforts include an ongoing job posting for Child Welfare Services (CWS) positions on the County's Human Resources website and participation in Title IV-E Job Fairs. These initiatives aim to address staff turnover and ensure a strong pool of candidates is available.

CWS collaborates with DSS Human Resources to advertise openings, screen applications, conduct interviews, and hire new staff. The hiring process involves the Deputy Director, Division Manager, and Supervisors, who work collaboratively to screen and interview applicants. Once the candidate pool is established, Managers and Supervisors identify and extend offers to the most qualified individuals.

While this rigorous process ensures thoughtful selection, it has been noted that the timeline for hiring new Social Workers can delay the timely filling of vacancies.

Currently, CWS has four vacancies, including eight Social Workers (I-IV classification), one Social Worker Aide, and two Legal Clerk vacancies. Staff retention continues to be a challenge, as highlighted during the California-Child and Family Service Review focus groups, community forums, and Peer Review event. This marks a significant increase from Quarter 3 of 2023, when only two vacancies were reported.

To address retention and streamline onboarding, the department has enhanced its recruitment and induction processes. Continuous recruitment ensures an active candidate pool, while speed interviews accelerate initial screening. Newly hired Social Workers participate in a field-based shadowing program that provides direct experience across units and fosters team relationships. This program allows the training manager and hiring supervisors to observe new staff during shadowing, identifying their strengths and aligning them with appropriate unit placements.

New hires also complete a survey during induction to identify their strengths, preferences, and areas of interest. This information is used collaboratively by the training manager and Social Worker Supervisors to determine the best unit fit for each new staff member. By addressing potential unit barriers during this process, the department ensures assignments align with individual strengths and interests, promoting long-term success and satisfaction.

Management continuously evaluates workload allocations to maintain equity across units, supporting a sustainable working environment for all staff. The department also applies a trauma-informed lens to its practices, ensuring that life and work balance are prioritized. This approach acknowledges the challenges inherent in child welfare work and promotes the well-being of staff, fostering a supportive environment that enables them to effectively serve children and families in the community.

Probation

Probation collaborates with the San Luis Obispo County Human Resources Department to advertise openings, screen applications, conduct interviews, and hire new staff. Recruitment efforts include postings of vacant positions on the San Luis Obispo County's Human Resources website as well as participation in job fairs and word of mouth at community events.

The hiring process involves the Chief and Assistant Chief Probation Officers, Chief Deputy Probation Officers and/or Department Administrator, and Supervising Deputy Probation Officers who work collaboratively to screen, interview, and select suitable applicants.

Staff Experience and Education

Child Welfare Services

San Luis Obispo County's Child Welfare Services (CWS) has a diverse workforce with varying levels of education and professional credentials. The updated breakdown of credentials among CWS social workers (SWs) includes one with a Doctorate, 14 with Master's degrees, 27 with Bachelor's degrees, one with an Associate's degree, and two with High School/GED qualifications.

Social workers have five or more years of experience related to case management of foster youth. The majority of CWS have at least a bachelor's degree in social work. Challenges to cultivate longevity of experience include generational shifts in retirement and an absence of social work as an academic area of focus at local universities. This results in a smaller pool of candidates with degrees in social work to recruit from and impacts on the longevity and experience of staff.

Probation

There are three Deputy Probation Officers assigned to the Juvenile Placement Unit who have all worked for the Department for five years or more and have been assigned to the Placement Unit for two years or more. A Probation Assistant, who has two years of experience working with the Probation Department, is assigned to the Unit. There is a Senior Deputy Probation Officer assigned to the Juvenile Placement Unit who has seven years' experience working with foster care and has been with the Department for twelve years. The Supervising Deputy Probation Officer assigned to the Unit has worked for the Department for eighteen years and has been assigned to the Placement Unit for eight years. All six staff members assigned to the Juvenile Placement Unit have a bachelor's degree in the field of human services.

Race/Ethnicity

The ethnic composition of the staff at San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation closely reflects the overall demographics of SLO County. The largest proportions of staff are White at 43% and Hispanic at 44%. While this indicates a strength in hiring personnel that are representative of the county's population, there remains a challenge in securing an adequate number of Spanish-speaking certified staff to effectively serve monolingual Spanish-speaking residents.

Demographic breakdown:

- Not Specified/Other: 6.40%
- African American: 1.13%
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 5.08%
- Caucasian: 42.94%
- Hispanic: 44.07%
- Native American/Alaskan: 0.38%

As of October 7, 2024, CWS employs 11 Social Workers, 7 Administrative Assistants, and 3 Social Worker Aides who are bilingual in English and Spanish. The limited number of bilingual staff members poses communication challenges for Spanish-speaking clients interacting with CWS.

Probation demographic breakdown:

As of December 2024, the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services was comprised of six staff: one Supervising Deputy Probation Officer, one Senior Deputy Probation Officer, three Deputy Probation Officers, and one Probation Assistant.

- White: 50%
- Latino: 33.5%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 16.5%

Position Types

CWS

In October 2023, each social worker (SW) unit was supervised by one social worker supervisor (SWS). Child Welfare Services (CWS) has eleven SW units. Nine of the units are comprised of case carrying SWs: Two Emergency Response (ER) units that investigate referrals, one Dependency Investigations

(DI) unit, three Family Maintenance/Family Reunification (FM/FR) units, one Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) unit, one Resource Family Approval (RFA) unit, and one Adoptions unit. The non-caseload carrying units were Placement and Intake.

The CWS Branch was comprised of the following allocations: one Deputy Director, three Division Managers, four Program Managers, eleven Social Worker Supervisors, seventy-one Social Workers (one social worker position was at halftime), nine Program Review Specialists, two Supervising Administrative Clerks, one Supervising Legal Clerk, seventeen Administrative Assistants, seven Legal Clerks, fourteen Social Worker Aides (two SWAs were dedicated to the CWS Parent Partners program), and three CWS Student Interns. Vacant positions are included in the allocation count.

Note: In 2024, the units were reconfigured, and the Placement and Intake Unit became supervised by one SWS.

Non-Case Carrying Units and Staff

The agency's staffing structure is organized into several specialized units to ensure effective support for children and families. The Hotline/Intake Unit is comprised of two intake social workers (SWs) who evaluate reports of child abuse or neglect to determine the appropriate response level. The Foster Support Program within the Placement Unit includes one social worker aide dedicated to supporting resource families with their placements, supervised by the Placement Supervisor.

The Placement Unit features a specialty care social worker who focuses on Options for Recovery (ages 0-5) and Intensive Services Foster Care homes, along with a placement social worker tasked with identifying suitable placements for children. The Staff Development Unit includes a case review quality assurance SW who conducts Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) case reviews for Child Welfare Services (CWS) and probation, and a Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) SW who conducts family finding searches and engagement.

The Legal Processing unit provides essential support for juvenile dependency cases by creating, editing, copying, and filing court documents, conducting diligent searches for parents or relatives, and reviewing documents for accuracy. They also handle data management, generate and deliver notices of hearings, petitions, court reports, and Indian Child Welfare Act noticing, among other responsibilities.

Administrative Assistants (AAs) who deliver exceptional customer service to both internal and external stakeholders. Their duties include answering phones, reception, document receipt, minor assistance to SWs, email responses, record-keeping, and general support as needed.

Social Worker Aides (SWAs) play a critical role as liaison between clients and the Department of Social Services. Their responsibilities include transporting clients, supervising child-parent visits, and providing routine assistance that does not require professional expertise.

Finally, Parent Partners bring valuable lived experience to their roles. Parent Partners collaborate with SWs and providers to meet family needs, contribute to policy and program development, shift community perceptions, and facilitate training opportunities. These individuals have firsthand experience with child removal and subsequent successful reunification or resolution, which informs their work in supporting families and systems change.

Probation

The Probation Department is comprised of an Adult Services Division, a Juvenile Services Division, a Professional Standards Division, and a Victim Support and Revenue Recovery Services Division, all of

which are under the direction of an Assistant Chief Probation Officer who reports to the Chief Probation Officer.

The Adult Services Division is managed by a Chief Deputy Probation Officer who reports to the Assistant Chief Probation Officer. The Division is divided into seven different units, Adult Treatment Court, Family Violence, Pretrial and Reentry, Specialized Assignments, Post-Release Community Supervision (PRDS), Adult Investigations, and General Field Supervision. Each unit is under the direction of a Supervising Deputy Probation Officer who reports to the Adult Services Division Chief Deputy Probation Officer.

The Juvenile Services Division is managed by a Chief Deputy Probation who reports to the Assistant Chief Probation Officer. The Division includes three different units, Court and Prevention Services, Supervision Services, and Placement and Commitment Services. Each unit is under the direction of a Supervising Deputy Probation Officer who reports to the Juvenile Services Division Chief Deputy Probation Officer. The Division also includes the Juvenile Hall, which is managed by an Assistant Chief Deputy Probation Officer reports to the Juvenile Services Division Chief Deputy Probation Officer and oversees three Supervising Deputy Probation Officers, six Senior Juvenile Services Officers, thirty-four Juvenile Services Officers, and an Administrative Assistant.

The Professional Standards and Human Resources Division is managed by a Chief Deputy Probation Officer who reports to the Assistant Chief Probation Officer. The Division includes a Professional Standards Unit overseen by a Supervising Deputy Probation Officer, a Legal Processing Unit overseen by a Supervising Legal Clerk, and a System Administrator who supervises an IT Specialist and an Automation Specialist.

The Victim Support and Revenue Recovery Services Division is managed by a Department Administrator and is divided into two units, a Victim Restoration Services Unit and a Finance Unit. The Victim Restoration Unit is managed by an Administrative Services Officer who oversees six Collection Officers and is supported by a Legal Clerk and an Administrative Assist. The Finance Unit is also managed by an Administrative Services Officer who oversees two Accounts Payable Senior Account Clerks and supported by two Account Technicians.

In total, there are 170 allocated positions, 130 of which are sworn peace officer positions, 40 are non-sworn positions, and sixteen are currently (December 2024) vacant.

Methods for Assigning Cases

CWS

The Intake Unit is responsible for assigning investigations to Emergency Response (ER) social worker supervisors (SWS) over that region who then assigns then to their unit social workers (SWs) when a Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) meets the statutory definition of child abuse and aligns with initial Structured Decision Making (SDM) criteria. Referrals received after hours are processed by an assigned After-Hours Social Worker, and the Intake Unit assigns the referral to the appropriate staff the following business day. The Intake Unit maintains a comprehensive database to ensure emergency investigations are equitably distributed among ER staff and assigned to the appropriate region.

When a referral leads to the removal of children or a family requires court-intervention to ensure child safety, the ER Supervisor promotes the referral to a case and assigns it to the dependency investigation unit. Once the case transitions to other programs, social worker supervisors oversee and manage the subsequent case assignments accordingly.

Probation

The Juvenile Court and Prevention Services Unit is responsible for investigating referrals from law enforcement agencies to determine in the case can be handled informally or should be referred to the District Attorney's Office for consideration for filing of a petition. Cases determined to be appropriate for formal handling are referred to court and if adjudicated of an offense, assigned to a Supervising Deputy Probation Officer, either the Juvenile Supervision Services Unit or the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services Unit. The Supervising Deputy Probation Officer will select the appropriate Deputy Probation Officer to assign the case too, which can be based on current caseload sizes, specialty services, such as foster care or camp commitment, or geographical location within the County.

Caseload Size

In October 2023, San Luis Obispo County Child Welfare Services (CWS) carried 364 cases and Juvenile Probation carried 21 Placement cases with children 0-21. From 2019 to 2023, the number of CWS cases decreased to the lowest rate in the five-year period. Juvenile Probation Placement cases decreased by 68%, in part because of the opening of the Coastal Valley Academy (CVA).

As outlined later in this report, Child Welfare Services (CWS) conducted separate focus groups with supervisors and social workers as part of the CSA process. Both groups provided detailed feedback on the agency's internal operations and shared suggestions for improving service delivery and engagement with children and families. Social workers emphasized the need for reduced caseload size, and enhanced training opportunities to improve agency functioning. They also recommended expediting the hiring and onboarding process for new staff. Regarding client services, social workers highlighted the importance of culturally appropriate resources, particularly for the Mixteco-speaking population, and noted the urgent need for more affordable housing in the county. These concerns were echoed by other stakeholder groups. Additionally, they suggested prioritizing the recruitment of resource homes for youth with high needs, hard-to-place children, and larger sibling groups. Feedback from the supervisor focus group aligned closely with that of the social workers, with a focus on high caseload numbers and challenges in retaining staff. Both groups also identified the agency's supportive atmosphere as a key strength, highlighting how staff collaborate effectively to solve problems and assist one another when needed.

Caseload Size by Service Component

Table 33. Child Welfare Services: Number of Cases per Service Component—Point in Time

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract Retrieved: 12/4/24 from UCB CCWIP website

Case Service Component Child Welfare	Point in Time (October 1)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Emergency Response	12	27	27	32	17
No Placement Family Maintenance	28	24	26	56	35
Post-Placement Family Maintenance	60	49	50	33	47
Family Reunification	143	108	76	76	100

Permanent Placement	159	156	118	99	114
AB12: Supportive Transition	74	84	91	60	51
Total	476	448	388	356	364

Table 34. Probation: Number of Cases per Service Component—Point in Time					
Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract Retrieved: 01/07/2025 from UCB CCWIP website					
Case Service Component Probation	Point in Time (October)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Family Reunification	M	M	M	M	M
Permanent Placement	M	M	0	M	M
Supportive Transition	14	11	14	11	M
Total	21	14	15	19	13

Impact of Staff Turnover

Social Worker turnover is manually tracked by management in San Luis Obispo County Child Welfare Services, including both separations from the department and internal movement between positions. This monitoring allows leadership to assess workforce stability, identify trends, and make informed decisions regarding recruitment, retention, and succession planning efforts. Between 2023 and 2024, there was a total of 18 staff movements. These included retirements, internal transfers, resignations, and separations. Notably, six staff members retired, six transferred to other units within the Department of Social Services (DSS), and several left for personal reasons, medical issues, or external opportunities. This level of turnover has led to 11 current vacancies, impacting on the department's ability to maintain continuity in service delivery and stability in case load management. The frequent loss of experienced staff diminishes institutional knowledge, disrupts relationships with foster youth and families, and increases the workload for remaining staff. Additionally, turnover contributes to challenges in achieving key child welfare outcomes, such as placement stability, timely permanency planning, and engagement with families.

Bargaining Unit Issues

The San Luis Obispo County Employee's Association (SLOCEA) represents the interests of employees in the County of San Luis Obispo (SLO). SLOCEA is a labor union advocating for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for county employees, including Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff. While the union does not have a direct role in determining worker unit assignments or individual case assignments, it actively lobbies at the state level for systemic changes, such as reducing caseload sizes for social workers. This information was provided by Emily Landis, the new Executive Director of SLOCEA.

Top bargaining and employment issues impacting CWS staff, particularly social workers (SWs), include insufficient wages, staffing shortages, unattainable performance standards, inadequate call back and standby pay, and the lack of hazard pay. Compensation levels are not competitive enough to attract and retain new employees, particularly in Child Welfare Services. The classification requires higher levels of training and expertise, a more intensive workload, and frequent exposure to secondary

trauma. Staff are often required to work beyond the standard 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday schedule, and operate under an increased level of judicial oversight.

CWS also faces high vacancies and significant turnover, which increases workloads for the remaining workforce and leads to low morale and reduced employee sustainability. Due to these staffing shortages, employees are often unable to meet the performance standards currently set by management, which has resulted in an increase in disciplinary actions against staff, including long-term employees with no prior record of issues. Furthermore, call back and standby pay is less than minimum wage, making these assignments undesirable. Additionally, there is no hazard pay for social workers tasked with investigating situations that may pose significant risks, such as homes with gang and criminal activities, clients with documented histories of violence, or those experiencing severe substance abuse or mental health crises.

Addressing these issues through union negotiations and advocacy will be critical to improving working conditions, employee morale, and the overall effectiveness of Child Welfare Services in San Luis Obispo County. Efforts to improve wages, staffing levels, and support for high-risk assignments will not only benefit staff but also enhance service delivery to the community.

Salaries

Table 35. Child Welfare Services Salaries (as of October 31, 2023)

Data Source: County of SLO Human Resources Job Class Salary Listing 10/31/2023

Position Type	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Monthly Base	Monthly Highest
Administrative Assistant III	\$22.58	\$23.71	\$24.90	\$26.15	\$27.46	\$28.83	\$3,913.87	\$4,997.20
Social Worker Aide I	\$16.63	\$17.46	\$18.33	\$19.25	\$20.21	\$21.22	\$2,882.53	\$3,678.13
Social Worker Aide II	\$18.29	\$19.20	\$20.16	\$21.17	\$22.23	\$23.34	\$3,170.27	\$4,045.60
Social Worker Aide III	\$20.12	\$21.13	\$22.19	\$23.30	\$24.47	\$25.69	\$3,487	\$4,452.93
Social Worker I	\$25.42	\$26.69	\$28.02	\$29.42	\$30.89	\$32.43	\$4,406.13	\$5,621.20
Social Worker II	\$28.19	\$29.60	\$31.08	\$32.63	\$34.26	\$35.97	\$4,886.27	\$6,234.80
Social Worker III	\$30.99	\$32.54	\$34.17	\$35.88	\$37.67	\$39.55	\$5,371.60	\$6,855.33
Social Worker VI	\$35.66	\$37.44	\$39.31	\$41.28	\$43.34	\$45.51	\$6,181.07	\$7,888.40
Social Worker Supervisor II	\$39.70	\$41.69	\$43.77	\$45.96	\$48.26	\$50.67	\$6,881.33	\$8,782.80
Program Review Specialist	\$32.94	\$34.59	\$36.32	\$38.14	\$40.05	\$42.05	\$5,709	\$7,288.67

Program Manager I	\$35.07	\$36.82	\$38.66	\$40.59	\$42.62	\$44.75	\$6,078.80	\$7,756.67
Program Manager II	\$38.96	\$40.91	\$42.96	\$45.11	\$47.37	\$49.74	\$6,753.07	\$8,621.60
Division Manager – Social Services	\$57.78	\$60.67	\$63.70	\$66.89	\$70.23	\$73.74	\$10,015.20	\$12,781.60
Deputy Director – Social Services	\$68.49	\$71.91	\$75.51	\$79.29	\$83.25	\$87.41	\$11,871.60	\$15,151.07

Table 36. Probation Salaries								
Position Type	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Monthly Base	Monthly Highest
Administrative Assistant III	\$22.58	\$23.71	\$24.90	\$26.15	\$27.46	\$28.83	\$3,913.87	\$4,997.20
Legal Clerk	\$24.15	\$25.36	\$26.63	\$27.96	\$29.36	\$30.83	\$4,186.00	\$5,343.87
Probation Community Liaison	\$15.50	\$16.28	\$17.09	\$17.94	\$18.84	--	\$2,686.67	\$3,265.60
Deputy Probation Officer I	\$31.20	\$32.76	\$34.40	\$36.12	\$37.93	\$39.83	\$5,408.00	\$6,903.87
Deputy Probation Officer II	\$34.66	\$36.39	\$38.21	\$40.12	\$42.13	\$44.24	\$6,007.73	\$7,668.27
Deputy Probation Officer III	\$37.93	\$39.83	\$41.82	\$43.91	\$46.11	\$48.42	\$6,574.53	\$8,392.80
Supervising Deputy Probation Officer	\$41.59	\$43.67	\$45.85	\$48.14	\$50.55	\$53.08	\$7,208.93	\$9,200.53
Chief Deputy Probation Officer	\$61.51	\$64.59	\$67.82	\$71.21	\$74.77	\$78.51	\$10,661.73	\$13,608.40

Financial/Material Resources

San Luis Obispo County receives funding that are shared between Child Welfare and Probation from multiple sources, including Title IV-B, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act of 1935 (as amended), Title XIX, Title XX, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). These federal funds are supplemented by matching contributions from the State of California and local county tax revenues to provide services to eligible children and families. The chart below outlines the primary allocations available to support program operations.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has a budget allocation of \$9,356,996 for Child Welfare Services (CWS) and an additional \$1,397,256 for Adoptions. DSS also utilizes funds from the Planning and CWS Outcome Improvement Project Augmentations. As a Cohort 1 County, the County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) receives \$1,538,362 in Redesign funds.

During fiscal year 2023-2024, the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) provided funding for community-based prevention services, including \$147,995 for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), \$81,308 for Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT), \$24,371 for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and \$39,435 for the Children's Trust Fund.

Table 37. CWS Program Funds					
CWS Program Funds	Federal	State	Realignment	County	Total
CWS Post 2011 Realignment		89,121			89,121
Title IV-E					6,107,969
EA TANF	1,204,466				1,204,466
Title IV-B	156,051		6,107,969		156,051
State Block Grant		768,661			768,661
FFPSA		93,517			93,517
FFTA (Family First Transition Act)	102,625				102,625
Adoptions	141,180		758,028		899,208
Transitional Housing Program and Housing Navigator Maintenance (from HCD)		337,181			337,181
Flexible Family Support		209,472			209,472
Total					9,968,271

Child Welfare/Probation Operated Services

County Operated Shelters

The Departments of Social Services (DSS) and Probation collaborate with Mental Health Departments and select foster care providers to develop a range of specialized placement options and programs. These initiatives are designed to preserve family and community connections while supporting family reunification and achieving permanency for children.

Placement with relatives or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) is prioritized. Shelter care is utilized only when less restrictive options, such as relatives or NREFMs, are unavailable. DSS and Probation partner with the Family Care Network, Inc. (FCNI), a private non-profit Foster Family Agency (FFA). FCNI provides six emergency shelter beds for dependent youth and non-dependent minors age birth to twenty-one (0-21). Two of these shelter beds are for youth with complex needs including, but not limited to, commercial sexually exploited children (CSEC), youth with mental/behavioral health concerns and/or substance use disorders, and youth who have a history of absence without office leave (AWOL). Additionally, DSS partners with Seneca Family Agencies, a private non-profit FFA to provide two emergency foster care beds. Both FCNI and Seneca's beds are

in a certified Resource Family home throughout the county and are updated daily on DSS's intranet, DSSNet.

Children under 10 are placed in shelter care only as a last resort, and such placements require management approval. Ideally, children remain in shelter care for no longer than five days, although in some cases, stays may extend up to 30 days if no less restrictive placement is available.

County Resource Family Approval

The Department of Social Services has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the California Department of Social Services, which allows Child Welfare Services to certify resource family homes. The Resource Family Approval (RFA) unit consists of one Social Worker Supervisor, six Social Workers, and one Administrative Assistant. They handle the certification process for all resource family applicants in the county. This includes, but is not limited to, conducting criminal records checks and inspection of the home and grounds for space and safety issues. Resource families are required to complete 23 hours of Resource Family Training (RFT), and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)/First Aid training. Biennial renewals are completed on all certified resource families by a designated RFA Social Worker.

Probation coordinates with the Resource Family Approval Unit at DSS in referring possible candidates who've been identified by the youth and/or youth's family. Probation Officers will explain the RFA process and initiate the referral process then submit the referral packet to the RFA Unit at DSS, which handles the certification process from that point forward.

County Adoptions

The Department of Social Services is committed to the process of concurrent planning which is working towards reunification while at the same time establishing an alternative permanent plan of adoption or legal guardianship for each of our children placed in out-of-home care. The department has one Adoption Unit, which is comprised of one social worker supervisor, five social workers, and one administrative assistant. All the adoption social workers in this unit have related master's level degrees. Adoption social workers provide case management support as they assist with assessing and implementing the most appropriate permanent plan for a child whose reunification with their parents was unsuccessful. Adoptions social workers are assigned as secondary social workers to cases in family reunification. When serving in the role of a secondary adoption social worker, they assist either the primary family reunification or dependency investigation social worker with identifying and assessing an appropriate concurrent plan for children. Adoption social workers also facilitate adoption through designated relinquishments and safely surrendered babies.

Juvenile Services Center

The San Luis Obispo County Juvenile Services Center, is a 50-bed detention facility for male and female youth arrested for criminal acts or probation violations. Detainees may be held awaiting court proceedings or serving court-ordered commitments. The center provides daily educational programs through the Juvenile Court School, operated by the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. In collaboration with organizations like Restorative Partners, the facility offers various rehabilitative programs, including art classes, chess club, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), yoga, tutoring, book club, and sports activities.

Coastal Valley Academy

Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) is a residential treatment program within San Luis Obispo County's Juvenile Hall, designed for moderate- to high-risk youth aged 14 to 17. Participants are court-ordered to the program for six to twelve months, during which they receive intensive case management, educational services, and evidence-based treatments. CVA collaborates with local organizations, including the Family Care Network and the County Office of Education, to provide comprehensive support. The program emphasizes family involvement through Child and Family Team meetings and offers various pro-social activities, such as community service projects and off-site events, to facilitate rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community.

Other County Programs

CalWORKs

CalWORKs is California's cash aid (welfare) program for needy families. The program helps eligible families become self-supporting through temporary cash aid and employment services. The program is time-limited and for families that are under certain income and property guidelines and have a qualifying child. A family is automatically eligible to receive Medi-Cal benefits and eligible to CalFresh benefits. CalWORKs also provides employment-focused services to help families become self-supporting.

To be eligible to CalWORKs, families must be under the state's income and property guidelines and include a child, who has a parent that is either deceased, absent from the home, disabled or unemployed.

The Department of Social Services continues to practice Linkages, where Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff will collaborate with an Employment Resource Specialist (ERS) when a family is receiving CalWORKs and has an active CWS case. Participant Services (CalWORKs) staff greatly assist both CWS and Probation in working with the family to provide stability and to assist with reunification services.

Public Health

The Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Public Health Department aim to ensure that all children in out-of-home care receive comprehensive health care through early identification, assessment, intervention, and treatment of medical, dental, mental health, and educational needs. These agencies are dedicated to achieving these objectives through coordinated communication and collaboration in implementing the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPFC).

At the initial court hearing, parents are required to provide CWS with complete health and education records for each child placed into custody, including the "Health and Education Questionnaire" (Judicial Council of California Form JV-225). This documentation should include medical histories for both the child and biological parents, if available. The completed form must be submitted to the Foster Care Public Health Nurse (PHN) within 72 hours of the child's placement.

The Foster Care PHN, stationed within the CWS agency, will support program implementation by providing consultation to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services (DSS). This includes advising on policies related to the Medi-Cal for Kids and Teens Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program as part of the HCPFC, ensuring that foster children's health needs are consistently addressed and met.

Drug and Alcohol Services (DAS)

Drug and Alcohol Services (DAS) promotes safe, healthy, responsible, and informed choices concerning alcohol and other drugs through programs responsive to community needs. DAS provides services to families involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) with contributing factors related to substance abuse issues. DAS also collaborates with CWS to offer a local Family Treatment Court (FTC) Program to assist with a higher level of accountability in their drug treatment, leading to shorter time periods before reunification occurs.

DAS also provides a multitude of preventative services such as Opioid Safety Coalition, Youth Substance Use Treatment Program, Perinatal Outpatient Extended Group (POEG), Medication Assisted Treatment, Adult Outpatient Substance Use Disorder treatments and Veteran Treatment Services.

Mental Health

The County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health Department provides a comprehensive array of specialty mental health services through a culturally diverse network of community mental health programs, clinics, and private practitioners, including psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists.

These services support both parents and children involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation, helping to stabilize youth in foster care and equipping families and caregivers with the tools needed to address special needs. The Youth Mental Health Services Division offers a wide range of supports for children and youth impacted by mental illness, trauma, or environmental stress. Services include individual and family therapy, rehabilitation, case management, and psychiatric care.

Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC)

Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC) provides supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities living in San Luis Obispo County, so that they may live fully and safely as active and independent members of the community.

Family support services provided assist the family in residing together. These services may include but are not limited to; in-home respite care; behavioral services; in-home nursing care; out-of-home respite care; day care; and/or crisis intervention services.

Family support services for school-aged children may be provided when:

- The individual has behavior challenges; medical care needs or supervision needs that exceed those of children the same age without developmental disabilities.
- There are few or no natural supports or services through other publicly funded agencies available to provide necessary supervision during times when the parent(s) are away.
- The behavior or medical needs of the child require supervision by a trained professional.
- The family is experiencing a short-term crisis or emergency situation.
- TCRC may authorize funding for the acquisition of specific adaptive skills when the planning team has determined the skills cannot be taught by the family or by other publicly funded agencies.

CWS and Probation youths utilize these support services to help stabilize their home environment both at home and in foster care.

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE)

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE) collaborates closely with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Probation Department to ensure educational stability and support for foster youth. Social Workers and Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) work with schools to identify appropriate placements for foster youth in compliance with Assembly Bill 490, which protects their educational rights and promotes stability. A SLOCOE representative actively participates in weekly Central Case Staffing and Interagency Placement Committee meetings to strengthen interagency coordination. Additionally, Child Welfare Services Staff Development conducts quarterly meetings with district foster care liaisons to address relevant issues and provide updates.

During the prior California-Children and Family Service Review Community Forum, concerns were raised by schools about Child Welfare Services (CWS) handling of abuse allegations. In response, the department partnered with the SLOCOE to develop a Mandated Reporter video training for educators that clarifies CWS responsibilities. The video is being updated to include information on Senate Bill 2085, which highlights early intervention and community support for families not meeting investigation thresholds.

Additionally, the department provides no-cost quarterly Mandated Reporter Trainings to foster collaboration with community partners, educate participants on DSS services, promote prevention and early intervention, and explain the roles of Differential Response and the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO).

Moreover, a significant issue affecting children is the lack of reliable transportation that was noted, which complicates access to school and medical appointments. While transportation vouchers are available from the school district, the limited public transport options worsen this challenge. Lack of school transportation for all students in multiple districts, the increased cost of living and limited public transportation options are contributing factors.

Overall, these initiatives aim to improve the support network for foster youth in San Luis Obispo County.

School Attendance Review Board (SARB)

The School Attendance Review Board (SARB) identifies at-risk children and youth early to engage families and encourage consistent school attendance and graduation. This approach may involve school counselors, community agencies for counseling and tutoring, and reinforcing parental legal responsibilities regarding attendance. Early engagement and accountability support families and help divert children and youth from more intensive services. Child Welfare Services and Probation staff are core members of the County's SARB teams, contributing to a collaborative effort to support student success.

Law Enforcement

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation maintain a strong collaborative relationship with local law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement supports Emergency Response (ER) Social Workers by accompanying them during immediate referrals, threats, or after-hours responses. Additionally, ER Social Workers join law enforcement on coordinated countywide drug-related operations involving children. Law enforcement provides periodic training to CWS staff on topics such as narcotics identification, fostering increased interaction and strengthening ties between CWS and law enforcement. Juvenile Probation works closely with law enforcement on probation cases and

diversion programs, collaborating on the processing of law enforcement referrals. Probation also holds regular meetings with School Resource Officers.

Contracted Services

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation partner with community providers through contractual agreements to deliver additional preventive and supportive services that complement core CWS components and case management provided by Social Workers.

These partnerships ensure families and youth have access to a broad range of resources, including therapeutic services, housing support, parenting education, mental health care, and assistance for families impacted by intimate partner violence. By leveraging these collaborations, the department enhances service delivery and addresses the diverse needs of the community. Further details about contracted services are provided in the Service Array section. These contracts and contract amounts will change effectively July 1, 2025, for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026.

Table 38 Contract and Funding Information FY 2024-2025				
Contractor	Contract Name	Amount	Funding Source Acronym	Funding Source
Center for Family Strengthening	CAPC Prevention Coordinator/SLOCCFWC Program Services	\$99,900.50	FFTA	Family First Transition Act
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)	Child Abuse Prevention Services (SAFE)	\$217,367.00	PSSF	Promoting Safe and Stable Families
	Emergency Child Care Bridge for FC Children	\$221,754.00	CWS IV-E ECCB	Emergency Child Care Bridge Program
	CWS and CalWORKs Family Preservation	\$731,742.00	SFP	CWS Services
Creative Mediation Services	Juvenile Dependency Mediation (JDM) Facilitation Services	\$50,000.00	CWS-SOR	CWS Direct Service
Evident Change	Safe Measures and SDM	\$93,745.00	Redesign	Staff Development CWS
Family Care Network, Inc.	Housing Navigator	\$210,000.00	HSP, BFH, HCD HNP	Housing Navigator
	CSEC & NMD Beds	\$12,000.00	CSEC	Commercial Sexually Exploited Child
	CWS Bridge Childcare			
	CWS Bringing Families Home (BFH)	\$544,580.00	CWS BFH	Bringing Families Home
	Emergency Shelter	\$830,000.00	CWS	Emergency Shelter CA
	Independent Living Program (ILP)/Extended Foster Care (EFC)	\$583,800.00	ILP/EFC	ILP Services

	TAY / THP-NMD / THP+	\$199,999.00	HCD TAY	Housing and Community Development
	Wraparound Services	\$3,262,560.00	SB163	Wrap Services
Mary Beth Abella, MI for Change	Motivational Interviewing (MI) for CWS Staff	\$76,600.00	FFPS State Block Grant	Family First Prevention Services
Mervin Maier, LMFT	Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) Training	\$44,175.00	FFPS State Block Grant	Family First Prevention Services
Regents of the University of California - UC Davis	DSS Staff Training	\$42,500.00		CWS Services
Seneca	ASIST	\$103,822.00	CWS	Active Support Intervention Services
	Emergency Resource Home	\$371,669.00	CWS	Emergency Shelter CA
	KSSP Family Ties Relative Caregiver Program	\$240,838.00	KSSP	Kinship Support Service Program
	Wraparound Services	\$2,985,733.00	SB163	Wrap Services

Child Welfare / Probation Initiatives

Anti-Human Trafficking

The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) has actively addressed the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) through a collaborative, multi-agency stakeholder approach. To ensure a coordinated and victim-centered response, the CSEC Collaborative Response Team was established. This team developed a comprehensive County CSEC Protocol, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and policies and procedures aimed at preventing and addressing the exploitation of children and youth within the community.

Led by Child Welfare Services (CWS), the CSEC Collaborative Response Team adopts a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach to ensure that sexually exploited youth receive the necessary support and services. The team's goals include preventing the exploitation of youth, addressing trauma, promoting healing, and equipping youth with the skills needed for adulthood and community contribution.

Building upon these efforts, the County expanded its approach by reframing the existing Domestic Violence Collaborative into the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (AHTTF). Chaired by the County of San Luis Obispo Deputy District Attorney, the AHTTF convenes bi-monthly and includes over 50 partner organizations. Membership in the AHTTF has grown considerably, reflecting increased

collaboration and engagement from stakeholders across the county. The task force has established key subcommittees focusing on Legislation, Education/Data Collection, Law Enforcement, CSEC Collaborative Response, Housing, and Health Providers.

Recognizing the intersection of labor and sexual exploitation, a Labor Trafficking Subcommittee was established under the leadership of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The DSS Program Manager serves as the CSEC Coordinator and plays a pivotal role in leading the Labor Trafficking Subcommittee and the restructured Children and Youth Anti-Human Trafficking Subcommittee. These subcommittees meet bi-monthly to address prevention, intervention, and systemic improvements, bringing together stakeholders such as public health representatives, educational partners, and front-line responders.

The Children and Youth Anti-Human Trafficking Subcommittee collaborates with direct service providers to ensure coordinated efforts to support victims and implement prevention strategies tailored to community needs. Stakeholders actively participate in identifying priorities and addressing service gaps.

The department continues to work closely with community partners and the AHTTF to strengthen prevention efforts, provide education, and develop essential resources and supports aimed at reducing human trafficking in the County of San Luis Obispo. Through a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach, these initiatives strive to safeguard youth, address the root causes of exploitation, and foster community resilience.

Assembly Bill (AB) 2083 – System of Care Interagency Team (SOCIT)

As a result of Assembly Bill 2083, the Department of Social Services collaborated a shared design, delivery, and management of services to children, youth and families in San Luis Obispo and developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to further the interdepartmental collaboration referred as the System of Care Interagency Teams (SOCIT). The members of this MOU are referred to as System Partners.

The goal of this collaboration is to address systemic barriers to the traditional provision of interagency services. It is the intent of the agency partners to utilize coordinated case planning for clients and maintain an administrative team with collaborative authority over the interrelated child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and behavioral health children's services. It is the intent of System Partners to fully support the structure and processes and to provide the framework that will guide their operations and the activities, decisions, and direction of each of their employees regarding children, youth, and family programming.

System Partners will ensure that programs and policies reflect a coordinated, integrated, and effective delivery of services for children, youth and families. It was agreed that consistent interdepartmental and interagency leadership is essential to successful collaboration on services provided on behalf of youth and families. They also agreed that without a concentrated effort to coordinate and collaborate on service design and delivery, the system to serve at-risk children and families in San Luis Obispo County may become fragmented and difficult to navigate by families in crises.

The following System Partners participate in SOCIT:

- County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services (DSS)
- County of San Luis Obispo Probation Department (Probation)
- County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health (BH)

- San Luis Obispo County Office of Education (SLOCOE)
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC)
- Family Care Network Incorporated (FCNI)
- San Luis Obispo Superior Court
- Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
- Tribal Partners
- Additional child serving entities

Active Supportive Intervention for Transition (ASIST)

The goal of the ASIST program is to provide specialized permanency services and supports that are tailored toward increasing the stability of family-based care, transitioning youth from Short Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTP) to home-based foster care, and preventing youth from entering congregate care. The program also provides file mining and extensive relative searches to help identify possible matches for permanent placement.

The department contracts with Seneca Family of Agencies to provide ASIST services, both in the home and at the STRTP. The Seneca ASIST team consists of a mental health clinician and a youth counselor. Services include but are not limited to case management and resource linkage for the youth and family members, intensive and individualized mental health services for youth and caregivers, collateral support and psychoeducation for caregivers, and monthly Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings to identify and address the needs of the youth and family.

Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) - Probation

In 2017, Juvenile Probation opened a custody commitment program committed to influencing positive changes in the lives of youthful offenders by engaging them in comprehensive residential treatment and education services in a safe and supportive environment. CVA provides residential treatment programming for wards of the juvenile delinquency court who have been removed from the homes of their parent(s)/guardian(s). CVA serves female and male youth ranging in age from 14 to 17 years old who previously would likely have been sent to Group Home placements. Implementation of this program was included in the previous SIP and has been Juvenile Probation's most significant achievement towards improving goals and outcomes for young people in need of residential care. Since opening in March 2017, the CVA has served 85 youth. The program provides youth with intensive case management, evidence-based treatment programming, and vocational and educational services. Program length varies based upon the individual needs and circumstances of each youth as well as progress in treatment and overall behavior.

The goal of the CVA is to safely return youth to the community after reducing their risk of future delinquent behavior by improving their reasoning and avoidance skills and providing them with positive pro-social replacement activities.

Creative Mediation for Juvenile Probation

In 2017, Juvenile Probation began a pilot program with Creative Mediation at Wilshire Community Services, SLO County's not-for-profit community mediation center. Services include intake assessment, coordination and delivery of Parent Teen Mediation sessions, Victim Offender Dialogue

with Family Group Conferencing, and Youth Conflict Mediation sessions.

Initially, these services were only available to youth involved with Juvenile Probation, however, these services have been expanded to serve youth prior to involvement in the justice system and, with the support of a bilingual resource coordinator position, and monolingual Spanish-speaking families. Some services are now available in specified schools, allowing more opportunities to divert at-risk youth from justice system involvement at the earliest possible point, thus preventing Probation-involved-youth from further penetrating in the juvenile justice system and preventing non-involved youth from being formally referred to Probation.

Family Finding and Engagement (FFE)

In May 2024, the agency received approval to implement the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support (EFFES) Program. This program enhances the agency's ability to provide specialized permanency services for Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation, emphasizing culturally responsive, family-centered, and trauma-informed approaches to family finding, support, and engagement. The program is supported by the funding of a full-time EFFES Social Worker position.

The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) is deeply committed to assisting foster children in maintaining and strengthening connections with their families. The Department aims to identify relatives who can support children in various capacities, such as serving as placement options, concurrent planning resources, or providing relational support through calls, letters, or visits. Department policy mandates the identification, location, and engagement of all identifiable adult relatives within 30 days of a child's removal from their home.

The EFFES Social Worker works closely with case-carrying social workers to identify, locate, and assess relatives, helping to establish a strong safety and support network for the family. This collaboration prioritizes relational permanency for the family, ensuring children remain connected to their extended family and cultural roots.

Additionally, the EFFES Social Worker participates in weekly meetings with the Active Supportive Intervention Services for Transition (ASIST) Program and its contracted partner, Seneca. The ASIST Program provides short-term resources designed to support children, youth, and Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) who are transitioning out of congregate care or are at risk of entering a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). These efforts align with the County's overarching goals of achieving permanency and stability for all children and youth in care.

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

On February 9, 2018, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), which includes the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), was signed into law. FFPSA introduces significant amendments to the Title IV-E Foster Care Program and updates the Title IV-B, Subparts 1 and 2 programs.

The primary goal of FFPSA is to enhance support services for families, enabling children and youth to remain safely at home, and to reduce reliance on congregate care placements. This is achieved through expanded prevention services, stricter oversight, and updated requirements for placements, as well as enhanced standards for congregate care settings.

To ensure compliance with FFPSA, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has implemented several programs and initiatives focused on prevention services, support for kinship caregivers, oversight of congregate care settings, and transitional youth services. These efforts demonstrate DSS's commitment to meeting FFPSA requirements and improving outcomes for children, youth, and families in the child welfare system. Specific actions taken include:

Motivational Interviewing (Evidence-Based Program)

CWS and Juvenile Probation have adopted Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-based practice (EBP) to enhance communication and engagement strategies. MI is a research-supported communication style designed to improve an individual's ability to inspire and guide others toward meaningful behavioral change. It leverages the intrinsic empowerment and autonomy of individuals, helping them take ownership of their actions, habits, and decisions.

MI is particularly effective in addressing ambivalence toward change. By eliciting and reinforcing an individual's own motivation for change, MI empowers participants to articulate and pursue changes based on their personal values and reasons.

The implementation of MI across Department of Social Services (DSS) and partner organizations aims to improve measurable outcomes, including retention of services, client satisfaction, and reductions in recidivism.

DSS contracted with the program "Motivational Interviewing for Change," with training beginning August of 2023. Trainers and consultants are members of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT), ensuring a high standard of fidelity. The Motivational Interviewing Competency Assessment (MICA) tool will be utilized to provide personalized feedback and coaching, ensuring adherence to MI principles. The objective is to train up to 200 individuals in CWS and community-based partners and provide 100 participants to receive four (4) MICA-coded reports, along with individual feedback sessions, upon completing the training.

By adopting Motivational Interviewing, DSS seeks to establish a sustainable, evidence-based framework to enhance client outcomes, empower staff, and foster systemic improvements within the child welfare system.

The Department is currently engaging with community partners to determine how many cycles of MI should be offered and working to identify candidates to be trained as trainers in MI as well in order to address sustainability of the program.

Oversight of Congregate Care Settings

Effective October 1, 2021, Part IV of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was implemented to reduce the use of unnecessary congregate care placements. This was accomplished by expanding prevention services, increasing oversight, and introducing stricter requirements for congregate care placement settings, including Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs).

Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation have made significant efforts to ensure that youth entering STRTPs are eligible and that their placements meet all federal and state requirements. Social Workers and Deputy Probation Officers, in collaboration with their supervisors, carefully assess youth to confirm they meet the necessary criteria before placement. Each Department's Placement Unit supports these efforts by helping identify facilities that align with the individual needs of each youth, ensuring that their placements are appropriate and supportive.

To maintain compliance and ensure accountability, DSS and Probation actively track all youth placed in STRTPs. This tracking process includes verifying that the facility is accredited, confirming that the placement is approved by a Qualified Individual (QI), obtaining the necessary court oversight and findings, and monitoring the length of stay for each youth. At DSS, a separate document is maintained to track this information, which is regularly shared with Division Managers and Deputy Directors to promote transparency and informed decision-making. The Probation Department reviews and

updates a monthly roster which is shared with the Juvenile Services Division Chief Deputy Probation Officer.

Additionally, DSS has implemented innovative practices to enhance the quality of care provided to youth in STRTPs. This includes adopting an Innovative Model of Care (IMC) with our local Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) and increasing outreach and recruitment efforts for Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) homes. These efforts aim to provide supportive alternatives to congregate care placements and improve outcomes for children and families.

Through these initiatives, DSS remains committed to meeting FFPSA requirements and providing high-quality care to youth, while continually seeking ways to innovate and improve service delivery within the child welfare system.

Qualified Individual

Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation have established a collaborative partnership with County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health to ensure the effective implementation of Qualified Individual (QI) assessments for STRTP placements. This partnership allows the Departments to leverage their expertise in conducting comprehensive evaluations of the youth's strengths, needs, and behavioral health goals. Behavioral Health provides trained QIs who act as impartial third-party evaluators, maintaining objectivity throughout the assessment process. QIs conduct thorough interviews with the youth, gathering input directly from the child and other relevant sources. They conduct timely assessments and determine whether family-based settings or STRTP placements best meet the child's needs. This collaboration ensures that QI assessments are completed within mandated timelines, align with federal and state requirements, and include culturally sensitive practices, especially for Indian children under Indian Child Welfare Act. Through this joint effort, we enhance decision-making for placements, maintain compliance with Family First Prevention Services (FFPSA) requirements, and prioritize the well-being and stability of youth in our care.

Family Preservation Program

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation have collaborated and contracted with Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) to expand the county's Family Preservation Program to offer In-Home Parenting Education to resource parents. CAPSLO's Parent Educators also refer CWS families to local Family Resource Centers for additional ongoing support and aftercare services.

CWS refers families who are at no risk to low risk of child maltreatment to CAPSLO for voluntary prevention services under the Family Support Services Division, which includes the Family Preservation Program (FPP) and Parent Education Program. DSS staff may refer to resource families, families receiving services through CWS, and families receiving CalWORKs benefits to FPP and Parent Education. Additionally, the Juvenile Services Division of the County of San Luis Obispo Probation Department may refer families for Parent Education services only.

Family Treatment Court (FTC)

Family Treatment Court (FTC) is a program for families involved in dependency proceedings, and whose primary barriers are related to substance abuse or co-occurring disorders. The Department of Social Services (DSS), in partnership with Drug and Alcohol Services (DAS) and dependency court, works in collaboration with these families through the FTC program. The FTC Steering meets monthly to ensure the local protocol is working well and identify any issues that might need to be addressed.

For participants, FTC is about overcoming barriers to life stresses that cause people to use illegal substances and parents ineffectively, learning skills to better parent, keeping their children safe, and learning how to sustain a lifestyle of sobriety and recovery. In addition, when needed, FTC participants can be linked to other departments and community services to aid parents in becoming self-sufficient and able to provide for their children's needs.

The goal of the FTC Program is to expedite treatment so that the possibility of reunification is enhanced. If reunification is not feasible, the goal is to make a timely decision about the child's permanent placement and reduce the time spent in care.

Foster Support Unit

The Foster Support Unit was established to support resource families to maintain placement stability for youth in care and provide an additional support network for resource families. A social worker is assigned to engage the resource parents soon after a youth is placed in their care to ensure they are prepared for the youth's needs and are familiar with local resources available to them in support of the youth's placement. The Foster Support Unit also publishes a monthly Parent Empowerment Newsletter (PEN) to inform resource parents of informative articles/trainings relating to fostering a youth, highlights quality parenting initiatives (QPI) champions, and provides announcements for resources and upcoming events that are intended to serve resource families.

Foster Youth and Education

The ongoing collaboration between Department of Social Services, San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, Cuesta College, private contractor Grade Potential Tutoring, and community-based organization Family Care Network Inc. has enhanced communication and support for the educational success of foster youth across San Luis Obispo County. By working together, these partners streamline data collection, ensure consistent service delivery, and provide coordinated resources that promote educational achievement and advancement for foster youth.

Family Urgent Response (FURS)

The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a statewide program designed to provide immediate, trauma-informed support for foster youth (current and former, up to age 21) and their caregivers during crises or instability. The system operates through a 24/7 state hotline, which routes calls to county-level mobile response teams. The state hotline is staffed by trained operators skilled in de-escalation and conflict resolution, who can provide immediate assistance and connect families to the appropriate local resources. Calls are routed to the host county, regardless of the caller's county of jurisdiction.

San Luis Obispo County has implemented FURS through a partnership with Sierra Mental Wellness Group, which leads the mobile response and stabilization efforts. Sierra Mental Wellness provides live phone responses, in-person support within one to three hours for urgent cases, and follow-up services to maintain stability. These services include in-home de-escalation, caregiver coaching, and referrals to community resources. This collaborative approach ensures a seamless connection between state and county systems, avoiding duplicate triage processes and emphasizing a trauma-informed, culturally responsive care model to stabilize families and prevent law enforcement involvement or placement disruptions.

Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC)

The County of San Luis Obispo has an approved plan with California Department of Social Services to administer a County Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) program. The department is committed to maintaining youth in family-based care settings with the provision of specialized services when they have been assessed as requiring intensive services based on the level of care protocol. The ISFC level of care provides an alternative to group-based residential treatment for youth in care who require intensive services. ISFC is not a placement type; rather it is a determination of an intensive rate based on the needs of a youth, and a caregiver who is willing and able to deliver specialized services and supports the youth in a home-based family care setting.

The Department has a Specialty Care Social Worker (SW) who provides additional services to families with the placement of a youth who is eligible to ISFC level of care. The SW helps facilitate and organize trainings for resource parents, provides connections to resources, tracks completion of trainings for recertification, and attends CFT meetings to ensure that families are receiving services that are meeting the needs of the child.

Juvenile Dependency Mediation (JDM)

Child Welfare Services (CWS) encourage social workers (SW) to refer to and participate in Juvenile Dependency Mediation. It is the intent of CWS to have SWs contribute their input to mediation proceedings in the hope of reaching a mutually acceptable resolution that focuses on the child's safety and best interest and the safety of all family members. DSS contracts with Wilshire Creative Mediation to provide these services.

Mediation is a process whereby a neutral third person called a mediator encourages and facilitates the resolution of disputed issues. Juvenile dependency mediation provides an opportunity to resolve issues that arise when a family has entered the dependency system. Mediation may take place at any point in the dependency proceedings on the court's motion and at the request of parties or attorneys with a court order. The court may order mediation over the objection of a party or party's attorney. Judicial officers, attorneys, social workers, parents, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), and children are allowed to request mediation.

Reproductive and Sexual Health for Youth in Foster Care (SB 89)

Senate Bill 89 (SB 89) is a California law that requires foster youth to receive sexual health education and establishes training requirements for child welfare workers and other professionals. In compliance with SB 89, social workers are required to provide youth aged 10 and older with information about their reproductive and sexual health rights, as well as guidance on accessing services. This information must be documented in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to ensure accountability and compliance.

The County of San Luis Obispo is utilizing a curriculum developed by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and trainers from the Central California Training Academy (CCTA), delivers SB 89 training to social workers. All staff have completed CCTA training, and new social workers complete online SB 89 training during induction. For SOGIE, while a comprehensive training series is not currently offered, all new social workers receive a brief training on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, And Expression (SOGIE) rights during induction.

The Resource Family Training (RFT) program underwent significant restructuring in January 2022 to integrate SB 89 and SOGIE training. Families certified prior to this restructure were notified of the

need to complete these trainings and are being encouraged to join RFT classes during a soft launch that began in 2024. All newly certified resource families have completed both training courses.

These collective efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to enhancing outcomes for foster youth by ensuring compliance with SB 89 and SOGIE mandates and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Transitional Age Youth Achievers (TAY Achievers)

The TAY Achievers program provides financial support to Independent Living Program (ILP) eligible youth with needs related to enrolling or maintaining enrollment in school or employment that enhances their ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. TAY Achievers is available to address any unmet financial need for eligible youth ages 16-24 attending college or vocational programs. To participate in TAY Achievers, youth must be eligible for ILP in San Luis Obispo County, be enrolled in an accredited higher education program (college, vocational program or internship), have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), Chafee Grant (if applicable), and applied for available grants and scholarships.

The TAY Achievers support may pertain to school supplies/fees, transportation expenses, groceries, access to housing and career navigators, housing, emergency needs not covered by Medi-Cal, campus/ community resources, and case management.

Tools/Workgroups for Collaboration

Interagency Meeting: The purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for announcements and agency news for attendees to share with line staff. It also provides an opportunity to discuss interagency referrals and the Department of Social Services (DSS) 815 Multi-Service Referral and Release of Information form. The intent is to hold the meeting quarterly. The focus of this meeting is to provide resources for the individuals, youth and families we serve.

SLO County Child and Family Wellness Collaborative: The SLO County Child and Family Wellness Collaborative envisions a united system of prevention resources that foster stable, nurturing relationships and communities for children. Its mission is to align efforts to promote safe, supportive environments for children, youth, and families through data-driven practices and thoughtful policy development. This meeting focuses on advancing the county-wide Child Abuse Prevention Plan by incorporating the Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE) System of Care, Motivational Interviewing, and a network of Family Resource Centers grounded in the Protective Factors framework, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and Trauma-Informed practices. The work group includes representation from social services, probation, schools, parent leaders, youth leaders, and various prevention-focused community partners, ensuring that diverse perspectives and voices guide this collaborative effort.

Child and Youth Human Trafficking Subcommittee: This subcommittee is a subset of the larger Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force and is chaired by the Department of Social Services Program Manager overseeing human trafficking (HT). This collaborative was previously designated the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children subcommittee and rebranded during the review period to be inclusive of all forms of human trafficking. The purpose of this group is to continue collaboration on the strengths and needs of our community and identify areas for continuous quality improvement. The focus of the subcommittee is on collaborating to provide HT awareness and education in the schools and to businesses in the community. During the review period the department made substantial progress integrating labor trafficking into programs, trainings and community outreach. Outreach to the community during the review period staff and youth with lived experience tabled a

booth at the Journey of Hope Festival sharing human trafficking prevention materials. This event had 580 youth and adults in attendance.

Labor Trafficking Subcommittee: This subcommittee is a subset of the larger AHTTF and is chaired by the DSS Program Manager overseeing HT. This subcommittee meets every other month following the Children and Youth Anti-Human Trafficking Subcommittee. The group has identified continuing education for understanding the nuances of labor trafficking, utilization of a screening tool encompassing labor trafficking for health care providers and the development of a community labor trafficking survey for a better understanding and outreach to agencies currently serving this population as top priorities.

Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) Tri-County Learning Collaborative: The Program Manager and Program Review Specialist who support the Human Trafficking Program attend quarterly meetings with Santa Barbara County and Ventura County to leverage cross agency strengths and opportunities. The department also requested assistance and shared learning opportunities with other California County Child Welfare Departments who are likewise incorporating labor trafficking. The first learning collaborative with Sacramento, Tulare, and Los Angeles counties was held in February of 2023 and has transitioned to a quarterly basis as dedicated time for counties to bring a labor trafficking case to talk about that they've identified as needing support with, as well as those struggling with law enforcement response to forced criminality and that have a new resource they'd like to share with the group.

Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM)

The County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) Department of Social Services (DSS) offers Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM), a program providing non-court-ordered, time-limited protective services to families whose children face potential danger of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This voluntary program is only available when children can safely remain at home, with or without a safety plan, and the family agrees to participate in corrective services.

VFM services focus on preventing or resolving issues of abuse and neglect through supportive interventions such as counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence intervention, and parenting education. These services help stabilize the family while allowing the child to remain safely at home. The agreement for voluntary services is formalized through the Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) Agreement. If the family's circumstances do not improve or begin to decline, putting the child's safety at risk, DSS may seek court intervention to place the child in out-of-home care.

Board of Supervisors Designated Commission, Board of Bodies

The BOS-Designated Public Agency

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is the public agency designated to administer and provide oversight of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF), Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Treatment (CAPIT) and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP) funding. The San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors designated Center for Family Strengthening to use CBCAP funding.

Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)

The Center for Family Strengthening (CFS) serves as the designated Child Abuse Prevention Council of San Luis Obispo County. As an established non-profit organization, they provide the leadership and advocacy required to ensure a county-wide prevention agenda that promotes the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Since 1987, the CFS has served San Luis Obispo County as the Child Abuse Prevention Council entity responsible for local efforts to advocate for the protection of all children and youth.

CFS is committed to strengthening families through education and advocacy, working closely with family support organizations throughout San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. Their focus is on providing resources for families in need, protecting children from maltreatment and neglect, and prioritizing the well-being of families within the community.

Currently, CFS is partnering with Child Welfare Services (CWS) to co-lead the Child and Family Wellness Collaborative. The director of CFS plays a key role in coordinating the county's prevention and early intervention efforts by facilitating and participating in various collaboratives, such as DSS and the First 5 Commission. The mission of the collaborative is to establish a collective impact approach to align and improve collaborative efforts to promote safe, constant, nurturing relationships and communities for children, youth and families through data-informed practices and policy development.

CFS staff regularly review the California Child Welfare Indicators Project to gain insights into child abuse issues within San Luis Obispo County. This data supports the development of the prevention programs, informs the Board of Directors, and provides the community with accurate information. Key data reviewed includes child abuse referrals, substantiated abuse cases, child fatalities, and Family Resource Center (FRC) performance and outcomes. Additionally, they utilize data from parent education services, family advocate services, outreach and education activities, as well as mental health interpretation services for the Latino community.

County Children's Trust Fund Commission, Board or Council

The designated agency that receives the County Children's Trust Fund is the Center for Family Strengthening (CFS). The agency is dedicated to strengthening families through education and advocacy. CFS manages primary prevention programs for families that provide parent education, community outreach, and healing services for child abuse victims. In addition, CFS partners closely with family support organizations in San Luis Obispo County to provide resources to families in need,

protect children from abuse and neglect, and ensure that strong families are a community priority. The County of San Luis Obispo deposits the entire Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) fund into the CCTF.

In 1988, the County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors designated Center for Family Strengthening (Child Abuse Prevention Council of San Luis Obispo) as the self-governing entity responsible for local efforts to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. The funding provided by the state is sent directly to CFS. Every year the Office of Child Abuse and Prevention (OCAP) County liaison collects information from CFS and reviews the work they are doing and reports directly to OCAP.

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and CFS collaborate on the mandated reporter training in the community to avoid any duplication in training. The agencies meet quarterly to identify what school, hospitals, or agencies need training, and they select which agency will do what training. In addition, CWS holds a Mandated Reporter training course every quarter where over 20 people attend consistently. The County of SLO and CFS have a website where the public can inquire where to sign up for Mandated Reporter training.

The CFS Executive Director identified an opportunity to utilize a portion of the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Fund to establish the Promotores Collaborative. This initiative was designed as a parent engagement and leadership development program to involve Latinx parents in their schools and civic activities. Initially a small grassroots project led by a part-time coordinator, the program has since grown into a highly valued community resource. It now requires the leadership of a full-time Director, a full-time Administrator overseeing multiple contracts, and a team comprising three Project Coordinators and six part-time bilingual, bicultural Promotores. Local agencies, schools, and community groups across San Luis Obispo County continue to recognize the importance of a high-functioning Promotores Collaborative and rely on its services.

The CFS partnered with the SLO County Public Health Department's Suspected Abuse Response Team (SART) to establish an accredited Child Advocacy Center (CAC) in San Luis Obispo County, funded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). The CAC now serves as a vital resource for young survivors of abuse, assault, and neglect, as well as their families. The Center provides forensic interviews in a safe and supportive environment where children can share their experiences with trained professionals. Medical examinations, conducted by a child abuse pediatrician, address physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and other forms of trauma. Family advocacy services act as a crucial bridge, connecting the child and their family members with the multidisciplinary team guiding the process. Additionally, mental health services address the immediate and long-term impacts of trauma, supporting both the child and their family in beginning their healing journey. With a dedicated team of professionals, the CAC ensures that every child and family is treated with respect and empathy, providing comprehensive care and support to navigate their recovery process.

PSSF Collaborative

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is the designated agency for Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) and Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Treatment (CAPIT) funds. DSS contracts with Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) that run the local Family Resource Centers (FRC) to respond to the needs of children and families in the community. The Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE) System of Care operates through six Family Resource Centers (FRCs) across San Luis Obispo County. Delivered primarily by trauma-informed Family Advocates, SAFE integrates support into schools and communities to address family needs or provide referrals to appropriate services. As a key member of the social services network, CAPSLO collaborates

with DSS, local nonprofits, and other organizations to provide children and families with resources within their own communities.

SAFE Family Advocates offer three levels of service based on family needs. The first level, Community Service, provides immediate, one-time assistance to resolve a specific concern. The second level, Information and Referral, serves families with multiple but non-intensive needs. This involves an intake and appropriate referrals without ongoing follow-up. The third and most intensive level, Case Management, involves a comprehensive process of intake, in-depth assessment, trauma-informed case planning, and regular meetings to address significant needs. Families' progress is reviewed every 90 days, with opportunities to transition between service levels based on their evolving needs using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix.

Systemic Factors

Management Information Systems

The County of San Luis Obispo relies on a robust set of information systems to support Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff and Juvenile Probation. These systems enhance case management, performance tracking, and data-driven decision-making, ensuring compliance with state requirements and improving outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS): Child Welfare Services and Probation primarily use CWS/CMS as the primary statewide case management system since its implementation in 1997. This system facilitates case recording, reporting, and tracking, allowing administrative assistants, social workers, supervisors, and program specialists to manage cases effectively. CWS/CMS is integrated with other tools, such as Business Objects, to generate custom reports that inform management decisions and identify data quality issues. County of SLO is preparing for the transition to the California Automated Response and Engagement System (CARES) in 2026, which is expected to streamline and modernize case management practices further. Barriers to full utilization of CWS/CMS include the complexity of the user interface and data entry redundancy. The system's intricate design can be challenging for new users to navigate, necessitating extensive training and potentially leading to user errors. Additionally, users need to input the same information multiple times due to limited integration with other systems, which increases the likelihood of errors.

SafeMeasures, provided by Evident Change: Transforms data from CWS/CMS into actionable insights. This web-based application offers real-time performance monitoring and outcome tracking, helping supervisors and social workers stay on top of timelines, compliance measures, and key tasks. Supervisors frequently use SafeMeasures during regular conferences with social workers to review caseload performance, timeliness of services, and any upcoming requirements. SafeMeasures also supports focused initiatives, such as tracking "Monthly Measures," which identify trends and areas for improvement throughout the year.

The County's partnership with Evident Change enhances its ability to assess performance through detailed management reports. For example, our management report provides insights into service timelines, outcomes, and trends across key performance indicators. By leveraging this data, the county can identify strengths, address challenges, and implement targeted strategies for improvement. Evident Change's tools, including SafeMeasures, allow CWS to focus on specific areas of work, such as timely permanency planning, effective case closure, and service delivery outcomes. These reports are critical for evaluating progress and informing future initiatives, ensuring the department remains responsive to community needs and state requirements.

Barriers to SafeMeasures include data accuracy dependency and training requirements. The effectiveness of SafeMeasures relies on the accuracy of data entered into CWS/CMS. Inconsistent or erroneous data input can lead to misleading reports and performance metrics. Additionally, staff require specific training to interpret SafeMeasures reports correctly and to utilize the data effectively in decision-making processes.

Structured Decision Making (SDM): Another tool that supports evidence-based practice in CWS. SDM provides standardized assessments to evaluate child safety, risk factors, and family strengths and needs. These assessments guide decisions at key points in a case, such as intake, safety planning,

and reunification, ensuring consistency and accuracy in decision-making. SDM is integrated with SafeMeasures, allowing supervisors and social workers to review its application in the case management process and adjust as needed. Barriers to the usage of SDM include the subjectivity in assessments and integration challenges. While SDM provides structured guidelines, the tool's effectiveness can be compromised by individual biases during risk assessments, potentially affecting decision outcomes.

Business Objects: Is a robust business intelligence and reporting tool used by Child Welfare Services (CWS) to extract, analyze, and visualize data from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). It allows for the creation of custom queries and detailed reports tailored to the specific needs of the organization. These reports are instrumental in tracking performance, monitoring compliance, and identifying trends across various operational and outcome measures. By using Business Objects, DSS ensures that staff at all levels such as clerical, supervisory, and management all have access to accurate and actionable data to guide their work. Its integration with other tools like SafeMeasures further enhances the county's ability to monitor outcomes and improve services for children and families. Business Objects serves multiple purposes:

- Data Extraction: It pulls data directly from CWS/CMS to generate reports on key performance indicators, such as timeliness of investigations, case closures, and placement stability.
- Custom Reporting: Staff can create tailored reports that address specific program needs, such as tracking referral outcomes, monitoring service timelines, or evaluating staff performance.
- Quality Assurance: Business Objects helps identify missing or incorrect data entries in CWS/CMS, enabling staff to address data integrity issues promptly.
- Decision Support: The tool provides managers and supervisors with insights into department operations, helping them make informed decisions and prioritize areas for improvement.

In addition to these systems, CWS employs various in-house databases to support specialized programs and initiatives. For example, the Family Treatment Court database tracks substance-use-related cases, while the Foster Recruitment Database supports efforts to identify and engage new resource families. Other tools/ databases such as the Child and Family Team meetings, Child Location, Foster Focus, Mental Health Evaluations/ Assessments/ JV-220 list/ Qualified Individual, and the Resource Family Approval Database, streamline service coordination and documentation for team meetings and resource home approvals. These in-house systems enhance service delivery by providing staff with tailored solutions for their specific needs.

The data integrity efforts are supported by Program Review Specialists who extract data from CWS/CMS using Business Objects. Reports are generated daily, weekly, monthly, and annually to monitor compliance, track performance, and identify areas for improvement. These reports are shared with staff and management via the DSS intranet and other internal channels, providing a foundation for continuous quality improvement.

The main barrier to Business Objects is the technical complexity of the program. Creating and customizing reports in Business Objects requires specialized technical skills, which may not be prevalent among all staff members, leading to a reliance on IT support.

Court Systems and Information Portals: The department leverages several court-related systems to ensure accurate and timely access to records that inform decision-making in Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation. These systems are essential for reviewing family histories, court proceedings, and criminal records, helping to guide service planning and ensure child safety. Barriers to the Court Systems and Information Portals include data synchronization and access limitations.

Discrepancies between court records and CWS data can occur due to delays or errors in data synchronization, potentially impacting case management and legal proceedings. Additionally, restricted access to certain court documents or systems can hinder caseworkers' ability to obtain comprehensive information promptly.

Odyssey Case Management System: The Odyssey system is a comprehensive digital case management tool used by the court system to track family court records, including dependency cases and custody arrangements. Child Welfare Services (CWS) staff and Juvenile Probation officers utilize Odyssey to access real-time updates on court hearings, rulings, and other case developments. This system ensures that social workers, probation officers, and supervisors have the most current information about a family's previous or current court involvement, which is critical for planning services and adhering to court orders.

Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Portal: The CJIS Portal provides secure access to local criminal history and law enforcement data, facilitating collaboration between CWS, Juvenile Probation, and law enforcement agencies. This portal is integral to evaluating the safety and suitability of placements, particularly when assessing relatives or potential guardians. It also supports timely background checks, helping staff make informed decisions about child placements and family reunification efforts.

California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS): CLETS is used to perform additional checks on individuals involved in CWS and Juvenile Probation cases. Through CLETS, staff can access statewide law enforcement data, including restraining orders, active warrants, and prior arrests, which may impact a child's safety or case direction.

Integrated Use of Court and Information Systems: Together, Odyssey, CJIS, and CLETS provide a comprehensive framework for reviewing family records and ensuring compliance with legal and safety standards. These tools are used in conjunction with CWS/CMS and in-house databases, such as the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Indian Child Welfare Act Inquiry Database, to ensure all legal and procedural requirements are met. They also streamline collaboration between the courts, law enforcement, and child welfare staff, reducing delays and improving outcomes for children and families. By integrating these court and information systems into daily operations, County of San Luis Obispo ensures that all decisions regarding child welfare and family support are well-informed, legally sound, and focused on the best interests of the child.

Child Welfare Services (CWS)

To enhance fieldwork and communication, CWS staff are equipped with laptops and cell phones, replacing older technologies like pagers. Social workers use laptops to access real-time case data, reports, and documentation tools while in the field or during home visits. Remote access capabilities allow staff to connect directly to their office systems from any location, enabling seamless integration with in-house tools and databases. This technology supports timely documentation, virtual participation in meetings, and enhanced collaboration with multidisciplinary teams.

Cell phones have become a critical tool for maintaining communication with clients, service providers, and colleagues. Social workers have access to their work email on their county-issued cell phone. Social workers use county-issued phones to contact families and coordinate services, addressing previous barriers associated with personal phone use. The shift to county-issued devices also mitigates privacy concerns and ensures compliance with legal and data security standards. These tools are complemented by information technology support and training to optimize their usage.

Probation

In addition to the aforementioned Information Systems, Probation staff utilize the Monitor Case Management System to manage interactions with youth, families, and service providers. This system is used for documenting case plans, court reports, and service referrals, ensuring thorough and accurate records. Deputy Probation Officers assigned to the Juvenile Division Placement and Commitment Services Unit are provided with cell phones to assist with reaching and maintaining communication with youth in foster care.

Enhancements to Service Delivery

The adoption of laptops and cell phones has significantly improved efficiency and communication in the field. Staff can now access case files, update records, and communicate with clients and colleagues in real-time, reducing delays and enhancing service delivery. These tools also support virtual meetings, allowing staff to participate in Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings or interdisciplinary discussions from any location.

By modernizing its technology and equipment, the County of San Luis Obispo ensures that social workers and probation staff are well-equipped to meet the needs of the families and children they serve. The continued integration of tools like SafeMeasures and Business Objects with mobile technology enhances data-driven decision-making and supports timely, effective service delivery.

County Case Review System

Court Structure/Relationship

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation have a positive working relationship with the Juvenile Court, the attorneys, and each other. When differences of opinion arise, all parties are willing to work together to discuss and resolve issues. The Juvenile Court Judge presides over delinquency court and the dependency court. A Commissioner presides over Family Treatment Court (FTC). Since 2007, Dependency Court has been held at the downtown courthouse, Delinquency Court is held at the Juvenile Hall, and the FTC is held at the Veteran's Memorial Hall Courtroom.

Supervisors from CWS and a Senior Deputy Probation Officer assigned to the Juvenile Division Court and Prevention Services Unit at Probation serve as court officers and liaisons for their respective departments in Juvenile Justice (Delinquency) and Dependency Court. Court officers take notes in collaboration with the assigned County Counsel and share information, such as dates and times of contested hearings and important information verbally communicated in court), as needed with the Social Workers, Probation Officers, and supervisors who have written the reports. Additionally, they are available to provide consultation for Social Workers, Probation Officers and their supervisors on court-related issues.

CWS and Juvenile Probation work closely together. CWS and Probation court officers communicate with each other on a regular basis and work together to resolve procedural issues, most recently regarding issues surrounding the Welfare Institution Code (WIC) 241.1 process. CWS and Juvenile Probation have signed a protocol pursuant to WIC 241.1. Whenever a child appears to come within the provisions of section 300 and either section 601 or section 602 of the WIC, CWS and Juvenile Probation must conduct a joint assessment to determine which status will serve the best interest of the child and the protection of society. In addition, the protocol provides a structure for an agreed-upon recommendation to be presented to the Juvenile Court, a framework for resolving disagreements between Probation and CWS, and a means to determine if circumstances warrant the

filing of a petition to change the minor's status. When differences of opinion occur, either department liaison can request management involvement for a final decision.

CWS and Juvenile Probation currently meet jointly with Juvenile Court Stakeholders on a quarterly basis. The Juvenile Court Stakeholders group includes the Juvenile Court Judge, Panel Attorneys, DSS and Probation Managers, Court Supervisors, CASAs, Court Administration, County Counsel, the Deputy District Attorney assigned to Juvenile Delinquency Court, and the liaison to the Administrative Office of the Court. The group meets to share information, announcements, training opportunities, and to develop agreed upon procedures and practices to improve working relationships. Additionally, several members of the Juvenile Court Stakeholders group attend the annual Beyond the Bench convening to build knowledge, skills and competency in Court matters.

CWS also offers a drug court program. Family Treatment Court (FTC) is a program for CWS families involved in dependency proceedings and parents with voluntary family maintenance cases, whose primary issues are drug and/or alcohol abuse. CWS, in partnership with DAS and Juvenile Court, work in collaboration with these families to expedite treatment and monitoring to enhance the possibility of reunification. A designated Social Worker serves as a liaison for FTC and is responsible for calling the cases and managing the calendars on the days of their hearings.

CWS also has an ongoing Court Work Group that meets monthly for specific projects and purposes. The work group consist of CWS Division Managers, Social Worker Supervisors, Legal Processing, County Counsel, and Staff Development.

Our county's case planning process emphasizes strong collaboration between the child welfare agency and county mental health services to ensure that families receive comprehensive, trauma-informed care. Coordination begins at the initial stages of a case, where joint efforts between social workers and mental health professionals ensure timely and thorough screening and assessment, with a specific focus on identifying trauma-related needs. These assessments inform the development of individualized case plans that include behaviorally based goals and objectives tailored to the child and family's unique circumstances. In partnership with mental health, the child welfare agency selects appropriate services that are both culturally responsive and trauma-informed, ensuring accessibility for all families. Additionally, mental health staff may provide input into visitation planning, helping to create safe and supportive environments that promote healing and strengthen the parent-child relationship. This integrated approach ensures that the child and family's mental and emotional well-being remain central throughout the life of the case.

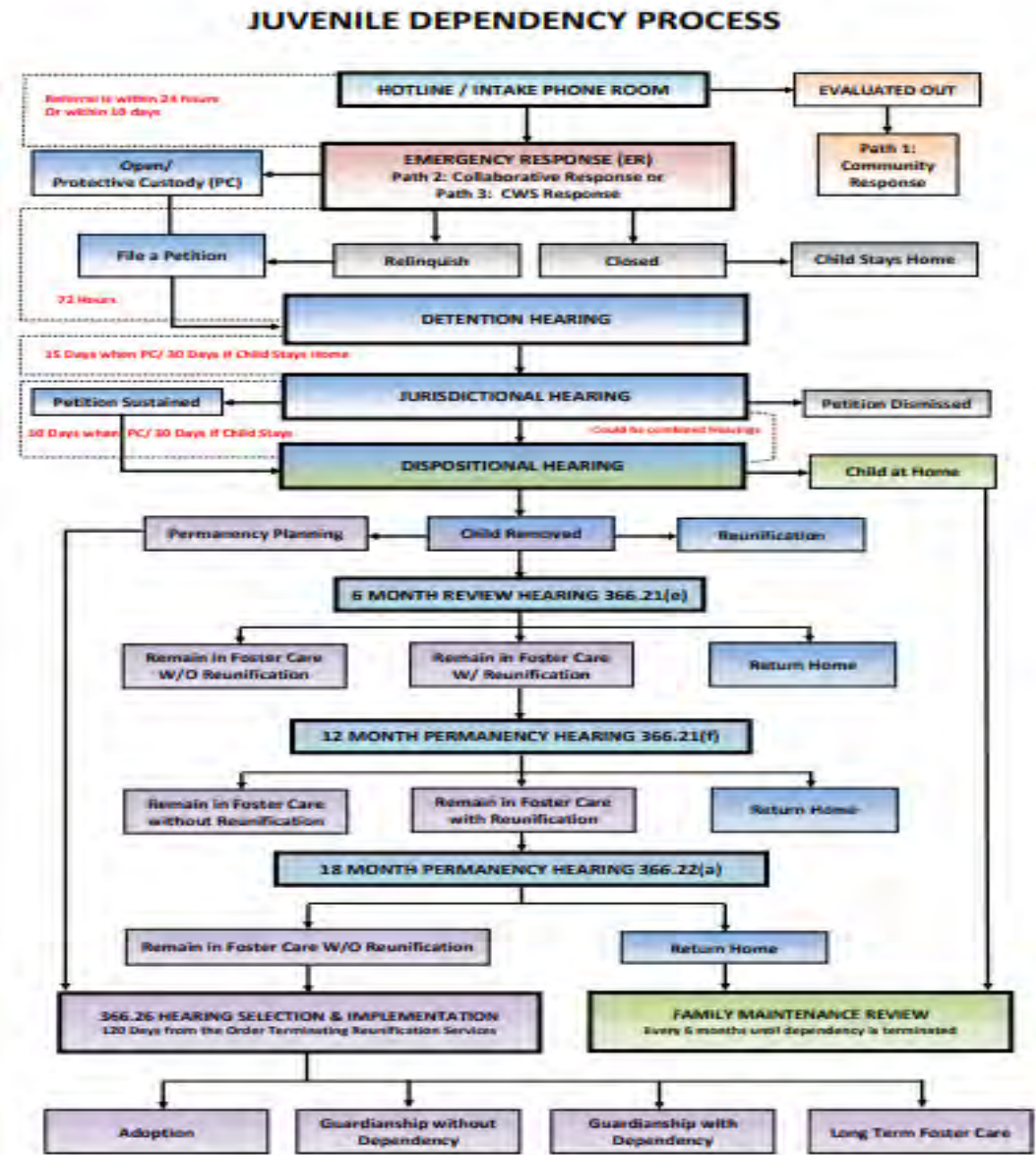
CWS' Legal Processing unit tracks the timeliness of reports to the court and continuance requests made by the social workers. Continuance requests that are submitted in lieu of the court report are presented in writing, with a legitimate reason for the continuance request. Late reports are tracked by a supervisor tool and incorporated into monthly supervisor/manager staffing. The CWS Court Officer and County Counsel are proactive in objecting to requests for hearings or continuances for the purpose of addressing issues that do not specifically pertain to detention, jurisdiction, and disposition, such as psychological evaluations, placement, or visitation. Every attempt is made to move a case forward in accordance with legal timelines. When services are ended or not offered to the parents, and a hearing date is ordered to terminate parental rights and determine the permanent plan, a service review date is set in compliance with statutes. Generally, by the termination of parental rights hearing, CWS is in compliance with notification requirements, and hearings do not need to be continued.

The CWS Legal Processing Unit includes two designated Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Legal Clerks who plays a vital role in ensuring compliance with the ICWA various child welfare hearings. These

clerks conduct thorough inquiries and meticulously document efforts to determine a child's potential Indian status. Their responsibilities include interviewing the child, parents, relatives, or other relevant parties using the ICWA Initial Inquiry Question Tool, contacting tribes to verify membership eligibility, building relationships with tribal representatives, and assisting families with tribal enrollment processes. They also ensure proper noticing of tribes, file court reports and legal documents, and distribute them to attorneys, tribes, parents, and other relevant parties while maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, they prepare ICWA Compliance or Due Diligence Reports, attend court hearings, and collaborate with social workers, supervisors, and legal processing staff to provide updates, ensure accurate documentation, and uphold ICWA requirements throughout the legal process. Through these efforts, the ICWA Legal Clerks ensure that all inquiries, findings, and actions are properly documented and communicated to support legal proceedings and maintain compliance with ICWA standards.

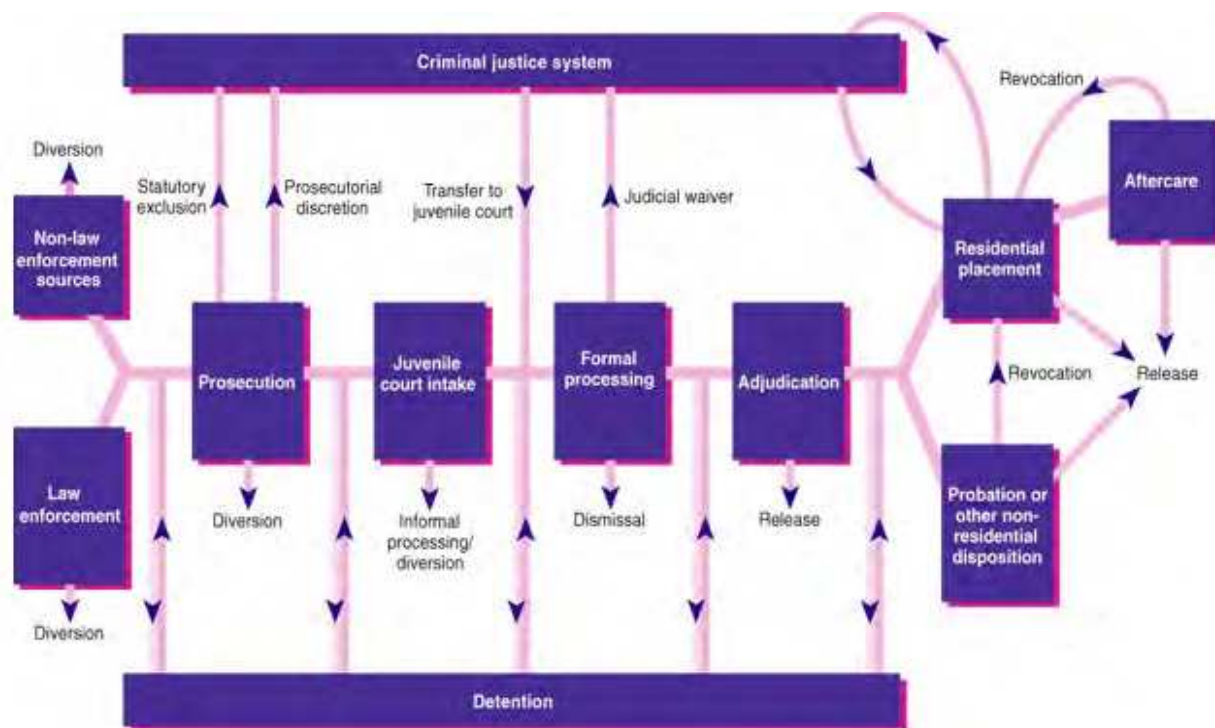
CWS uses several forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution, including Grievance Review Hearings and Dispute Resolution Reviews. In addition, Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings for placement/reunification, Juvenile Dependency Mediation for contested hearings, and Post Permanency Mediation for ongoing birth family/sibling contact after adoption are used. CWS works hard to resolve all issues at the lowest level with facilitation and collaboration by family members, so that all parties are invested in mutually beneficial outcomes when possible. The focus of issues is narrowed and reduced to safety, well-being and permanence.

Juvenile Dependency Process Flowchart



Juvenile Delinquency Process Flowchart

The following diagram describes the stages of Delinquency Case processing in the Juvenile Justice system and is an excerpt from the *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report* publication, NCJ 153569, pages 76-79.



Process for Timely Notification of Hearings

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation cases involving youth in care are reviewed in the court system as they move through the legal process. After the Disposition Hearing the 6, 12 and 18-month Review Hearings are usually scheduled in advance.

CWS

For CWS, Special 3-Month Interim Hearings are held to assess the parent's case plan progress made toward reunification are requested for all children who are younger than three years old at the time of Detention.

Contested Hearings and/or Continuances can extend the time it takes to complete a prior hearing. CWS and County Counsel have been proactive throughout the years in objecting to Continuances whenever possible. Juvenile Dependency Mediation has also decreased the volume, frequency and duration of Contested Hearings. CWS hearings are commonly delayed or continued because of late court reports from social workers.

A monthly Court Reports Due Statistics Report is sent to supervisors and managers accounting for all the reports sent to court each month. Most recently, a Juvenile Court System (JCS) Work Request Database was developed to establish an efficient means of communication between Legal Processing and social workers. The primary purpose of this database is to reduce the correspondence requests and delays between Legal Processing and social workers, which have been an identified barrier to timely notices and submitting timely court reports.

For Post-Disposition Hearings, timely notices of hearings and the social worker recommendation are sent to resource families who have dependent children in their home prior to upcoming court hearings. Following the notice is the social worker's written Recommendation Report. CWS strongly encourages resource parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of children in foster care as well as the children themselves to exercise an opportunity to be heard at any review hearing.

Notices include the date, time and location of hearing. The minor's attorney often visits with the child in advance of the hearing. CWS and the resource family coordinate transportation of the child to the hearing, if the hearing is in person.

Many caregivers apply for and are granted de facto parent status of a child by the court. This allows them to have an enhanced presence in the courtroom and be able to participate in proceedings and provide evidence. Social Workers routinely seek the input and feedback of caregivers, who may or may not attend court. The JV 290 Caregiver Information Form is given to caregivers, and if completed and returned, is included in Social Workers' court reports. This form details in the caregiver's own words an account of how the foster child is doing in care. If families and caregivers are at court, the court officer attempts to prioritize cases based on their needs to ensure that there are not excessive delays in waiting for their case to be called.

Adoption staff and Legal Processing staff are responsible for the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 366.26 Hearings and timelines. The 366.26 Hearings are set at WIC 366.21 or WIC 366.22 Hearing. There is a service hearing held mid-way between the WIC 366.21/366.22 Hearings and the WIC 366.26 Hearing to address issues needing attention regarding personal service of notice of hearing to the parents. For example, it may be necessary to publish notice to a parent whose whereabouts are unknown.

Probation

The assigned Deputy Probation Officer generates a Notice of Hearing Form and submits it to a Legal Clerk assigned to the Juvenile Division who a Proof of Service form and then mails, via certified mail, to the youth and involved parties of the upcoming hearing. The notice is submitted at least fifteen days ahead of the scheduled hearing. The assigned Deputy Probation Officer then completes the appropriate foster care status review report (i.e., Pre-Permanency, Permanency, Post-Permanency, Non-Minor Dependent) and submits it to the Supervising Deputy Probation Officer assigned to the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services Unit, who reviews, edits, and signs the report. A Legal Clerk assigned to the Juvenile Division is then notified of the report's status and then distributes it to the Court and involved parties, such as attorney's and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) ten days before the scheduled hearing.

Process for Parent-Child-Youth Participation in Case Planning

Child Welfare Services (CWS) prioritizes family-centered, strength-based, and needs-driven approaches in case planning. Case plans are informed by tools such as the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Family Strengths and Needs Assessment and emphasize collaboration between families, community partners, and social workers. Plans focus on mitigating safety and risk factors to ensure timely reunification and case closure when it is safe to do so.

Social Workers review case plans monthly to assess family progress and consider any changes in family strengths, needs, or safety and risk factors. Every six months, a Family Strengths and Needs Reassessment is completed, and case plans are updated in collaboration with the family and involved team members. These efforts ensure that case plans remain relevant and effective in addressing the needs of children and families.

Court Involvement in Case Planning

At the Detention Hearing, the judge will ask parents to disclose names of relatives and other possible resources for the children, in addition to paternity, absent parent information, or details regarding potential Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applicability. This process ensures that efforts to identify and involve relatives or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs) are initiated early in the case.

At the Disposition Hearing, the judge informs parents of the six-month reunification timeline for children under three years old and/or sibling groups with one or more children under three. All Disposition Reports emphasize this advisement in bold type, ensuring parents are fully aware of the time-sensitive nature of the proceedings. Additionally, these reports outline the permanency alternative and detail the characteristics of potential adopters or guardians, ensuring the case plan addresses the safety concerns that led to the child's entry into foster care while working toward timely and stable permanency.

Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings

Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings are a cornerstone of collaborative case planning, providing a structured framework for engaging families, youth, and community partners in decision-making. CFTs meetings are conducted at key stages, including initial case plan creation, placement changes, and case closure, to address safety concerns, update and review case plans, and establish permanency goals. These meetings ensure that family voices are central to the planning process and align with the unique needs of each case.

Permanency Planning for Youth

Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation recognize the importance of permanency planning for youth who cannot reunify with their parents or are aging out of the foster care system. Permanency planning plays a critical role in identifying and supporting stable, nurturing, and lasting connections for youth. The adoption social worker collaborates with the primary social workers to explore all available options for permanency, focusing on building meaningful relationships with adult caregivers or significant individuals.

For youth in a Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) or permanency placement status, permanency planning efforts include:

- Interviewing and assessing youth to identify significant individuals in their lives.
- Conducting case file and CWS/CMS history reviews to develop family trees and identify potential connections.
- Contacting identified individuals to evaluate their willingness and ability to support the youth.
- Facilitating twice per month permanency case staffings with social workers and supervisors to monitor progress and address barriers.
- Preparing binders/ packets for youth transitioning to adulthood.

CWS remains committed to ensuring that every child and youth achieves permanency, safety, and well-being through structured planning, family involvement, and community collaboration.

Tools for Family Engagement and Grievance Review

Child Welfare Services (CWS) uses several tools to engage families and ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities throughout the case planning process. These tools include:

- Parent's Guide to Dependency: Offers parents a detailed overview of the dependency system, including timelines, legal rights, and expectations.
- Placement Grievance Hearing: Provides families with clear steps to address concerns related to a placement or removal of a child into a foster care home.
- Complaint Protocol and Civil Rights Brochures: Ensures families are aware of their rights to equitable treatment and the mechanisms available for reporting concerns.

- Client Satisfaction Survey: Collects feedback from families to assess and improve service delivery.

These tools empower families by fostering transparency and ensuring they have accessible avenues to voice concerns, understand the process, and engage meaningfully in case planning.

General Case Planning and Review

Case planning is a foundational process in Child Welfare Services aimed at ensuring safety, well-being, and permanence for children and families involved in open cases, whether voluntary or court ordered. In the County of San Luis Obispo, case plans serve as a roadmap that outlines actionable steps and accessible services for families, developed collaboratively by social workers and families. These plans are customized to address individual family needs, engage all participants, and include concurrent planning for long-term solutions. Social Workers utilize tools like the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to inform plans, ensuring they are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based). Case plans are revisited at least every six months to evaluate progress, adjust goals, and ensure alignment with family dynamics and cultural contexts. This approach not only supports families in overcoming challenges but also emphasizes transparency, collaboration, and accountability in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Our county is committed to a collaborative and transparent case planning process that begins with informing parents and guardians of their rights and responsibilities in participation. This is achieved through verbal and written communication at the onset of the case, during team meetings, and throughout ongoing case management activities. In addition to addressing the needs of children and youth, the case plan also identifies and addresses the needs of caregivers, ensuring they have access to supportive services, resources, and parenting education to help maintain stable and nurturing environments. Despite our efforts, barriers remain in case plan engagement, particularly in sustaining consistent participation due to factors such as systemic distrust, mental health issues, and socioeconomic challenges. To address these, we have implemented engagement strategies such as family-centered meetings, trauma-informed practices, and frequent communication to build trust and promote meaningful involvement. Additionally, the county continues to work closely with the Juvenile Court to ensure that case plan objectives and court expectations are aligned, fostering a more unified approach to supporting families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Structured Decision Making

Decision Making (SDM) assessments play a key role in shaping case plans by identifying safety and risk factors, setting clear priorities, and recommending targeted services like mental health support or parenting education. These assessments also track family progress through reassessments, helping determine readiness for case closure or reunification. By involving families in the development of their case plan, SDM fosters collaboration and strengthens relationships between families, social workers, and service providers. These tools are utilized at multiple stages to ensure that decisions are consistent, objective, and informed by evidence. Key components of SDM assessments include:

- **Safety Assessment:** Conducted at the initial investigation of a referral to identify immediate threats to a child's safety and determine whether removal or other protective actions are required.
- **Risk Assessment:** Evaluates the likelihood of future maltreatment to inform and guide the services and supports a family may need to prevent future harm from occurring to a child. This helps in tailoring the intensity of interventions to family needs.

- **Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA):** Facilitates an in-depth understanding of family dynamics, pinpointing areas requiring support and interventions to achieve reunification or other permanency goals.
- **Reassessment Tools:** Periodically applied to measure progress and recalibrate the case plan as needed, ensuring responsiveness to changing family circumstances.

Linkages and Coordinated Case Plans

When families receive assistance from both Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Participant Services (CalWORKs), their cases are linked through the Linkages program. A team comprising of social workers, employment resource specialist (ERS), and other relevant service providers collaborate with the family to develop a coordinated case plan. This plan integrates the requirements of CWS and Welfare-to-Work case plans, preventing duplication of services and providing families with a unified and clear set of goals. Coordinated case plans align expectations, services, support, and timelines across programs, reducing conflicts and enhancing the family's ability to succeed in meeting their goals.

Team-Based Models and Collaborative Meetings

Child Welfare Services utilizes several team-based models to enhance case planning and ensure comprehensive support for families and youth. These include Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE) meetings, initial and follow-up Wraparound Services meetings, child and family team (CFT) meetings, and concurrent planning meetings.

During these collaborative meetings, case plans are reviewed, assessed, and updated. The involvement of families and community partners ensures that plans remain relevant and focused on addressing safety concerns, reducing risks, and promoting long-term stability. This inclusive approach strengthens the relationship between families, service providers, and social workers while ensuring timely and appropriate interventions.

Case Plan Monitoring and Supervision

Social Workers receive training in collaborative case planning and have access to a comprehensive Case Planning Policy & Procedure Guide for reference. To track case plan progress, social workers utilize the case deadlines report, which provides details on case plan due dates, goal dates, and pending renewals. They also rely on SafeMeasures to monitor caseloads and identify when plans are due, missing, or expired.

Supervisors and managers have access to additional tools, such as the Monthly Measures Reports and archived SafeMeasures data, to track performance at the individual, unit, or agency level. These reports enable supervisors to identify patterns and trends, ensuring timely and consistent case planning. Newly hired social workers' cases are reviewed weekly, while experienced workers undergo monthly reviews as they gain proficiency. Social workers meet monthly with the parents to discuss their case plan progress and to address both compliance and non-compliance, so the parents always know how they are doing and what still needs to be completed.

Case Presentation and Internal Staffing

Child Welfare Services offers multiple opportunities for case presentation and review, enabling social workers to address challenges and access guidance from peers and supervisors. Common forums for review include:

- **Family Centered Teaming Sessions:** Staff are strongly encouraged to attend these monthly peer-to-peer support sessions and work through case specific needs, such as Harm and Worry

statements, safety plans, safety goals, tips and tricks for working out in the field, etc. Non-case carrying staff are encouraged to come to provide support to their peers.

- Unit Meetings: Monthly meetings where social workers present challenging cases for peer and supervisor input.
- Regional Case Staffing: For linked cases involving Participant Services staff, supervisors, and managers.

Interagency Placement Committee (IPC)

The Interagency Placement Committee is a multi-agency team that includes managers from Child Welfare Services, Probation, Mental Health Services, education, and community-based organizations providing Wraparound Services, crisis stabilization, and Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs). The IPC ensures that placement decisions prioritize the least restrictive, most family-like settings close to the parent's home, in compliance with Senate Bill 969 requirements while ensuring all lower-level services have been accessed (TBS, Katie A) prior to approving a higher level of care. Options such as Wraparound home-based services and family reunification supports are carefully considered to meet the child's unique needs.

Referrals to Service Providers

Our department places the utmost priority on confidentiality as a foundational principle of our work, ensuring that all information sharing complies with legal, ethical, and procedural standards. To facilitate secure and appropriate communication among authorized agencies, we use the Form 815 Multi-Agency Referral and Client Release of Information, which must be completed for all referrals within Child Welfare Services (CWS). This critical document serves as legal authorization to exchange client information while upholding strict confidentiality protections. The Form 815 includes multiple sections designed to ensure compliance, such as authorization pages, a fax cover page, and a re-disclosure addendum for drug and alcohol treatment information, if applicable. Clients have the right to revoke or modify their consent at any time, ensuring they retain control over their information.

The County of San Luis Obispo uses Form 815 to eliminate communication barriers between agencies, enabling effective collaboration among Child Welfare Services (CWS), Behavioral Health, and other service providers. In addition to the form, a joint database facilitates seamless communication and coordination of Behavioral Health services. Social workers use this database to complete assessments, which are reviewed by Behavioral Health staff to confirm eligibility and determine appropriate services. Behavioral Health interventions may include individual therapy, family therapy, case management, or medication management, with family therapy tailored to involve birth parents in reunification services, resource families providing temporary care, or families ensuring permanency through guardianship or adoption. The database also tracks eligibility, identifies missing assessments, and generates data to monitor and improve service delivery.

Staff are trained to verify the validity of all releases prior to any information exchange, ensuring compliance with confidentiality protocols. Managers from both CWS and Behavioral Health meet regularly to review data trends, identify areas for improvement, and refine processes to better serve individuals and families. By using the Form 815, leveraging technology, and fostering cross-agency collaboration, our department ensures the secure handling of sensitive information, maintains client trust, and supports the effective delivery of services.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Our county also maintains partnerships with CASA to support children and families more holistically. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteers play a vital role in advocating for the best

interests of children in the court system, particularly those who may not have consistent adult support or whose voices may be overlooked in complex legal proceedings. Youth are typically referred to CASA by the Juvenile Court, often when there are concerns about long-term permanency, complex family dynamics, or when additional advocacy is needed to ensure their needs are being met. Once assigned, CASA volunteers build relationships with the child, gather information from various parties involved in the case, and provide the court with objective recommendations focused on the child's well-being. CASA volunteers are invited to participate in Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings to provide valuable insight, advocate for the child's needs, and support collaborative case planning efforts. The presence of a CASA has been shown to improve outcomes for youth by promoting stability, supporting educational success, and helping to ensure timely permanency. We are working to strengthen this partnership through regular communication, shared training opportunities, and improved information-sharing protocols to ensure consistency in support and advocacy. Additionally, we are exploring ways to increase CASA volunteer engagement for older youth and youth in congregate care, recognizing the unique value of having a dedicated adult advocate throughout their time in care.

Family Treatment Court

Family Treatment Court (FTC) supports families involved in dependency proceedings where substance use or co-occurring disorders are significant barriers to reunification and long-term family stability. The Department of Social Services, in collaboration with Drug and Alcohol Services and the dependency court, works closely with families through the FTC program to provide intensive, coordinated, and trauma-informed services that address the root causes of substance use and its impact on parenting.

FTC offers a structured, phased approach that includes frequent court check-ins, drug testing, case management, recovery support services, and parenting education. For participating families, FTC creates a supportive environment that promotes accountability while encouraging progress and personal growth. The program is designed to help parents enhance their parenting skills, maintain child safety, and establish a stable, recovery-oriented lifestyle. When appropriate, participants are also connected with additional county and community-based resources such as mental health services, housing assistance, employment programs, and child development supports to promote holistic family well-being and long-term self-sufficiency.

FTC has proven to be a valuable collaborative model in San Luis Obispo County, offering a path toward reunification that prioritizes the needs of both children and parents. Ongoing coordination among child welfare, behavioral health, the courts, and other stakeholders ensures that services are responsive, integrated, and focused on supporting positive outcomes for families.

Tribal Court

While we do not currently have formal tribal court collaboration, we recognize the importance of honoring tribal sovereignty and are committed to building and sustaining meaningful relationships with local tribes. This includes identifying opportunities to consult with tribal representatives, inviting participation in case planning and team meetings when applicable, and seeking culturally responsive solutions that align with ICWA requirements. When applicable, we will coordinate with tribal courts in cases involving Indian children. The court must transfer a case to tribal court if the child is a ward of a tribal court, lives on a reservation, or if the tribe has exclusive jurisdiction. In cases where the child does not live on a reservation or is not a ward of tribal court, the court may still transfer the case to tribal court if the tribe requests it, neither parent objects, and the court does not find good reason to deny the request. Tribes can request a transfer at any stage of the proceedings. Transfers may be

denied if one or both parents object, if a child who is 12 or older objects, if the tribe declines the transfer, if there is no tribal court available, or if there is good cause such as hardship or delay.

Dual-Jurisdiction Youth

For dual jurisdiction youth, we follow established protocols to coordinate with Probation, ensuring that both systems work collaboratively to meet the youth's needs, avoid duplication of efforts, and provide cohesive, supportive services. We continue to explore opportunities to improve communication and outcomes across systems, including ongoing efforts to enhance the relationship between Child Welfare and the Juvenile Court through joint trainings, regular multidisciplinary meetings, and the development of shared outcome goals. These collaborative efforts are aimed at creating a more integrated, responsive, and equitable system of care for children, youth, and families.

Probation

Juvenile Probation case reviews are conducted by Child Welfare Services (CWS). When a Juvenile Probation foster care case is selected for review, a CWS Social Worker is invited to the Probation Department to review the youth's Probation file and are granted access to the Probation Department's digital case management system, Monitor.

Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) and Division 31 of the Child Welfare Services Manual of Policies and Procedures outline case plan requirements, including content and timeframes, for youth in foster care. The use of case plans is evidence based as well as best practice.

After a petition is filed and report is ordered by the court, the assigned Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) creates the youth's initial case plan with the youth and the youth's family after completing a Youth Level of Service – Case Management Inventory (YLS-CMI) risk assessment and a Youth and Family Assessment (YFA).

Case plans are expected to include the following: Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time limited (SMART) objectives, services to be provided to the youth/family, dosage and duration of services, responsibilities of parent/guardian and assigned DPO, responsivity issues (barriers to intervention), planned level of contact by the DPO, signatures of the youth, parent, DPO, and their supervisor (SDPO), and projected date for completion of case plan objectives.

Placement case plans are to be completed either within 60 days of the date of the youth's removal from their home (e.g., date of arrest resulting in foster care placement) or within 30 days of the date the youth entered foster care.

Resource Family Approval, Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Foster parent recruitment in San Luis Obispo County is a collaborative effort led by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to build a diverse network of resource families committed to providing safe, stable, and nurturing homes for children in need. Recruitment strategies emphasize community outreach, education, and partnerships with local organizations and community partners to raise awareness about the critical role foster parents play in the child welfare system.

Efforts focus on engaging individuals and families from various backgrounds to ensure placements reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community. Recruitment campaigns highlight the importance of keeping children connected to their schools, neighborhoods, and support networks. The recruitment process includes informational sessions for unmatched applicants, targeted media

campaigns, and ongoing collaboration with existing foster parents, who often serve as ambassadors for the program.

The department holds monthly meetings dedicated to reviewing and refining recruitment goals and strategies, as well as addressing retention efforts to ensure that resource families are supported throughout their journey. These meetings focus on evaluating the effectiveness of current recruitment initiatives, identifying potential areas for improvement, and ensuring that our strategies align with the principles of the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI). By aligning recruitment with QPI, the department emphasizes the importance of engaging and retaining resource families who are committed to providing stable, nurturing environments for children in care. Additionally, these meetings foster collaboration among various stakeholders, including staff, resource parents, and community partners, to share insights and best practices for improving both recruitment and retention outcomes. The department remains proactive in adapting its approach to meet the evolving needs of both resource families and the children they care for, ensuring a consistent focus on quality caregiving and long-term family stability.

Faith-Based Recruitment: This collaborative initiative actively engages local faith-based communities across San Luis Obispo County to address the needs of youth and families affected by abuse and neglect. Recognizing the unique qualities of each faith community, many are inspired to provide care and support to children and families involved in the foster care system. Our faith-based communities play a critical role in recruiting potential resource and adoptive homes for children and youth in foster care, while simultaneously fostering a robust support network for the families caring for these children.

School-Based Recruitment: School-based recruitment in San Luis Obispo County is a key component of our foster care recruitment strategy, leveraging the strong connections schools have within the community. We collaborate closely with local school sites, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and district administration to raise awareness about the need for resource families and encourage community involvement. Through this partnership, we host informational sessions, distribute recruitment materials, and engage with educators and parents to highlight the importance of fostering and its impact on children in care. By tapping into the school community, we not only increase visibility for the foster care program but also foster a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of children. This collaboration ensures that recruitment efforts are targeted, relatable, and effective, reaching families who may be open to becoming resource parents while also strengthening the support network for those already fostering.

SLOFosterCare.com: The SLOFosterCare.com website was developed to support foster care recruitment and retention efforts in San Luis Obispo County. Designed as a comprehensive resource hub, the site serves the needs of birth parents, resource parents, youth in care, and community partners. It provides valuable information and guidance to resource families, offering tools and support to ensure their success and well-being. For birth parents, the website includes resources aimed at promoting reunification and family engagement. Additionally, it offers resources for youth in care to help them navigate their journey while fostering connections with community partners to build a strong network of support. Through this collaborative platform, SLOFosterCare.com plays a crucial role in strengthening the local foster care system, promoting positive outcomes for children and families.

Tri-County Recruitment Collaborative (TCRC): In partnership with Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, the County of SLO Department of Social Services (DSS) collaborates quarterly to strengthen foster care recruitment and retention efforts. This ongoing collaboration brings together key stakeholders from each county to discuss and share best practices for resource-family recruitment,

training, family finding, and retention strategies. By aligning efforts, the three counties can pool resources, exchange successful initiatives, and create more comprehensive, region-wide strategies that address common challenges. This cooperative approach fosters a unified voice in community outreach, amplifying recruitment campaigns and ensuring a broader reach across the region.

The benefits of this collaboration are significant, as it allows for the development of joint training programs, provides consistent support for resource families across county lines, and facilitates the sharing of valuable insights on how to better engage prospective resource families. Additionally, the collaborative efforts in family finding and retention ensure that resource parents receive the necessary tools, support, and recognition to continue their vital roles in the child welfare system. Ultimately, this partnership enhances the overall foster care system by creating a more interconnected network of resources and increasing the availability of stable, loving homes for children in care.

Resource Family Approval (RFA)

Resource Family Approval (RFA) plays a vital role in the lives of children placed in out-of-home care. When a child's safety requires placement outside the home, Child Welfare Services (CWS) prioritizes identifying, evaluating, and considering relatives, family friends, and others closely tied to the child as the first placement option. If a relative or close adult cannot be located, CWS works to place the child with an already approved resource family who can help maintain the child's connection to their community and culture. Resource families collaborate closely with social workers and the child's biological family to work toward reunification.

RFA ensures that all families who wish to provide care for dependent youth are evaluated as potential adoptive homes. Adoption through RFA is pursued only when the Court determines that the child needs permanency and both the family and DSS agree that adoption is in the child's best interest. As part of the RFA process, all families providing care for children in out-of-home placements are required to complete a comprehensive background check, pre-approval Resource Family Training (RFT), and extensive family study. Criminal record clearances are completed through both the California Department of Justice and the FBI, and any criminal history is carefully reviewed to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, prioritizing child safety. DSS has internal protocols in place to monitor background clearances and ensure that no placements proceed without the appropriate approvals in place. Additionally, RFA Social Workers use an internal database to track requirements and progress to ensure homes are compliant with Resource Family Approval standards.

RFT, which requires 23 hours of preservice training, is designed to strengthen resource parents by providing a framework for understanding how to work with the Department of Social Services (DSS), care for children who have experienced trauma, and better meet the needs of vulnerable children in care. This training helps increase stability, improve caregiver satisfaction, and supports a smoother transition to permanency. The benefits of RFA have been evident, with a reduction in complaints from relative homes, increased engagement with relative families, and enhanced short-term placement stability. RFA aligns with the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), facilitating open discussions about permanency and commitment, both from the caregiver to the child and from the County to the family. Additionally, RFA strengthens QPI by integrating caregivers as professional members of the child's team.

To support timely permanency, San Luis Obispo County actively uses cross-jurisdictional resources, including communication with other counties and states through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), to identify appropriate permanent homes for youth. These collaborative

efforts ensure that children in care have timely access to stable, permanent placements regardless of jurisdiction.

Retention

Family Support Unit: The family support unit is integrated into our placement and intake unit, and includes one Supervisor, one Social Worker and one Social Worker Aide. The unit works closely with resource parents to address their immediate and ongoing needs. In addition to the foster support unit, our staff development unit responsible for retention helps to support the ongoing needs of youth and families. The Staff Development unit includes one Program Manager, three Program Review Specialists and one Contractor. This unit is responsible for planning and executing our monthly foster youth enrichment activities and publishing our Parent Empowerment Newsletter (PEN).

Trauma-Informed Kit: Traumatoolbox.com This website offers a Trauma Toolbox filled with free tools and resources for parents who work with traumatized children. Resource parents are offered the opportunity to learn how to build resilience and regulation after trauma, discover healing strategies, attachment styles, parenting strategies, developmental buckets, and changing negative atmospheres.

Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI): Our department QPI workgroup consists of Child Welfare Services and Probation staff, resource parents, birth parents, youth partners, Court Appointed Special Advocate, and local community stakeholders. The QPI workgroup meets monthly to maintain policies and support that will strengthen foster care, including kinship care. The workgroup's recent goals are to improve relationships with resource parents and to reengage youth to participate with the group

In-Home Parenting Program: Child Welfare Services contracts with a local community-based organization, Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo, to have educators/advocates visit resource families and offer additional parenting education and community-based referrals to other supports and services to reduce placement disruption for children of all ages. Cases are currently referred to using the Form 815 Multi-Agency Referral and Client Release of Information.

Placement Resources

Child Welfare Services (CWS) prioritizes placing most foster children with relatives to support stability and continuity in care. CWS conducts comprehensive research on all available kin to facilitate timely placements, ensuring placements align with each child's unique needs. This includes addressing the needs of children exposed to drugs, those with mental health challenges, or those managing chronic conditions such as diabetes.

CWS collaborates closely with public health nurses and hospitals for youth with special needs to secure the most appropriate placements. This process often includes incorporating hospital discharge plans and providing necessary training for Resource Families. In situations requiring additional support, CWS may partner with agencies like Family Care Network Inc. to arrange in-home counseling assessments. When resources are limited, the management team steps in to collaborate with FCNI or Probation to develop tailored plans, such as utilizing Therapeutic Behavioral Services.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) supports placement success by assigning a dedicated staff member to contact newly placed homes within 24 hours to address any immediate concerns. Additionally, DSS distributes placement review surveys at 90 days post-placement and after placement ends to gather feedback and identify trends for continuous improvement.

Recently, concerns have emerged among Emergency Response Social Workers regarding challenges in securing placements for young sibling groups. Despite concerted efforts, these children may

sometimes be placed separately, outside of relative care, or away from their home communities. While CWS strives to prioritize relative placements within a child's home community, the availability of suitable relatives remains a limiting factor.

Placement Collaboration with Local Tribes

County of San Luis Obispo currently has no federally recognized tribes or local Indian Custodian placement options. When a child falls under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) through a federally recognized tribe outside the county, the Department of Social Services (DSS) collaborates closely with the tribe to determine the most appropriate placement for the child. The tribe may request that DSS place the child in the least restrictive environment that closely resembles a family setting, is in proximity to the child's home, and meets the child's special needs.

The social worker conducts a formal assessment and prioritizes placement options as follows:

1. A member of the Indian child's extended family.
2. An approved resource home.
3. A tribally approved home (TAH) or one approved by an authorized non-Indian licensing authority.
4. An institution approved by an Indian tribe with a program suited to meet the child's needs.

Placement preferences of the child and parents are also considered during the decision-making process. DSS remains committed to collaborating with local tribes and adhering to these placement preferences to fulfill the legal requirements of ICWA.

Probation

Probation partners with the CWS in the Resource Family Approval process, and Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) efforts, as previously referenced under Placement Initiatives.

Staff, Caregiver and Service Provider Training

Child Welfare Services - Staff /Service Providers Training

The County of San Luis Obispo provides extensive training to its social workers and service providers. Every year, social workers and supervisors are required to complete 20 hours of training, 6 of which must align with Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) categories. These programs ensure compliance with state and federal mandates, promote the adoption of best practices, and enhance skills to meet the diverse needs of children and families. Supervisors in San Luis Obispo County play a critical role in maintaining oversight of daily social work practice and ensuring accountability to both policy and best practice standards. Oversight is provided through a combination of direct supervision, case consultation, field coaching, and regular review of documentation. Supervisors monitor daily skills demonstrated by staff such as engagement with families, timely case contacts, quality of documentation, assessment of safety and risk, and effective case planning. In addition to qualitative supervision, SafeMeasures is used as a key tool to track compliance with key performance indicators, including timeliness of referrals, investigations, case plans, and contacts. SafeMeasures reports are reviewed regularly by supervisors to identify trends, support staff in meeting deadlines, and provide targeted coaching where improvement is needed. These data-informed discussions occur in supervision meetings and during unit team meetings, allowing supervisors to celebrate achievements,

address barriers, and ensure consistency across staff performance. This dual approach—combining observational oversight with data analytics—ensures that staff receive the support they need to grow professionally while maintaining high standards of service delivery and improving outcomes for children and families.

A new Field-Based Trainer (FBT) position was established in September 2024 designed to support social workers and supervisors in enhancing their proficiency in child welfare practices. Focusing on support, training, and collaboration, the FBT helps staff through self-reflection, skill development, and goal setting without participating in performance evaluations or case-specific decisions. The FBT provides practical assistance, including court preparation, documentation accuracy, engagement strategies, handling challenging conversations, and implementing tools like Structured Decision-Making (SDM) and Motivational Interviewing (MI). Accessed via a referral process, the FBT schedules tailored training sessions and shares follow-up resources with staff and their supervisors. The role aims to promote best practices, ensure consistency across Child Welfare Services (CWS) units, boost job satisfaction, retain staff, and foster professional growth.

This section outlines DSS's capacity to deliver and monitor training programs, addressing mandatory and specialized training requirements:

Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM)

The Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) serves as a foundational framework in San Luis Obispo County, guiding how Child Welfare staff and service providers engage with children, youth, and families across systems. By emphasizing values such as family voice and choice, teaming, and culturally responsive practice, the ICPM supports a holistic and coordinated approach to service delivery. A key element of the model is its focus on identifying and addressing emotional trauma. Staff are trained to recognize the signs of trauma and its impact on behavior, development, and family functioning. Through the use of trauma screening tools, Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, and collaborative planning with behavioral health and community partners, the ICPM helps ensure that emotional trauma is not only identified early but addressed with appropriate, trauma-informed interventions. This shared framework enhances communication between providers, aligns goals across systems, and ensures that care is centered on healing and long-term well-being. By embedding trauma-informed practices within the ICPM, San Luis Obispo County continues to strengthen the support network for children and families, ultimately leading to more effective, compassionate, and sustainable outcomes.

Completion of California Common Core Training

All Child Welfare Services (CWS) social workers complete the California Common Core Training within their first two years of employment, as mandated by CDSS. Training begins during induction and progresses through a structured curriculum monitored by the training program manager (PM). The PM ensures staff meet deadlines and tracks completion using the Training Management System Database. Quarterly reports are generated by supervisors to monitor staff compliance, while twice per year updates highlight progress across cohorts. In 2024, two cohorts (February and June) graduated with six staff completing induction, and five remaining in employment. A new cohort will begin in January 2025 with eight staff, with recruitment underway for additional hires in spring 2025.

Mandatory Training Requirements

The department enforces strict adherence to mandatory training requirements for all staff, tracked through a robust reporting system:

- **Annual Training Requirements:** Social workers and supervisors must complete 20 hours of annual training, including six hours focused on the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM). In

Fiscal Year 2023–2024, all staff met this requirement, except for one ICPM component addressed through a corrective action plan. Family Engagement was the ICPM focus for 2024, with all staff completing a Father Engagement Skills Lab.

- **Recurring Trainings:** These include Child Passenger Safety (annual), CPR/First Aid (twice per year), Defensive Driver Training (every four years), and After-Hours Training (annual).
- **Specialized Trainings:** DSS introduced modules like the Cool Aunt Series and Linkages as one-time mandatory training in 2024.

Safety Organized Practice (SOP) Integration

The completion of SOP modules in 2023 marked the transition from introducing SOP concepts to embedding them into practice. Key components include:

- **Family-Centered Teaming Sessions:** Held monthly to reinforce SOP skills through peer collaboration and case staffing, with an average of 19–25 participants per session.
- **SOP 101 and SOP 102 Training:** SOP 101 is provided during induction, while SOP 102 follows approximately 4–6 months later. These sequential trainings help new staff integrate SOP principles into daily practice.
- **Community SOP Training:** Twice per year training sessions are offered to community partners, focusing on SOP fundamentals and collaborative practices. Each session averages 20–30 participants.

Specialized and Elective Trainings

The department offers a variety of specialized and elective trainings to meet staff development needs:

- **Motivational Interviewing:** A focused training module aimed at enhancing staff communication and engagement skills.
- **Legal Education:** Providing staff with a comprehensive understanding of legal requirements and their practical application.
- **Mandated Reporter Training:** This training, offered every two months, ensures compliance with state laws and includes content on federal regulations, reporting processes, signs of abuse, and community resources. Attendance averages 50–85 participants, including community partners.

Training for Underserved Populations

The department prioritizes cultural competence and inclusivity in its training efforts:

- **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Training:** Supporting staff and caregivers in addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth.
- **Options for Recovery:** Monthly sessions for resource parents caring for children with special medical needs.
- **Human Trafficking:** Ensuring all new staff receive training on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Labor Trafficking during induction.

Monitoring and Reporting

The department maintains a robust tracking system to ensure compliance and accountability. The Staff Development team provides monthly reports to supervisors and managers, detailing the status of mandatory training completion. This system has improved accountability and ensured all staff meet their 20-hour training requirement every fiscal year.

Service Provider and Community Training

The department collaborates with community partners and service providers to align practices and strengthen support networks:

- **Mandated Reporter Training for Community Partners:** This training is provided every other month offering to introduce reporting laws and processes.
- **Community SOP Training:** Twice per year sessions introducing SOP principles to foster collaboration.
- **Other Specialized Events:** These include annual conferences, wellness fairs, and training sessions tailored to emerging needs, such as placement stability and adolescent development.

Probation

All Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) are required to complete a Probation Officer Core course within their first year as a DPO. The course is certified by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BCSS) and includes 196 hours of instruction in specific performance/instructional objectives.

DPOs assigned to the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services Unit are also required to complete an additional 51 hours of Juvenile Placement Core within the first two years of being assigned to the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services Unit. Juvenile Placement Core was developed to be consistent with the flow of the placement process once a youth is ordered into a foster care placement all the way through case closure, including information about extended foster care and all Division 31 requirements. Juvenile Placement Core meets the California Department of Social Services (DSS) training requirements for placement staff. DPOs assigned to the Juvenile Placement and Commitment Services Unit are also required to complete an Introduction to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Child (CSEC) 101 and 102 training, and a Child Welfare Services / Case Management Services (CWS/CMS) New User Training.

Caregivers Training

Juvenile Probation partners with Child Welfare Services which provides comprehensive training programs for resource families to ensure they meet state and county requirements, enhance caregiving skills, and address the diverse needs of children in their care. Resource families are required to complete 23 hours of preservice training and at least 8 hours of ongoing training annually. Additionally, families must maintain current certification in Adult, Child, and Infant CPR and First Aid, which must be renewed every two years. All RFT trainings and components are virtual. As San Luis Obispo County has a wide distance between cities, having training virtually, has allowed more families to complete their training classes timely.

Specialized programs are available for caregivers in specific roles, such as Options for Recovery (OFR) homes. These homes have additional training requirements tailored to the unique needs of the children they serve, such as caring for infants exposed to drugs or, alcohol, or has HIV. Training topics are diverse and include trauma-informed practices, positive discipline, substance exposure care, and cultural competency

As part of the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process, families must complete a series of Resource Family Trainings (RFT), which include: (all remaining classes are required for unmatched and matched homes)

1. **Informational Meeting:** This session is held for unmatched families who are interested in finding out what it entails to become a resource home. Offered two times a month on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 6:00-9:00pm.
2. **RFT Orientation:** This session is required for all unmatched and matched homes. This is the first class with the basics of what to expect for the RFT series along with the rule and decorum for the class participation. This session is offered twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 6:00-9:00pm.
3. **RFT #1:** This session is a Saturday class from 9:00am-4:00pm. The morning session includes RFA requirements, life of a case, court process. The afternoon session includes mandated reporter training, self-care, trauma informed practice.
4. **RFT #2:** This session is a Trust-based Relational Intervention (TBRI 1) which is held on Thursday nights, from 6:00-9:00pm.
5. **RFT #3:** This session is a Saturday class from 9:00am-4:00pm. The morning session covers reunification/visitations. The afternoon session covers Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Training.
6. **RFT #4:** This session is the second TBRI which is held on Thursday nights from 6:00-9:00pm.
7. **RFT #5:** This session is held on Thursday nights from 5:30pm-8:30pm. Includes SB89 Reproductive Health which is provided by the public health nurse and Human Trafficking. It covers both commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and labor trafficking.

Trainings must be completed in the listed order and within 60 days of starting RFT Orientation. Exceptions will be made for families that have emergency placements and need to get through classes quicker. This structured approach equips families with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe and supportive care to children.

The department actively tracks training compliance through its training unit to ensure caregivers meet both initial and ongoing requirements. Accessible options, such as online courses and community partnerships, are provided to support caregivers. These efforts help ensure families are well-prepared to offer safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children.

Service Providers (including those supported by CAPIT, CBCAP or PSSF funds)

The County of SLO does not have dedicated resources or a formal plan for training and technical assistance for community-based service providers and subcontractors. Service providers and subcontractors have access to multiple training resources, including online offerings, web-based training, conferences, and topic-specific meeting presentations. Many organizations have their own internal training programs. Trainings offered to county staff such as Mandated Reporter, Child and Family Team, and Human Trafficking trainings, are also offered to service providers if there are slots available.

CalTrin: Offers training specifically tailored for professionals working in family strengthening and child abuse prevention across California. These trainings are also available to service providers who are not county employees, ensuring access for a broad range of community partners. This includes staff from Family Resource Centers, Child Abuse Prevention Councils, community-based organizations, and other systems dedicated to supporting children and families. CalTrin provides a range of self-paced trainings and recorded webinars on topics such as Comprehensive Prevention Planning, protective factors, and trauma-informed care, all accessible at www.caltrin.org. These resources are widely

distributed through community networks to ensure broad access and support for professionals and service providers.

The Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC): Incorporates the five protective factors as a key component of the Strengthening Families Framework, designed to promote healthy family functioning and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. These factors help families build resilience, strengthen their connections, and provide a safe, nurturing environment for children. The CAPC offers the Bridges to Resilience Conference annually which provides county staff and community partners with in-depth training on trauma-informed care, resilience-building strategies, and effective practices for supporting children and families. Through keynote presentations and breakout sessions, participants gain practical tools and insights to enhance their work in family strengthening, child abuse prevention, and foster community well-being.

Agency Collaboration

Collaboration with Public and Private Agencies

Collaboration with public and private agencies is central to the work of Child Welfare Services (CWS), Juvenile Probation, and Office of Child Abuse Prevention providers in San Luis Obispo County. These partnerships ensure a coordinated and holistic approach to meeting the diverse needs of children, youth, and families across the community.

Community Engagement in the California-Child and Family Service Review (C-CFSR) Process

The C-CFSR process serves as an opportunity to engage the community in efforts to ensure children are safe and cared for in their homes. Regional County Self-Assessment Community Forums were held, involving many participants from various professions, to assess regional needs and identify areas for improvement. Input from these forums guided the development of strategies to address gaps and improve outcomes for children and families.

Collaboration Throughout Case Stages

Child Welfare Services works with community partners at all stages of a child welfare case, from differential response to permanency planning. Juvenile Probation similarly collaborates with schools, behavioral health providers, law enforcement, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to address the needs of justice-involved youth. Both agencies engage in regular outreach efforts, including participation in community events, to educate the public on available services and policies.

Integrated Service Models and Collaborative Efforts

County of San Luis Obispo has implemented and sustained integrated service models to enhance collaboration and family involvement:

Linkages and Differential Response - Coordinated Support for Families: Linkages is a collaborative partnership between Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Participant Services (PS) designed to holistically support families by addressing both child welfare concerns and economic challenges. This coordinated approach ensures that families receive comprehensive services tailored to their unique needs, reducing barriers and promoting long-term stability. Through Linkages, families benefit from integrated case management, where child welfare staff and participant services work together to align goals, streamline service delivery, and reduce duplication. This coordination is particularly impactful for families facing challenges such as domestic violence, mental health needs, or substance abuse, as it connects them to a broad array of services, including prevention programs, treatment options, and financial assistance. Differential Response further enhances this framework by offering

tiered interventions based on a family's level of need, ensuring early engagement and reducing deeper system involvement.

Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings: The Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting process is a cornerstone of family-centered practice in San Luis Obispo County, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and shared decision-making. CFT meetings bring together the child or youth, their family, service providers, and other key support people to create a holistic and strengths-based plan tailored to the family's unique needs. The goal is to ensure that the child or youth remains in a stable, safe, and nurturing environment while addressing challenges effectively. CFT meetings play a critical role in supporting families through all stages of involvement with Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation, from prevention and early intervention to permanency planning. The meetings are designed to give families a voice in the decision-making process, ensuring that plans are culturally appropriate and reflective of their strengths and values.

Outreach - Engaging Families and Building Community Awareness: Outreach is a vital component of San Luis Obispo County's efforts to connect families and youth with available services and resources. Through targeted engagement strategies, the county works to raise awareness about support programs while addressing critical community needs, such as increasing the number of resource family homes.

Engaging Families and Youth: Outreach initiatives aim to educate families and youth about the comprehensive services offered by Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation. These efforts include participation in local events, such as health fairs, school programs, and community gatherings like Farmer's Markets and Kid's Day at the Park. By meeting families where they are, staff build trust and ensure accessibility, providing information on programs such as differential response, Family Urgent Response System (FURS), and mental health services.

Recruiting Resource Families: A critical focus of outreach is raising awareness about the need for more resource family homes. The county hosts informational sessions, community presentations, and resource fairs to recruit families willing to open their homes to children in need. These efforts emphasize the support available to resource families, such as training, respite care, and financial assistance, while addressing common questions and concerns.

Collaborative Efforts: Outreach activities are often conducted in collaboration with community partners, such as the Family Care Network Inc., Seneca Family of Agencies, and Community Action Plan of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO). These partnerships amplify the county's message and ensure a unified approach to engaging families. Additionally, staff work closely with schools, faith-based organizations, and local nonprofits to reach diverse populations and promote culturally inclusive services.

Formalized Partnerships (Contracts and MOUs)

CWS and Probation have developed contracts and MOUs with numerous agencies to coordinate and enhance services:

- **Housing Assistance:** A contract with Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) administers eviction prevention and security deposits.
- **Kinship and Caregiver Support:** A contract with Seneca provides the Family Ties program, supporting relative caregivers.
- **Youth Services:** FCNI supports the Independent Living Program (ILP), empowering foster youth through life skills training and workforce development.

- **Family Preservation:** CAPSLO administers prevention programs such as in-home parenting education, including educating fathers on their roles and importance in children's lives.
- **Mental Health Collaboration:** An MOU with Behavioral Health facilitates integrated case management for individuals needing substance use and mental health treatment services.
- **Emergency Shelter and Adoption Services:** Partnerships with Seneca Family of Agencies and Family Care Network Inc. provide shelter care post adopt services.

Interagency Collaboration and Committees

Child Welfare Services and Probation actively participate in interagency committees and collaborative groups, including:

- Interagency Placement Committee
- Child Death Review Team
- Anti- Human Trafficking Task Force
- Youth Task Force
- Judicial Stakeholders Council
- Child Abuse Prevention Planning Team
- System of Care Interagency Team (SOCIT)

Focus on Inclusion and Culturally Responsive Collaboration

A key area for improvement is strengthening collaboration with non-federally recognized tribes in alignment with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirements. DSS is committed to building trust and enhancing engagement with regional tribes to ensure culturally appropriate practices and improved outcomes for Indigenous families. To support this, the Department of Social Services partnered with UC Davis to provide specialized ICWA training, equipping staff with the skills and knowledge to serve as ICWA specialists. This training enhances the agency's capacity to meet ICWA compliance standards while fostering respectful and culturally sensitive interactions with tribal communities. By prioritizing these efforts, DSS aims to honor tribal sovereignty, preserve cultural connections, and ensure the best outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

DSS has developed many contracts and MOUs with other agencies to coordinate services. For an array of contracts with other agencies please refer to [Contracted Services](#) section.

Probation

The Probation Department also has MOUs with other agencies to coordinate services, including:

- with Behavioral Health to provide medical and mental health services at Juvenile Hall
- with participating agencies in the Services Affirming Family Empowerment System of Care
- with Drug and Alcohol Services regarding the administration of Adult Drug Court
- with the Sheriff's Department regarding involvement in Task Force positions

Service Array

The County of San Luis Obispo offers a comprehensive array of services and programs designed to support the well-being, stability, and growth of individuals, families, and children across the

community. We offer a comprehensive array of services and programs designed to support the well-being, stability, and growth of individuals, families, and children across the community.

The Form 815 Multi-Agency Referral and Client Release of Information is a vital tool used to refer to the families and children we serve to our community partners and service providers. By authorizing the secure exchange of information, the form enables seamless coordination of services tailored to meet the unique needs of each family, ensuring they receive comprehensive support from all available community resources.

Public Assistance Programs

Residents can apply for many of these programs online through BenefitsCal or in person at local Social Services offices. These programs aim to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families facing various challenges, ensuring access to essential services and resources. Eligibility to public assistance services differs by program. There are several public assistance programs available to support residents in need:

CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids): This program provides temporary cash aid and employment services to eligible families with children, aiming to help families achieve self-sufficiency through financial assistance and supportive services. Families receiving CalWORKs are automatically eligible for Medi-Cal benefits and are usually eligible for CalFresh benefits.

CalFresh: Formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, CalFresh offers monthly nutrition benefits to assist low-income individuals and families in purchasing healthy foods. Benefits are provided via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which can be used at participating grocery stores and farmers' markets.

Medi-Cal: This is California's Medicaid program, offering free or low-cost health coverage to eligible individuals and families with limited income. Medi-Cal covers a wide range of medical services, including doctor visits, hospital care, and preventive services. Eligibility is based on income, household size, and other factors.

General Assistance (GA): This program provides temporary cash aid to low-income individuals and families who are not eligible for other cash aid programs. Applications are accepted at any County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services office during business hours.

Homeless Assistance: The CalWORKs Homeless Assistance Program offers temporary and permanent shelter solutions for families who are homeless or facing eviction. This includes payments for security deposits, last month's rent, and utility deposits.

Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI): CAPI provides cash assistance to certain aged, blind, and disabled legal non-citizens who are ineligible for Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) due to their immigration status.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS): IHSS offers services to eligible aged, blind, and disabled individuals, allowing them to remain safely in their own homes. Services may include personal care, housekeeping, and meal preparation.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and assistance with purchasing healthy foods for pregnant women, new mothers, and children under five. Eligibility is based on income and nutritional need.

Senior Home Delivery Program: In partnership with Ride-On Transportation and Wilshire Community Services, the SLO Food Bank offers weekly grocery deliveries to low-income, homebound older adults facing food insecurity in the County.

211 Helpline: Operated by the United Way of San Luis Obispo County, the 211 Helpline is a free, confidential service that connects individuals to local health and human services programs, including housing assistance, food resources, and mental health services. Assistance is available 24/7 via phone, text, and online.

Residents can apply for many of these programs online through BenefitsCal or in person at local Social Services offices. These programs aim to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families facing various challenges, ensuring access to essential services and resources.

Prevention

County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) prioritizes prevention through programs that focus on strengthening families, promoting wellness, and addressing challenges before they escalate, ensuring a healthier and more resilient community. The following prevention services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

Center for Family Strengthening: Provides programs that make positive systemic changes in the lives of families in SLO County through education and advocacy. The Office of Child Abuse Prevention funds of Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBAPP) is used for Promotores.

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO): A non-profit agency that is committed to eliminating poverty by empowering individuals and families to achieve economic self-sufficiency and self-determination through a comprehensive array of community-based programs. CAPSLO uses the Office of Child Abuse Prevention funds of CAPIT and PSSF in addition to other local funding sources to support these programs.

Cool Aunt Series: Is an educational program provided to our social workers and youth to help recognize and prevent human trafficking and exploitation. Through storytelling and survivor mentorship, it teaches participants about risk factors and warning signs while offering tools and resources to stay safe.

Differential Response: Difference Response is a program that has paths 1, 2, and 3 at different levels of emergency response (ER) response. CAPSLO takes path 1 referrals, only one of the three types of referrals. CAPSLO offers in-home parenting and assists the family with concrete support and referrals to local resources in support of Prevention, Family Preservation, and Family Reunification.

DSS Community Outreach: Increases awareness in the community of services and programs available through DSS and Probation. Outreach activities include informational booths at events such as Kid's Day at the Park, Farmer's Markets, and Health Fairs.

Family Resource Centers (FRC): The FRCs are located in Nipomo, Oceano, Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo, Los Osos, Atascadero, and Paso Robles. These centers provide accessible services such as parenting education, financial assistance, counseling referrals, and linkage to public assistance programs. FRCs also facilitate prevention and early intervention efforts, connecting families to vital resources that promote stability and self-sufficiency, while fostering collaboration with community partners to strengthen local support networks.

Family Urgent Response System (FURS): The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a free, 24/7/365 hotline designed to provide immediate, trauma-informed support to current and former foster youth and their caregivers. By calling or texting 1-833-939-3877, individuals can connect with

trained counselors who offer assistance for various challenges, aiming to preserve relationships and prevent placement disruptions. Additionally, local mobile response teams are available to provide in-person support during critical moments, ensuring that help is accessible whenever needed.

Pregnancy and Parenting Support: Provides free services such as pregnancy testing, infant equipment, prenatal vitamins, emergency supplies, diapers, formula, maternity and infant clothing, and other support services.

Preventative Health Grant: Funded by tobacco tax monies which fund local programs to support optimal health, stability, independence and well-being of county residents. Currently, South County SAFE and Paso Robles SAFE sites receive grant money to help fund family advocate positions.

Salvation Army: Provides casework services to men and women for emergency financial assistance, food and nutrition programs, and seasonal services.

Seneca Family of Agencies: Offers trauma-informed care, therapeutic interventions, and wraparound services to support kinship caregivers, foster families, and youth, promoting stability and resilience.

- **Family Ties:** This program provides comprehensive support to relative caregivers, including case management, resource linkage, education, and legal guardianship assistance, aiming to enhance family functioning and ensure a stable, nurturing environment for children and teens.

Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE): A community based, school-linked program designed to bring prevention/early intervention services to children and families throughout SLO County.

Womenades: Various non-profit networks that serve SLO County and donates items, time, and money to meet unmet financial essential needs in the county.

Substance Abuse Services

County of San Luis Obispo provides substance abuse prevention and support services through various initiatives focused on education, counseling, and resources. These efforts aim to promote wellness and address substance use for individuals of all ages. The following services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

Behavioral Health Youth Treatment Program: This program offers individualized substance use treatment and counseling services for youth struggling with addiction, helping them recover and build healthier lifestyles.

County Drug and Alcohol Services (DAS): Offers a variety of services and programs (at multiple locations throughout the county) to help people with drug and alcohol problems, including public walk-in clinics, outpatient treatment, and court-mandated programs.

County Family Treatment Court (FTC): Program for families involved in dependency proceedings and offered to parents who have voluntary family maintenance cases whose primary issues are drug and/or alcohol abuse.

Friday Night Live (FNL): FNL is a youth-led program that promotes leadership, healthy choices, and substance-free activities through community engagement and peer support.

School-Based Prevention Services: These services provide education, workshops, and early intervention strategies within schools to prevent substance use and promote mental health and resilience among students by DAS.

Child/Youth Services

County of San Luis Obispo provides comprehensive child and youth services to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children and teens in our community. The following services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

Aggression Replacement Training: A cognitive-behavioral intervention program to help children and adolescents improve social skill competence and moral reasoning, better manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of SLO County: Offers one-to-one mentoring through community-based and school-based programs, pairing youth with mentors to build confidence, academic success, and life skills.

California Youth Connection (CYC): Giving youth a voice to advocate for improvements in the care and treatment of youth and a chance to shift the stereotype of foster youth to a more positive image of strength, potential, and resilience.

Child Development Resource Center: A nonprofit organization and community program providing child development and therapeutic interventions to strengthen families.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of San Luis Obispo: Advocates for the best interest of abused and neglected children within the court system. CASA recruits, trains, and supervises volunteers who advocate ensuring every child grows up in a safe, nurturing, and permanent home.

Head Start and Early Head Start: Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo provides comprehensive child development programs for children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.

Permanency Planning Services: Focus on achieving stable and lasting living arrangements for children in the foster care system. This includes working toward reunification with birth families, adoption, guardianship, or placement with relatives whenever possible. Services typically involve:

- **Family Reunification Efforts:** Providing support and resources to help families address issues that led to the child's removal, ensuring a safe return.
- **Relative and Kinship Placement:** Prioritizing placements with relatives or kin to maintain family and cultural connections.
- **Adoption Services:** Supporting the legal and emotional processes of adoption for children who cannot return to their birth families.
- **Guardianship Assistance:** Helping relatives and caregivers establish legal guardianship as a permanent solution.
- **Concurrent Planning:** Developing alternative permanency plans alongside reunification efforts to reduce delays if reunification is not possible.

Restorative Partners: Local non-profit agency that consists of local volunteers running a variety of programs in Juvenile Hall. These are just a few of the many programs Restorative Partners offers at

the Juvenile Hall: Alternative to Violence Project, Aggression Replacement Training. Creative Writing, and Substance Use Responsibility Education.

SLO County YMCA: Provides youth programs like after-school care, sports leagues, summer camps, and wellness activities, fostering healthy development and community engagement for all ages.

Thinking for Change: An integrated cognitive behavior change program for Probation youth that includes cognitive restructuring, social skills development, and development of problem-solving skills.

Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC): providing support and services for children and adults with developmental disabilities living in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties so that they may live fully and safely as active and independent members of our community.

Youth Engagement Project (YEP): Empowers current and former foster youth to lead and advocate for systemic improvements in child welfare. The lead youth ambassador for the central region is a SLO county former foster youth who works with policymakers, service providers, and peers to ensure foster youth voices shape policies and practices. YEP focuses on leadership development, policy advocacy, and collaboration, equipping youth with the tools to create meaningful change in the system.

Youth Treatment Program (YTP): A STRTP serving youth who cannot cope with their present living situation and need a different living structure to recover and become stable.

Independent Living Program

The Independent Living Program (ILP) in San Luis Obispo County equips current and former foster youth aged 16-21 with essential life skills, education, and resources to support their transition to independent adulthood.

- **Independent Living Program (ILP):** Child Welfare Services partnered with Family Care Network Inc. to provide ILP and permanency services to both CWS and Juvenile Probation youth.
- **Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Achievers Program:** Provides financial assistance and personalized guidance to foster youth, enhancing their post-high school academic and career opportunities to empower them in achieving their career goals.

Medical Services

County of San Luis Obispo offers a comprehensive array of medical services to meet the diverse needs of its residents:

Arroyo Grande Community Hospital: Provides acute care services in the southern region of the county, including cardiac care, critical care, diagnostic imaging, emergency medicine, obstetrics, and free educational programs.

Community Health Centers (CHC): A nonprofit network providing fully accredited medical, dental, and chiropractic care, as well as health education and specialty care, across multiple county locations.

French Hospital Medical Center (FHMC): Collaborates with local physicians to offer cardiac care, critical care, diagnostic imaging, emergency medicine, and obstetrics, along with several free community and education programs.

Martha's Place Children's Center: Martha's Place specializes in assessing and treating children (birth to age five) with at-risk behaviors, developmental delays, or prenatal substance exposure. Services include mental health and pediatric evaluations, therapy, case management, and medication

management as needed. The center operates year-round during regular business hours, excluding holidays.

Planned Parenthood: Delivers high-quality, affordable health care and sex education for individuals with or without insurance.

Public Health Nurse (PHN): The Department of Social Services contracts with the County Public Health Department for two PHNs to work with children aged 0-18 years.

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center: A 164-bed tertiary acute-care hospital specializing in neurosurgery, high-risk pregnancy, pediatrics, trauma, and neonatal intensive care. It is accredited by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

SLO Noor Foundation: A volunteer-based nonprofit offering high-quality free healthcare, including medical, dental, and vision services to uninsured county residents.

The Center for Health and Prevention: Offers free to low-cost family planning and reproductive/sexual health services to men, women, teens, and undocumented individuals.

Twin Cities Community Hospital: An acute care facility in the northern region, specializing in maternity care, emergency services, surgery, joint replacement, and a broad array of medical, surgical, and outpatient services, complemented by free community and educational programs.

Dental Services

County of San Luis Obispo offers a comprehensive array of dental services to meet the diverse needs of its residents:

Community Health Centers (CHC): Provides dental services at various locations, including Nipomo, Templeton, Oceano, and Santa Maria, accepting Medi-Cal Dental (Denti-Cal) and offering sliding scale fees.

Medi-Cal Dental Providers: A comprehensive list of dental providers accepting Medi-Cal in San Luis Obispo County is available through the county's Public Health Department.

SLO County Oral Health Program: Collaborates with community partners to enhance oral health education and access to dental care, ensuring every child has a primary dentist.

Tolosa Children's Dental Center: A nonprofit clinic serving children from low-income families, with locations in Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo. They accept Denti-Cal and offer sliding scale fees.

Wraparound Services

In the County of San Luis Obispo, Wraparound Services are designed to provide comprehensive, individualized support to children, youth, and families facing complex challenges. The Department of Social Services contracts with two agencies to provide a full range of intensive, clinical, and wellness services to children, youth, and families involved with Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Probation. The goal is to keep children in their homes and communities, reducing the need for out-of-home placements.

- **Seneca Family of Agencies:** Offers intensive wraparound services to children and youth at risk of losing placement or transitioning from high-level care back into home or community environments. Their programs aim to reduce unnecessary psychiatric hospitalizations and keep children with their families.

- **Family Care Network, Inc. (FCNI):** Offers wraparound services to support and work with children/families facing complex challenges. This program is family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven, and solutions-focused, integrating a family's unique culture into their individualized treatment plan.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health Providers in San Luis Obispo County offer a range of services to address various mental health needs. These providers collaborate to deliver a continuum of care, ensuring that residents have access to the mental health services and support they need. The following mental health services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

County Behavioral Health Department: Provides adult and youth mental health services, including screening, assessment, treatment planning, psychotherapy, medication services, and case management. They also offer specialized programs like the Adult Full-Service Partnership (FSP) and Homeless Outreach Full-Service Partnership, which deliver intensive, community-based wraparound services to support recovery and independent living.

Martha's Place: serves as a children's assessment center for SLO County. The Center provides assessments and treatment for children entering dependency and/or at high-risk for health and mental health problems.

Private Practitioners: Numerous licensed therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists operate within the county, providing individual, group, and family therapy, as well as medication management. Resources like Psychology Today offer directories to help individuals find local mental health professionals.

Sierra Mental Wellness Group: Provides mental health counseling to children, adolescents and adults in individual, group, family, and couple modalities. They also provide crisis response services in San Luis Obispo County.

SLO Counseling Service at Cal Poly: This service offers short-term counseling and consultation to San Luis Obispo County residents who do not qualify for Behavioral/Mental Health Services or cannot afford private psychotherapy. Staffed by culturally responsive, well-educated, and trained graduate students under the supervision of licensed psychologists, they provide services to children, youth, families, individuals, and couples.

Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA): A non-profit organization serving San Luis Obispo and North Santa Barbara Counties, TMHA is dedicated to eliminating stigma and promoting recovery and wellness for people with mental illness through work, housing, community, and family support services.

Parenting Class

County of San Luis Obispo offers a variety of parenting classes and resources to support families. These organizations are dedicated to strengthening families by providing accessible and comprehensive parenting education and support services throughout San Luis Obispo County. The following parenting services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

Center for Family Strengthening: Offers programs aimed at helping families thrive, including parent education and support services. They manage the countywide delivery of parent education and

coaching services and maintain a web-based family resource center with a current list of parenting classes and support services.

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO): offers family-focused services in collaboration with Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation to support children at risk of abuse and neglect. These services are part of the Differential Response system and the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) initiatives, aimed at promoting family preservation and providing parent education. County-wide prevention efforts include in-home parenting education, Parent Cafés, and direct services, all available in both English and Spanish to ensure accessibility for diverse families.

First 5 SLO County: Funds parent participation classes focusing on early childhood development and parenting skills. These classes are designed to support parents in nurturing their children's growth and development.

Parent Connection of San Luis Obispo County: Provides workshops, parent coaching, and a monthly newsletter with information on family-friendly events and parenting education. Their classes cover topics such as positive discipline, co-parenting, and child development.

Parents Helping Parents of San Luis Obispo County: Supports families of children with special needs through parent education, mutual support, and referral networks. They offer workshops and trainings to empower caregivers in understanding and advocating for their children's unique needs.

Positive Opportunities for Parenting Success (POPS): Offered by the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO), is an evidence-based initiative designed to empower fathers with the skills and confidence needed to be effective, positive parents and co-parents. The program includes multi-week sessions where dads come together to discuss challenges, brainstorm solutions, and support each other in their parenting journeys. POPS welcomes all fathers, including single dads, expectant fathers, and those who are co-parenting. Workshops are held three to four times a year, with the next session expected to take place this summer.

Intimate Partner Violence

County of San Luis Obispo is dedicated to addressing intimate partner violence through a network of supportive services, collaborative protocols, and resources aimed at ensuring the safety, stability, and well-being of individuals and families impacted by abuse. The following services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

California Victim Witness and Victims of Crime Compensation Program: Supports children and families impacted by violent crimes, including domestic violence. Administered under the District Attorney's Office, the program provides financial assistance and other resources to victims. Child Welfare Services helps connect youth and caregivers with this program, offering guidance on accessing available benefits.

Community-Based Collaborations: San Luis Obispo County emphasizes a collaborative approach to addressing intimate partner violence, partnering with local agencies, schools, and community organizations to deliver trauma-informed, culturally responsive care to survivors and their families.

Domestic Violence Protocol: Child Welfare Services (CWS), in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies, has developed a coordinated protocol to respond to children exposed to domestic abuse. This approach ensures their safety, stability, and connection to necessary resources.

Lumina Alliance: A non-profit organization that provides comprehensive support to individuals affected by sexual and intimate partner violence and addressing domestic violence and child abuse in a culturally sensitive manner. Lumina Alliance welcomes and celebrates people of all genders,

ethnicities, cultures, religions, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and countries of origin. Services are offered in both English and Spanish, with interpreters available for other languages to ensure accessibility for all.

Housing

County of San Luis Obispo offers a range of housing assistance programs to support families and individuals in need:

Bringing Families Home (BFH): This program assists families involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) where homelessness hinders reunification or achieving safety. BFH provides financial assistance and housing-related supportive services, including rental assistance, housing navigation, case management, and help with security deposits and utility payments.

Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO): HASLO offers affordable housing options and manages programs like Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. They also provide the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which helps participants improve their economic situation and reduce dependence on public assistance.

Housing Support Program (HSP): HSP serves eligible families who are homeless and have at least one member receiving CalWORKs benefits in San Luis Obispo County. The program offers services such as temporary and permanent shelter assistance, including payments for security deposits and utility deposits.

Paso Cares: A local nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the immediate and long-term needs of homeless and needy individuals in the Paso Robles area. Paso Cares provides services such as meal programs and collaborates with other organizations to support the homeless community.

People's Self-Help Housing Program: This organization provides services including minor home repairs, special needs rentals, and assistance with homeowner construction, aiming to support low-income families in achieving stable housing.

Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers: Administered by HASLO, FUP vouchers assist families for whom inadequate housing is a primary factor in the imminent placement of their child in out-of-home care, or in delaying the discharge of a child to the family from care. The program also supports eligible youth aged 18 to 24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Homeless Services

County of San Luis Obispo offers a variety of services to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These organizations work collaboratively to address homelessness in San Luis Obispo County, offering essential services and support to help individuals and families achieve stability and self-sufficiency. The following homeless services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

40 Prado Homeless Services Center: Managed by the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO), 40 Prado offers comprehensive services, including food, shelter, counseling, job training, tutoring, healthcare for medically fragile individuals, veteran services, and assistance with finding permanent housing. The center serves approximately 90 to 100 individuals daily.

5Cities Homeless Coalition (5CHC): Serving the southern regions of San Luis Obispo County, from Avila Beach to Nipomo, the Coalition mobilizes resources, fosters hope, and advocates for individuals and families facing homelessness. They collaborate with local agencies to provide comprehensive support services.

El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO): ECHO operates shelters in Atascadero and Paso Robles, providing case management, safe shelter, and meal programs. Their residency program assists residents in securing employment and finding permanent housing within three months.

Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA): Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA) is a nonprofit organization committed to helping individuals recover from mental illness and maintain wellness through community, family, and housing support services. TMHA provides over 40 programs in San Luis Obispo County, including housing services, counseling, and outreach to homeless individuals struggling with mental health challenges. TMHA's programs in Paso Robles and surrounding areas include:

- **HousingNOW:** Assists over 300 individuals annually in obtaining and maintaining stable housing. This program offers rental assistance, housing navigation, and supportive services to help participants achieve housing stability.
- **Homeless Outreach Team (HOT):** Provides direct engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health issues, connecting them to vital services and resources to address their needs.
- **Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program:** Operates transitional housing for individuals with serious mental health or substance use conditions, offering treatment and support to help them stabilize and transition into permanent housing.

Foster Support

County of San Luis Obispo offers a comprehensive array of support services for foster and resource families, aiming to ensure the well-being of children in care and to assist caregivers in providing stable, nurturing environments.

Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Program: This county-optional program provides financial assistance to relative caregivers of non-federally eligible foster children, offering a basic foster care rate to support the child's needs.

Cuesta College Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) Program: This program offers ongoing parenting classes tailored for foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers, focusing on enhancing caregiving skills and addressing the unique challenges associated with foster care.

Family Care Network, Inc. (FCNI): A community-based organization that partners with the county to provide therapeutic foster care services, transitional housing, and support programs aimed at empowering foster youth and resource families.

Foster Support Unit: Designed to provide an additional layer of support for resource parents, this unit responds to requests for information, referrals, resources, and general support, ensuring caregivers have access to necessary assistance.

Options for Recovery: A specialized program that offers recruitment, training, and respite care for resource parents and federally eligible relative or non-relative caregivers. It supports those caring for infants and children (newborn to age 5) who are dependents of Juvenile Court and have been prenatally exposed to alcohol or other drugs or diagnosed as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) positive.

San Luis Obispo County Foster Parent Association: This association provides a platform for foster parents to connect, share resources, and receive support, fostering a community of caregivers dedicated to the well-being of foster children.

Seneca Family of Agencies: Operating in San Luis Obispo County, Seneca offers foster care and adoption services, children's mental health support, and relative caregiver services. They recruit and train resource parents to provide trauma-informed, attachment-based, and culturally competent care for children in the foster system.

Aftercare

In County of San Luis Obispo, aftercare services for youth involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) and the Probation Department are designed to support their transition to independent adulthood and reduce recidivism. Key programs include:

Child and Family Teams (CFT): CFTs are collaborative planning groups that include youth, family members, service providers, and other support people. They work together to assess needs, plan interventions, and monitor progress, ensuring that services are tailored to the youth's and family's unique circumstances.

Extended Foster Care (EFC): This program offers eligible foster and probation youth, aged 18 to 21, voluntary supportive services such as case management, monthly financial stipends, housing assistance, and educational and employment training opportunities. The goal is to provide a safety net as they transition to independence.

Family Resource Centers (FRC): Serve as a valuable aftercare resource for families and youth involved with Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation. FRCs provide ongoing support through services like in-home parenting education, access to community resources, case management, and family counseling. These centers help families maintain stability, strengthen bonds, and prevent the recurrence of issues that may lead to system involvement, ensuring continued growth and success after formal interventions have ended.

Independent Living Program (ILP): Available to current and former foster youth aged 14 to 21, ILP provides resources and support to develop essential life skills. Services include educational support, employment training, financial management, and housing assistance, aiming to prepare youth for successful independent living.

Wraparound Services: These are intensive, individualized care management services for youth and families with complex needs. The program focuses on keeping youth in their homes and communities by providing comprehensive support that addresses emotional, behavioral, and social challenges. Eligibility typically includes youth on court-ordered supervision who meet specific criteria.

Culturally Relevant Services

County of San Luis Obispo offers a variety of culturally responsive services to meet the diverse needs of its residents. The following services are available to individuals at no cost and participants can either self-refer or be referred by our agency.

Catholic Charities: Provides assistance to individuals and families in need, offering services such as emergency financial aid, immigration support, food programs, and counseling, all delivered with cultural sensitivity and respect for faith traditions.

Faith-Based Support through Churches: Many local churches offer outreach programs including food pantries, shelter, spiritual counseling, and community support groups, fostering inclusivity and meeting the spiritual and practical needs of diverse populations.

Family Resource Centers (FRC): These centers offer support services in various languages and are culturally responsive to the needs of individual families. They provide parent-to-parent support, peer

counseling, information and referral, public awareness, parent education, and assistance with transitions from Early Start at age three.

Herencia Indígena: A community organization focused on serving Indigenous migrant populations. They offer culturally sensitive resources, advocacy, and education to support the health, rights, and well-being of Indigenous families in the county.

Latino Outreach Council: This organization serves as a resource network, building bridges between resources and the Latino community. They are committed to supporting and offering community programs and events to educate and raise cultural awareness in the county, enhancing opportunities for the Latino/Hispanic community to participate in county affairs, governance, and the political process.

Latino Outreach Program: This initiative provides culturally appropriate mental health services for Latino adults and youth. Bilingual and bicultural therapists work to increase access to mental health care for monolingual Latinos and to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness and treatment among the Latino population. Services are available at multiple locations throughout the county.

Promotores Collaborative of San Luis Obispo County: This group of trained community health workers connects underserved populations, particularly Latino families, with culturally appropriate health and social services, promoting wellness and access to care. They are supported by Child and Family Strengthening and funded through Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program (CBCAP) funds.

Salinan Tribe: The Salinan Tribe provides cultural and community support, preserving the heritage and traditions of indigenous peoples in the region while advocating for the well-being of tribal members.

Gaps in Services

While San Luis Obispo County offers a wide range of programs and resources to support children and families, several gaps remain that Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Probation aim to address in the upcoming System Improvement Plan (SIP). These gaps often arise not from a lack of available services but rather from barriers to accessing them. Key challenges include readiness and willingness of families and youth to engage with services, transportation limitations (both cost and accessibility for long-distance travel), and coordination and communication issues between Social Workers, service providers, and service recipients.

The following gaps have been identified:

- **Alcohol and Drug Treatment Programs:** While San Luis Obispo County provides various alcohol and drug treatment programs, there is a significant gap in services tailored specifically for youth. Additionally, the absence of a local detox facility means individuals must be referred to out-of-county services, creating additional barriers to care. Furthermore, there is a shortage of sober living environments where fathers can reside and work toward reunifying with their children.
- **Mentorship and Peer Support Programs:** Establishing mentorship and peer support initiatives can play a crucial role in addressing gaps in services for youth, particularly those transitioning out of foster care or struggling with substance abuse. Programs that connect youth with mentors or peers who have faced similar challenges can provide guidance, emotional support, and practical advice. These relationships foster resilience, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging, empowering youth to navigate the complexities of adulthood while

building positive connections within their community. Implementing such programs could enhance the existing service array and address the critical need for supportive, transitional resources.

- **Bilingual and Culturally Responsive Services:** While bilingual and culturally responsive services are available in San Luis Obispo County, they are not equitably distributed or readily accessible across the region. This is particularly true for Indigenous languages such as Mixteco, where additional services are needed to meet the unique linguistic and cultural needs of this community. Enhancing the availability of culturally competent providers is critical to ensuring all families feel supported and understood.

By addressing these gaps, the county can enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and the overall effectiveness of its services, ensuring better outcomes for children, youth, and families across the community.

Discontinued Services and Programs

The Active Supportive Intervention Services for Transition (ASIST) program, introduced by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on June 28, 2019, was initially funded by the state to facilitate youth transitions from residential placements to family-based settings. This program aligned with Assembly Bill 403's vision of prioritizing family-based care while reserving congregate care for short-term therapeutic needs.

Despite the discontinuation of state funding in 2022, the County has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to these critical services by allocating local funds to sustain the program. Partnering with a local Foster Family Agency (FFA), Seneca, the County ensures continued support for youth transitions. This partnership emphasizes maintaining the program's original goals, including reducing reliance on congregate care and fostering culturally responsive, family-centered practices.

Seneca plays a vital role in stabilizing placements by providing each youth with access to a counselor and therapist. While ASIST was initially intended as a step-down support program, the County now primarily uses it for placement stabilization. Once stabilization is achieved, many youths transition to established therapeutic services with Seneca. The County remains dedicated to ensuring that youth in need of permanency receive tailored, supportive interventions, even in the absence of state funding.

Quality Assurance System

Child Welfare Services and Probation employ the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) model and have a wide variety of quality assurance mechanisms that are used to regularly assess and improve how each agency is performing. These mechanisms include various qualitative and quantitative data sources, intra-agency meetings, interagency meetings and collaborative meetings with stakeholders. Below is a summary of these methods of quality assurance:

Both departments utilize the SafeMeasures system for information and compliance monitoring purposes. SafeMeasures provides a variety of data reports that each agency utilizes to monitor monthly caseworker visits, timeliness to investigation, eligibility in the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) surveys, accuracy and completion of data entry in the CWS/CMS system, and emergency information related to impacted disaster areas.

Child Welfare Services

Child Welfare Services (CWS) maintains a comprehensive and data-driven Quality Assurance (QA) system to evaluate the adequacy, effectiveness, and alignment of services across the continuum of care. This system integrates quantitative data, qualitative case reviews, and stakeholder feedback to inform continuous improvement and ensure that services meet federal, state, and local goals. Supervisors and managers use tools such as SafeMeasures, Structured Decision Making (SDM), and California's Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP) data to monitor performance indicators including safety, permanency, and well-being. These tools allow for real-time tracking of case activities, identification of trends, and targeted coaching in areas needing improvement. Performance is reviewed quarterly through cross-departmental CWS Outcomes and Accountability meetings, where findings are used to inform Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plans and training priorities.

DSS also maintains oversight of Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Treatment (CAPIT), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds through structured processes and close collaboration with community providers. DSS uses the Apricot software system to manage and report data to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP). CAPSLO, which oversees CAPIT and PSSF funds, utilizes its Client Services Program, while The Link uses its own Apricot platform to track services and report outcomes. Providers submit detailed reports, which DSS compiles for the annual OCAP report and uses internally to evaluate service effectiveness. DSS hosts quarterly Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE)/OCAP Collaborative meetings with CAPSLO and The Link to review service delivery, fund utilization, address barriers, and ensure alignment with strategic goals. CBCAP funds are monitored through Child and Family Services (CFS), with internal tracking of outcomes, service access, and effectiveness. DSS also conducts an annual site visit with an OCAP analyst to evaluate compliance and program quality. If any funding is found to be underutilized or mismanaged, DSS partners with the provider to implement a corrective action plan to ensure effective service delivery and stewardship of public resources.

Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) is a priority for San Luis Obispo County. ICWA inquiry begins at case intake and continues throughout the life of the case. Supervisors reinforce compliance through case review and QA processes. The County designates ICWA leads, conducts regular training, and ensures tribal participation in case planning and placement decisions. All ICWA determinations, tribal notifications, and placement considerations are thoroughly documented and monitored.

To support children's mental health and trauma-related needs, the County has implemented a coordinated and trauma-informed approach to screening, assessment, and treatment. Children entering foster care are assessed using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool, with referrals made to Behavioral Health or other appropriate services. These needs are addressed collaboratively through the Child and Family Team (CFT) process, ensuring that mental health treatment is timely, appropriate, and aligned with each child's case plan. Public Health Nurses (PHNs) and Behavioral Health partners contribute expertise in medication monitoring and treatment planning, including oversight of psychotropic medication administration through JV-220 reviews, caregiver consultation, and supervision.

Physical health and educational needs are closely monitored through case reviews and collaborative partnerships. PHNs conduct health assessments, track immunizations and well-child visits, and provide medical case management. Social workers and educational liaisons ensure children are enrolled in school, receive necessary assessments, and maintain educational continuity. Children with special needs receive individualized service plans that incorporate support from specialized providers,

educational teams, and mental health professionals. These cases are flagged for enhanced case management, including wraparound services and regional best practice strategies for complex care coordination.

Case planning is documented in CWS/CMS and monitored for quality and timeliness. Families are actively engaged in the case planning process through CFT meetings, home visits, and regular contact with their social worker. Concurrent planning is implemented in all cases receiving reunification services, and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) timelines are tracked and documented, including compelling reasons for delays. Youth age 16 and older have Transitional Independent Living Plans (TILPs) developed and updated every six months, with supportive services in housing, education, employment, and life skills facilitated through the Independent Living Program (ILP).

To address the developmental needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth, the County has implemented age-specific assessment and service delivery practices. For young children, safety assessments consider developmental risk factors, and services such as early intervention referrals, parenting education, and increased visitation are prioritized to support reunification. Foster parent-to-child ratios are monitored to ensure appropriate caregiver capacity, and placement decisions consider each child's level of need and caregiver strengths.

Overall, San Luis Obispo County's QA system and operational policies reflect a unified commitment to trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and data-informed service delivery. By integrating community partnerships, leveraging robust data systems like CCWIP, and maintaining strong oversight of public funds and performance measures, the County continuously works to improve outcomes and ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for all children and families served.

Probation

In addition to utilizing SafeMeasures, as noted above, Juvenile Probation assesses every youth, prior to being recommended for removal, through an internal staffing process. Probation's internal staffing is comprised of the Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) assigned to the case, the DPO's supervisor, the Juvenile Probation Court Officer, two additional Supervising Deputy Probation Officers (SDPO), and the Juvenile Division Chief Deputy Probation Officer (CDPO). During the internal staffing process, each case is reviewed to ensure reasonable efforts have been made, such as providing specialty mental health services or Wraparound services, prior to a recommendation for removal. When removal appears necessary, Probation's internal staffing process will review the appropriate level of care to ensure the least restrictive options are considered, such relative care and home-based foster care.

Probation has implemented several strategies to ensure youth in foster care receive an optimal level of quality services and contacts. Each DPO assigned to the Placement Unit is trained in core practice model elements, such as Child and Family Team Meetings, Safety organized Practice, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Each month, the Placement Unit SDPO conducts case conferences with the DPOs to ensure each youth's safety, permanency, and well-being is discussed during their monthly contacts and that an appropriate level of service is provided to the youth and the youth's family.

The Juvenile Division CDPO and SDPOs also meet bi-monthly to review Juvenile Probation statistics and data points for every youth on Juvenile Probation and to ensure cases are being managed appropriately.

Critical Incident Review Process

Any report of a child fatality or near fatality is handled as a new referral. Information must be communicated by the Chain of Command. For any report of a child fatality/near fatality, an emergency response social worker will go out to investigate as an Immediate Response referral.

On a quarterly basis, the division manager over emergency response participates in the Quarterly Reconciliation Process with California Department of Social Services who sends for review two Excel spreadsheets listing child fatalities and near fatalities. The division manager reviews the spreadsheets sent by CDSS and makes corrections if needed.

For child fatalities, the County of SLO Public Health Department serves as the convening agency for the Child Death Review Team. The meetings are scheduled twice a year. However, since the County has such few fatalities, the meetings are often cancelled if there are no cases to review. The Child Death Review Team is responsible for providing aggregate data to the state regarding child fatalities that occur in SLO County

National Resource Center Training and Technical Assistance

Neither Child Welfare Services (CWS) nor Probation currently utilize the National Resource Center for Training and Technical Assistance. While this resource is available to support training and capacity-building efforts for child welfare systems, the county has developed alternative partnerships and in-house training methods to address local needs. Collaborations with agencies such as UC Davis for ICWA training, along with internal training programs and the use of data systems like SafeMeasures, Business Objects, and SDM, allow the county to maintain a tailored approach to staff development and performance improvement. By focusing on localized strategies and leveraging specific tools, the county ensures that training and technical assistance align directly with the unique challenges and priorities of its community.

Peer Review Results

CWS Focus Area: Recurrence of Maltreatment (S2)

As part of the County Self-Assessment (CSA) and in accordance with the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), San Luis Obispo held its Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) from August 26–29, 2024. Nine peers from seven counties across California participated, including Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Ventura, Merced, Yuba, San Joaquin, and Kings. These counties were selected for their achievements in meeting federal measures relevant to Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation.

The PQCR process included three teams, each consisting of two social workers and one probation officer. The teams reviewed 18 cases in total—12 child welfare referrals and 6 probation cases. Each

case was examined during in-depth interviews with staff, followed by team debriefs to identify themes and opportunities for improvement. Facilitated by Michaela Woodward, with support from CCTA and CDSS, the PQCR culminated in large group debriefings to discuss overarching strengths and challenges associated with the identified outcome measures.

Child Welfare Services (CWS) selected Recurrence of Maltreatment (S2) as the focus outcome measure. This measure reflects the department's commitment to improving safety outcomes for children and reducing the likelihood of repeated maltreatment.

Strengths

- **Workforce Experience:** Many social workers had prior experience in related fields, such as case management or working with children and families, which prepared them for the complexities of child welfare work.
- **Community Collaboration:** Workers effectively collaborated with law enforcement, probation, homeless shelters, and park services to locate families and gather critical information.
- **Proactive Family Engagement:** Social workers consistently exceeded expectations by locating families in challenging environments, including homeless encampments and other non-traditional settings.
- **Cultural Competence and ICWA Inquiry:** Workers inquired about Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) connections during investigations and sought to connect families with appropriate supports.
- **Supportive Resources:** Programs like the Independent Living Program (ILP) and the use of multiple regional offices were highlighted as valuable for supporting families and youth.

Challenges

- **Application of Training:** While workers attended relevant training, they struggled to integrate concepts like Safety Organized Practice (SOP) and Motivational Interviewing (MI) into their practice to mitigate recurrence of maltreatment.
- **Safety Planning Misalignment:** Safety plans often focused on complicating factors, such as substance use or cleanliness of the home, rather than addressing identified safety threats from SDM assessments.
- **Limited Engagement with Fathers:** Efforts were primarily focused on mothers, with limited outreach to fathers and paternal relatives, resulting in missed opportunities for additional family support.
- **Barriers to Accessing Services:** Without an open case, families faced significant delays in accessing services, particularly under Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM). Confusion regarding VFM timelines and processes further limited its effectiveness.
- **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Follow-Up:** Although workers identified ICWA applicability during investigations, there was limited follow-through in reaching out to tribes.

Promising Practices

- **Expand Training:** Offer targeted, practice-focused training on safety planning and family engagement, emphasizing connections to practical application.

- **Strengthen VFM Processes:** Clarify timelines and processes to enhance service delivery and engagement.
- **Improve ICWA Follow-Up:** Develop protocols to ensure tribes are consistently contacted when ICWA applicability is identified.
- **Increase Father Engagement:** Establish strategies and resources to involve fathers and paternal relatives early in investigations to improve family support networks.

Probation Focus Area: Permanency in 12 Months (P2)

As part of the County Self-Assessment (CSA) and the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), Juvenile Probation selected Permanency in 12 Months (P2) as the focus outcome measure for the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR). This measure was chosen to highlight the department's commitment to continuing supportive interventions that ensure timely permanency for youth under probation supervision, while also identifying areas for growth to enhance these efforts further.

The PQCR was conducted from August 26–29, 2024, involving nine peers from seven counties: Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Ventura, Merced, Yuba, San Joaquin, and Kings. These counties were selected for their demonstrated strengths in achieving federal measures relevant to probation and child welfare. Each team consisted of two social workers and one probation officer, with all teams reviewing a mix of child welfare and probation cases. Six probation cases were reviewed, representing a cross-section of age, placement history, and outcomes. Interviews with Probation Officers (POs) and case file reviews were conducted, followed by facilitated discussions to identify themes.

The Peer Review process underscored the dedication of POs to relational and legal permanency and their efforts to engage youth meaningfully in case planning. However, challenges such as placement instability and AWOLing were identified as barriers to achieving permanency goals.

Strengths

- **Long-Term Relationships with Youth:** POs often worked with the same youth for years, fostering trust and consistency.
- **Youth-Centered Planning:** POs consistently engaged youth in case planning, allowing their voice and choice to guide permanency and service decisions.
- **Relational Permanency:** Even when legal permanency was not achieved, POs helped the youth maintain meaningful relationships with supportive individuals identified during the case.
- **Comprehensive Services:** POs connected youth to resources tailored to their needs, including WRAP, Behavioral Health Services, Educational Services, and the Independent Living Program (ILP). ILP was particularly valuable in helping youth achieve independence by securing employment, housing, furniture, and even vehicles.
- **Proactive Placement Efforts:** POs invested time in understanding youth preferences for placements, conducting pre-placement visits, and increasing in-home visits to support placement stability and address challenges.

Challenges

- **Aweing and Placement Instability:** Youth leaving placements without permission disrupted permanency planning and hindered the development of consistent relationships.

- **Reoffending and Detainment:** These factors often led to placement disruptions, creating additional challenges for permanency planning.
- **Engagement with Fathers and Paternal Relatives:** Limited engagement with paternal connections was identified as a missed opportunity to strengthen family support.
- **Communication with Behavioral Health:** Gaps in coordination and communication between probation and behavioral health providers were noted as areas needing improvement.
- **Limited Housing Options for High-Needs Youth:** Youth with sexual offenses or other complex needs faced significant barriers in accessing appropriate placements, despite the creativity and diligence of POs in identifying solutions.

Promising Practices

- **Expand Placement Options:** Increase the availability of therapeutic resource homes and specialized housing resources for youth with complex needs.
- **Enhance Father Engagement:** Develop strategies to involve fathers and paternal relatives earlier in the permanency process to broaden youth support networks.
- **Improve Behavioral Health Collaboration:** Strengthen communication and coordination with behavioral health providers to ensure timely access to services and alignment in case planning.
- **Build on Relational Permanency Efforts:** Continue leveraging relational permanency when legal permanency cannot be achieved, maintaining connections with natural supports identified by youth.

Overall Summary of Peer Review

The 2024 Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) provided valuable insights into the strengths, challenges, and promising practices of County of SLO Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Juvenile Probation. Through a collaborative process involving peer reviewers from seven counties, the PQCR highlighted both departments' commitment to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families, while also identifying areas for growth.

For CWS, the focus on Recurrence of Maltreatment (S2) emphasized the department's efforts to ensure child safety and reduce repeated instances of abuse or neglect. Social workers demonstrated exceptional dedication by engaging families in challenging circumstances, leveraging community partnerships, and utilizing assessment tools like Structured Decision Making (SDM) to guide their work. However, challenges such as aligning safety plans with identified threats, engaging fathers, and navigating Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) processes were identified as areas needing improvement. Promising practices include expanded training for social workers, better Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) follow-up, and strengthening engagement with paternal relatives.

For Juvenile Probation, the focus on Permanency in 12 Months (P2) highlighted the department's dedication to achieving timely, stable placements for youth. Probation Officers (POs) excelled in building long-term relationships with youth, centering their voice and choice in planning, and maintaining connections with supportive adults. However, barriers such as placement instability, limited housing options for high-needs youth, and gaps in communication with behavioral health services hindered progress. Promising practices include enhancing father engagement, increasing placement resources, and improving coordination with behavioral health providers.

Overall, the findings from the Peer Review reaffirm the strengths of CWS and Juvenile Probation staff, including their dedication, creativity, and commitment to youth-centered practices. At the same time, the identified challenges present opportunities for improvement in areas such as training application, engagement strategies, and resource availability. These findings will inform the development of the 2024 System Improvement Plan (SIP), ensuring targeted strategies to address gaps and enhance outcomes for children and families in San Luis Obispo County.

Outcome Data Measures

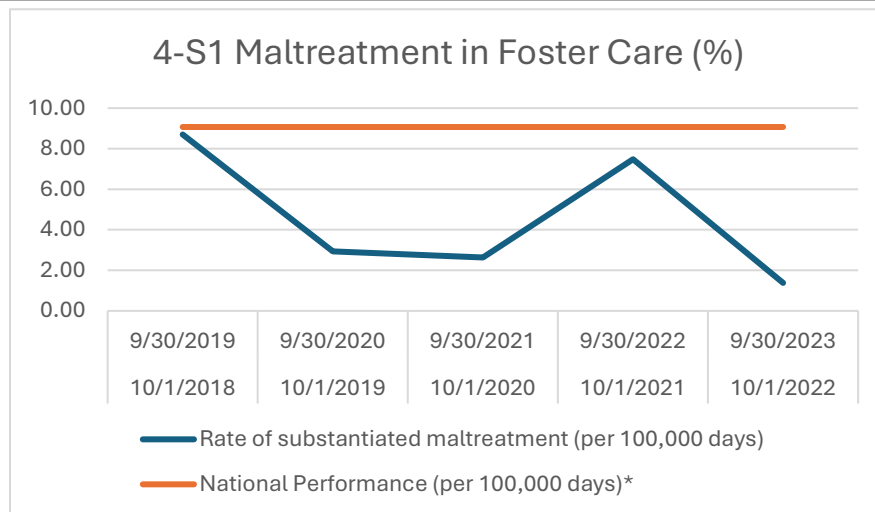
The data presented in this section was sourced from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP) website, an online tool for examining key child welfare outcomes at both the state and county levels. CCWIP is a collaborative effort between the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The baseline performance timeframe for County of SLO is based on Q3 2023, the study period.

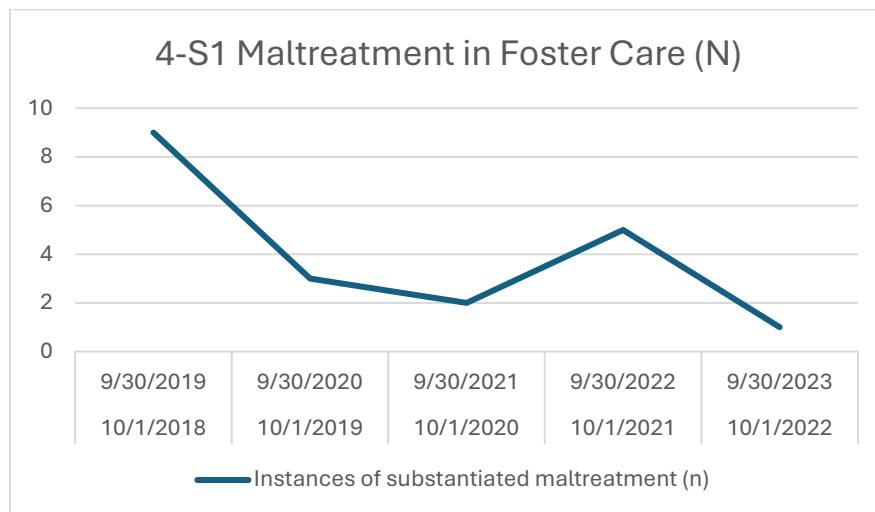
County of SLO conducted a series of stakeholder community forums, peer review and focus groups (June 2024 – December 2024) to inform the County's Self-Assessment process. Participants included stakeholders, youth, social workers, social worker supervisors, resource parents, birth parents, court, and peer reviewers. Insights gathered from these sessions will be integrated into various measure analyses.

4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care

The 4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care measure compares the total number of substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment during a foster care episode within the selected 12-month period to the total number of days spent in foster care. The national performance standard benchmark for this measure is less than 9.07%.

CWS





4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care					
National Performance < 9.07					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Rate of substantiated maltreatment (per 100,000 days)	8.70	2.94	2.64	7.48	1.38
Instances of substantiated maltreatment (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/S1.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=S1>

Trends (2018–2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo consistently performed below the national benchmark for the rate of substantiated maltreatment in foster care (9.07 per 100,000 days) across the five-year period, showcasing significant improvement in child safety outcomes. In 2018–2019, the county recorded a rate of 8.70%, slightly below the national threshold. The rate dropped dramatically to 2.94% in 2019–2020 and 2.64% in 2020–2021, representing a marked improvement. However, a notable increase to 7.48% in 2021–2022 occurred, followed by a significant decline to the lowest rate of 1.38% in 2022–2023. Over the five-year period, the county demonstrated a consistent downward trend in the maltreatment rate, achieving a 78.85% reduction from the highest recorded rate in 2018–2019 to 2022–2023.

Age Group

Maltreatment rates varied notably by age group across the five-year period. Infants aged 1–2 years experienced the highest rates of maltreatment, with a peak rate of 27.48 per 100,000 days in 2020–2021, followed by a decline in subsequent years. Preschool-aged children (3–5 years) recorded a peak of 17.92 in 2020–2021 but exhibited no instances of maltreatment in 2022–2023. Children aged 6–10 years demonstrated a relatively consistent and low rate, averaging 6.89 per 100,000 days during the reporting period. Older youth aged 11–15 years showed a significant decrease in maltreatment rates, dropping from 16.01 in 2018–2019 to 5.28 in 2022–2023. Similarly, youth aged 16–17 years experienced fluctuations, with an initial rate of 8.12 in 2018–2019 that fell to 0.00 in 2022–2023. These

findings suggest that targeted interventions for younger children, particularly those aged 1–5 years, are crucial for reducing maltreatment risks.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in maltreatment outcomes were evident when stratified by race and ethnicity. Latino children consistently experienced higher maltreatment rates compared to White children. In 2018–2019, Latino children had a rate of 18.33 per 100,000 days, while White children recorded a significantly lower rate of 3.47. Over the years, Latino children continued to experience higher rates, with a peak of 11.07 in 2021–2022 before dropping to 4.03 in 2022–2023. White children demonstrated lower and more stable rates throughout, averaging 3.52 per 100,000 days during the reporting period. The significant disparity underscores the need for culturally responsive practices and targeted strategies to address systemic inequities affecting Latino families.

Conclusion

From 2018 to 2023, the County of San Luis Obispo consistently maintained maltreatment rates below the national benchmark, reflecting significant progress in improving child safety. The dramatic reduction in the maltreatment rate to 1.38% in 2022–2023 is a commendable achievement. However, disparities persist, with younger children (ages 1–5 years) and Latino children disproportionately affected. The increase in rates during 2021–2022 signals a need for further investigation into factors such as placement disruptions, reporting practices, or systemic barriers.

Since the last report, the department has focused on strengthening support systems for resource families. A monthly Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) Work Group provides a forum for agencies and resource families to come together to share ideas, experiences, expectations, concerns, and recommendations. Additionally, monthly resource parent trainings are offered to enhance their ability to address trauma-related behaviors. Resource parents also receive additional support through the Family Support Unit. The department continues to prioritize strengthening collaboration between social workers, resource parents, and biological families to promote better outcomes for children in foster care.

PROBATION

4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care (N)					
National Performance < 9.07					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Child with substantiated maltreatment rate (%)	57.32%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Child with substantiated maltreatment (n)	m	m	m	m	m

4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care Stratified by Ethnicity					
National Performance < 9.07					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
White (%)	50.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Latino (%)	50.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
White (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Latino (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Total (n)	m	m	m	m	m
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4-S1 Maltreatment in Foster Care Stratified by Age Group					
National Performance < 9.07					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
11-15 (%)	100.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
11-15 (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Total (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/S1/MTSG/r/Fed/I>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=S1>

Trends (2018–2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo's performance on S1: Maltreatment in Foster Care for probation youth demonstrates significant improvement over the five-year period. In 2018–2019, the county reported a substantiated maltreatment rate of 57.32%, far exceeding the national benchmark of 9.07%. However, beginning in 2019–2020 and continuing through 2022–2023, no instances of substantiated maltreatment were reported. This reduction represents a dramatic shift in outcomes, bringing the county in compliance with national performance standards for this measure over the last four reporting years.

Age Group

An age-based analysis of the 2018–2019 data shows that all substantiated maltreatment cases occurred among probation youth aged 11–15 years, indicating a heightened vulnerability for this age group during that reporting period. No instances of maltreatment were reported for any age groups from 2019–2020 through 2022–2023, highlighting the success of interventions in addressing these risks.

Race/Ethnicity

In 2018–2019, maltreatment among probation youth in foster care was evenly distributed between White and Latino children, with each group comprising 50% of the substantiated cases. No instances of maltreatment were reported for other ethnic groups. From 2019–2020 onward, there were no recorded instances of substantiated maltreatment, making it difficult to assess ongoing trends or disparities by ethnicity beyond the initial year.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made notable progress in reducing maltreatment in foster care for probation youth, achieving four consecutive years with no substantiated cases of maltreatment. However, the data from 2018–2019 underscores the need for sustained efforts to mitigate risks for high-vulnerability groups, particularly youth aged 11–15 years. Additionally, while no ethnic disparities were observed during the reporting period, it remains critical to monitor and ensure equitable outcomes for all populations. The department's demonstrated success provides a strong foundation for maintaining compliance with national standards and continuing to protect the safety and well-being of probation youth in foster care.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: S1- Maltreatment in Foster Care (N)					
Federal Standard $\leq 9.07\%$	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Child with substantiated maltreatment rate (%)	57.32%	.	.	.	.
Child with substantiated maltreatment (n)	M	.	.	.	.

Probation: S1- Maltreatment in Foster Care (N)					
Race/Ethnicity	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
White (%)	50.0%	.	.	.	.
Latino (%)	50.0%	.	.	.	.
White (N)	M	.	.	.	.
Latino (N)	M	.	.	.	.

Probation: S1- Maltreatment in Foster Care (N)					
Age	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
11-15 (%)	100%	.	.	.	.
11-15 (N)	M	.	.	.	.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract Retrieved: 01/07/2025 from

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/S1?MTSG/r/Fed/I>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=S1>

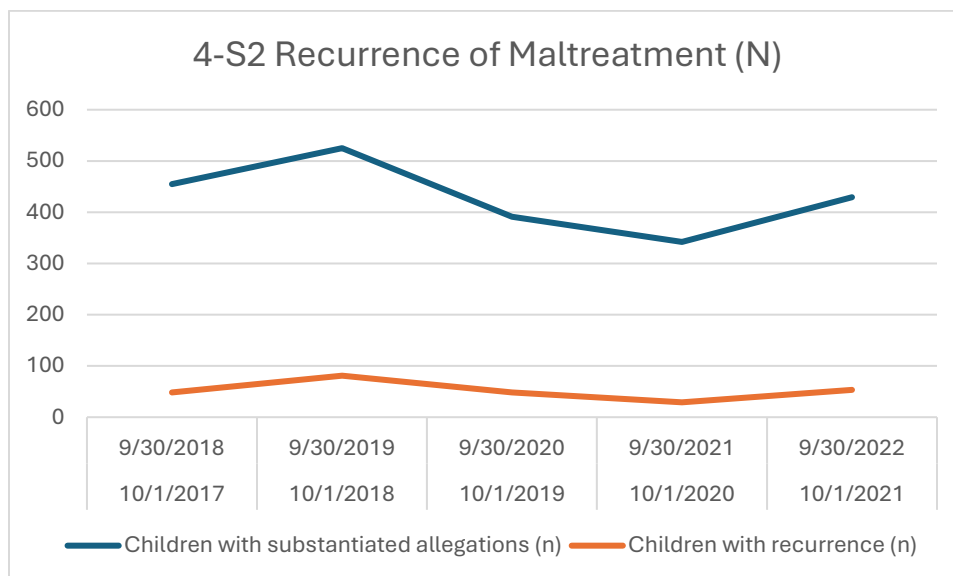
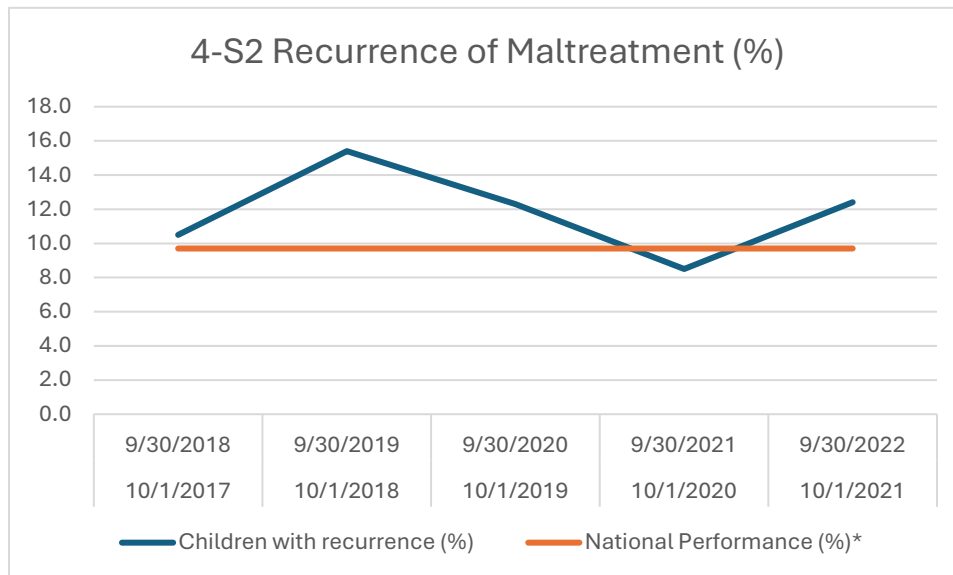
Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance on S1: Maltreatment in Foster Care for probation involved foster youth demonstrates significant improvement over the five-year period. In 2018–2019, the data reflects a substantiated maltreatment rate of 57.32%, far exceeding the Federal Standard rate of 9.07%. However, given the low number of youth captured in this measure, one youth can have a significant impact on Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure. Beginning in 2019–2020 and continuing through 2022–2023, no instances of substantiated maltreatment were reported. This reduction represents a dramatic shift in outcomes, bringing Juvenile Probation into compliance with Federal Standard performance standard for this measure.

4-S2 Recurrence of Maltreatment

The S2 Recurrence of Maltreatment measure reflects the percentage of children with a substantiated allegation during the 12-month period and had another substantiated allegation within 12 months. The national performance standard benchmark for this measure is less than 9.7%.

CWS



4-S2 Recurrence of Maltreatment					
National Performance < 9.7					
From	10/1/2017	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Children with recurrence (%)	10.5%	15.4%	12.3%	8.5%	12.4%
Children with substantiated allegations (n)	455	525	391	342	429

Children with recurrence (n)	48	81	48	29	53
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*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/S2.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=S2>

Trends (2017–2022)

The County of San Luis Obispo's recurrence of maltreatment rates fluctuated across the five-year period, with rates consistently above the national benchmark of 9.7% in all years except 2020–2021. In 2017–2018, the recurrence rate was 10.5% (48 recurrences out of 455 substantiated allegations). This increased to a high of 15.4% in 2018–2019 (81 recurrences out of 525 allegations). Improvements followed in 2019–2020 with a rate of 12.3% (48 recurrences out of 391 allegations) and the lowest rate of 8.5% in 2020–2021 (29 recurrences out of 342 allegations), meeting the federal standard. However, the rate rose again to 12.4% in 2021–2022 (53 recurrences out of 429 allegations), indicating ongoing challenges in achieving consistent performance.

Age Group

Recurrence rates varied significantly by age group, with older children generally experiencing higher rates. Children aged 11–15 years consistently showed the highest rates of recurrence, averaging 28.9% over the five years. This was followed by children aged 6–10 years, who averaged 20.7%, and children aged 3–5 years at 15.0%. The youngest age groups (under 1 year and 1–2 years) had moderate rates of 13.1% and 15.7%, respectively, while youth aged 16–17 years had the lowest average rate of 6.7%. The data suggests that older children face greater challenges in avoiding recurrence, potentially due to systemic or behavioral factors requiring targeted intervention.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in recurrence rates were evident when stratified by race and ethnicity. White children, who constituted the largest subgroup, experienced an average recurrence rate of 13.8% over the five years. Latino children had a lower recurrence rate of 9.2%, while Black children averaged 11.1%. Native American children faced the highest recurrence rate at 20%, though their small population size likely contributed to this elevated percentage. Asian/Pacific Islander children recorded no instances of recurrence.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made notable progress in reducing the recurrence of maltreatment, achieving its lowest rate of 8.5% in 2020–2021. However, fluctuations in performance and persistent disparities across age groups, ethnicities, and years underscore the need for sustained efforts to address systemic barriers. Older children (ages 11–15) and Native American children remain at higher risk of recurrence, indicating a critical need for targeted interventions.

The department has taken significant steps to strengthen support systems, including offering monthly resource parent training focused on trauma-informed care and fostering collaboration through initiatives such as the Family Support Unit. Feedback from focus groups revealed that parents and resource families have identified gaps in post-reunification support, which could contribute to an increased risk of recurrence.

The department offers Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM), a program providing non-court-ordered, time-limited protective services to families whose children face potential danger of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This voluntary program is only available when children can safely remain at home, with or without a safety plan, and the family agrees to participate in corrective services.

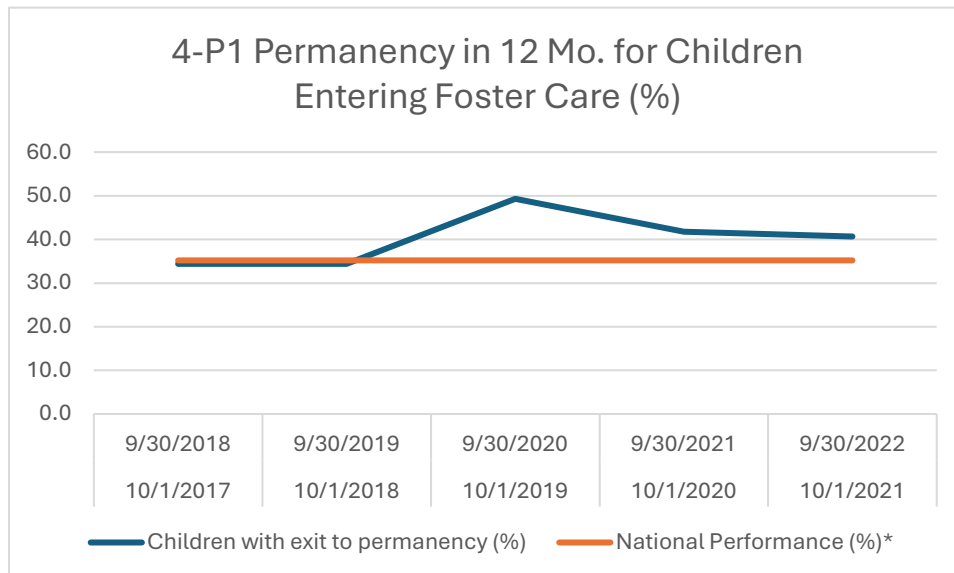
VFM services focus on preventing or resolving issues of abuse and neglect through supportive interventions such as counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence intervention, and parenting education. These services and intensive case management help stabilize the family while allowing the child(ren) to remain safely at home. The department has observed the success of this program in the decrease of court involved cases and children remaining safely in their homes. The department hopes to see the reduction in the recurrence of maltreatment as an additional benefit.

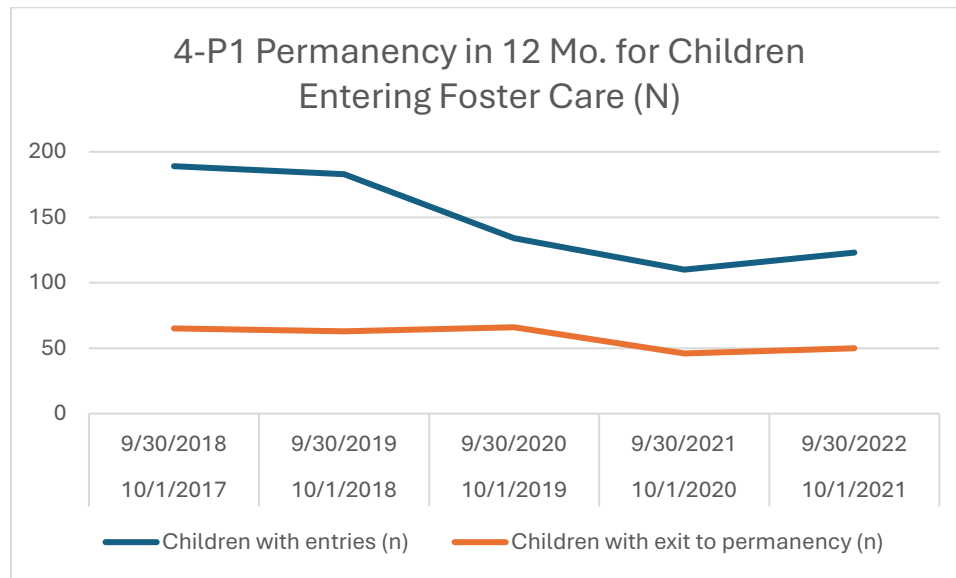
Moving forward, efforts should prioritize enhancing post-reunification support services, addressing systemic inequities, and expanding culturally responsive practices to ensure equitable outcomes for all children in care.

4-P1 Permanency in 12 months (Entering Foster Care)

P1 Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care measures the percentage of children who entered foster care and exited to permanency (reunification, adoption, or guardianship) within 12 months. The national performance average for this measure is greater than 35.2%.

CWS





4-P1 Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care					
National Performance >35.2					
From	10/1/2017	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Children with exit to permanency (%)	34.4%	34.4%	49.3%	41.8%	40.7%
Children with entries (n)	189	183	134	110	123
Children with exit to permanency (n)	65	63	66	46	50

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/P1.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P1>

Trends (2017–2022)

The County of San Luis Obispo has demonstrated consistent efforts in achieving permanency within 12 months for children entering foster care. The county's performance generally aligned with or exceeded the federal benchmark of 35.2% over the five-year period. In 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, the county achieved a permanency rate of 34.4% (65 children exiting to permanency out of 189 entries in 2017–2018 and 63 out of 183 in 2018–2019). Performance peaked in 2019–2020 with a rate of 49.3% (66 children exiting to permanency out of 134 entries). While rates decreased slightly in subsequent years, they remained strong, with 41.8% in 2020–2021 (46 children exiting out of 110 entries) and 40.7% in 2021–2022 (50 out of 123 entries). This overall trend reflects significant progress and commitment to timely permanency for children.

Age Group

Permanency outcomes varied by age group, with younger children achieving higher rates. Infants under 1 year consistently had high permanency rates, reflecting their likelihood of adoption or reunification. For example, children aged 1–2 years and 3–5 years also showed strong outcomes, indicating the county's focus on prioritizing permanency for younger children. However, older age groups (6–10, 11–15, and 16–17 years) faced greater challenges in achieving timely permanency, with their rates declining over time. These findings highlight the need for specialized interventions to support older youth in achieving permanency.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in permanency outcomes by race and ethnicity were apparent. White children consistently achieved the highest permanency rates, with 34 exits to permanency in 2021–2022, compared to Latino children (20 exits). Black children recorded lower rates, although the sample size is limited.

Placement Type

The type of placement significantly influenced permanency outcomes. Children placed in foster care consistently had higher permanency rates compared to those placed with relatives or in Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes. For example, 35 children in resource homes exited to permanency in both 2021–2022 and 2022–2023, while exits for children in relative placements were lower. These findings highlight the importance of home-based and stable placements in achieving timely permanency.

Conclusion

County of SLO is meeting the federal P1 standard for permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care. The county achieved an average rate of 40.12% over the five-year period, consistently exceeding the national benchmark of 35.2%. However, the decline from 49.3% in 2019–2020 to 40.7% in 2021–2022 signals a need for continued efforts to maintain and improve outcomes. Younger children (ages 0–5 years) and those placed in pre-adoptive, or resource family homes had the highest rates of permanency, emphasizing the importance of focusing on home-based family placements.

The county will continue to address the challenges faced by older youth and children from minority populations. That includes enhancing family finding initiatives to identify and engage relatives or close connections for older youth and continuing recruiting additional resource family homes that are equipped and willing to care for older youth and children with higher needs. Feedback from focus groups has highlighted the importance of addressing barriers such as trauma-related behaviors and systemic inequities, which may delay permanency for certain populations.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: P1 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care					
Federal Standard $\geq 35.2\%$	Oct 2017-Sep 2018	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022
Rate of children with exits to permanency (%)	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Children with entries to permanency (N)	M	M	M	M	M
Children in exits to permanency (N)	M	M	M	M	M

Probation: P1 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Care					
Age Group	Oct 2017-Sep 2018	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022

	N	N	N	N	N
11 – 15	M	M	.	M	M
16 – 17	M	M	M	M	M
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Probation: P1 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Care					
Ethnic Group	Oct 2017- Sep 2018	Oct 2018- Sep 2019	Oct 2019- Sep 2020	Oct 2020- Sep 2021	Oct 2021- Sep 2022
	N	N	N	N	N
Black	.	.	.	.	.
White	M	M	M	M	M
Latino	M	M	M	M	M
Asian / Pacific Islander	M	.	.	.	.
Native American	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Probation: P1 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Care					
Sex at Birth	Oct 2017- Sep 2018	Oct 2018- Sep 2019	Oct 2019- Sep 2020	Oct 2020- Sep 2021	Oct 2021- Sep 2022
	N	N	N	N	N
Female	.	.	M	M	M
Male	M	M	M	M	M
Intersex	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/S1/MTSG/r/Fed/I>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P1>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently fallen below the Federal Standard of 35.2% over the past five years. Given the small sample size over the past five years, it is difficult to identify any trends, with the exception that Probation involved youth in San Luis Obispo County are typically older than 11 years of age, are of White or Latino heritage, and male at birth. These trends are reflected in the general make-up of youth referred to Probation, as noted in this report (see Table 29).

Age

Probation is rarely involved with youth under the age of 13, and those that do enter the Juvenile Justice Court at a young age, between 11-15, are rarely removed by Probation. While age does appear to play a factor in this outcome for youths, referred to Probation who are between the ages of 11-17, it is difficult to identify any other trends as the sample size each year has been under ten, and in some years, it has only included one youth.

Race/Ethnicity

The youth(s) included in this measure are of either White or Latino descent, which is typical of Probation involved youth noted in the general heritage of make-up of San Luis Obispo County's demographics.

Gender

Probation involved youth are typically identified as being male at birth.

Placement Type

Placement type does appear to influence permanency outcomes, as youth placed in home-based care tend to have higher rates of attaining permanency within 12 months, compared with those youth placed in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). Youth placed in a STRTP often have more complex needs, such as requiring residential sex-offender treatment, than youth placed in home-based care. Additionally, youth placed in home-based care typically score lower in terms of being at risk of reoffending, compared with youth placed in STRTPs.

Conclusion

While individual factors may have contributed to a small number of Probation involved youth exiting to permanency within 12-months of entering care, the overall trend of Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently fallen below the Federal Standard of 35.2% over the past five years. Small sample sizes make it challenging to identify trends. However, the data suggests that Probation involved youth in San Luis Obispo County are typically older than 11 years of age, are of White or Latino heritage, and male at birth. Youth placed in home-based care appear to have a high rate of attaining permanency within 12 months of entering care. Focusing efforts on strengthening family connections and placing youth in home-based care will likely have a positive impact on youth attaining permanency within 12 months. Probation plans to continue engaging in Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) efforts, connecting youth and their families with services, such as Wraparound and Parent Teen Mediation, and connecting youth with services that can be provided in a home-based setting, such as sex-offender treatment provided via videoconferencing.

4-P1 Permanency in 12 Months (Entering Foster Care)					
National Performance > 35.2					
From	10/1/2017	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022

Rate of children with exits to permanency (%)	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Children with entries to permanency (n)	M	M	M	M	10
Children with exits to permanency (n)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/S1/MTSG/r/Fed/I>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P1>

Trends (2017–2022)

The County of San Luis Obispo's performance on P1: Permanency in 12 Months for probation youth entering foster care has consistently fallen below the national benchmark of 35.2% over the five-year period. In 2017–2018, the county achieved a permanency rate of 16.7%, with one child exiting to permanency out of six who entered care. This performance dropped to 0% from 2018–2019 through 2020–2021, as no children exited to permanency within 12 months during those years. In 2021–2022, the county saw a slight improvement, achieving a permanency rate of 10.0%, representing one out of ten children exiting to permanency. Despite this modest progress, the county remains significantly below the national standard.

Age Group

The analysis of permanency outcomes stratified by age group highlights key differences. In 2017–2018, permanency was achieved exclusively for youth aged 16–17 years, with no exits to permanency for the 11–15 age group. By 2021–2022, this trend reversed, with the single permanency exit occurring within the 11–15 age group. This shift underscores a need for targeted strategies to ensure that both age groups have equitable opportunities to achieve permanency.

Race/Ethnicity

In 2017–2018, the single permanency exit occurred for a child identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, representing 100% of the exits during that period. By 2021–2022, the single exit was for a Latino child, also accounting for 100% of exits in that year. The absence of exits for other racial or ethnic groups over the reporting period suggests potential disparities in permanency outcomes, necessitating further investigation and intervention.

Placement Type

Placement type appears to influence permanency outcomes significantly. In 2017–2018, the single exit to permanency occurred for a youth placed in a group home or Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). Conversely, in 2021–2022, the sole exit to permanency occurred for a youth placed with a relative or Non-Relative Extended Family Member (NREFM). This data indicates that placement with relatives or NREFMs may be more conducive to achieving permanency, aligning with best practices that prioritize family connections.

Reunification and Emancipation Outcomes

Reunification rates have mirrored overall permanency trends, with a rate of 16.7% in 2017–2018 and 10.0% in 2021–2022, while no reunifications occurred in the intervening years. Additionally, 2021–2022 saw two youth age out of care, representing 20.0% of the cohort. The data highlights a concerning trend of youth remaining in care for extended periods, with a substantial proportion not achieving permanency through reunification or other exits.

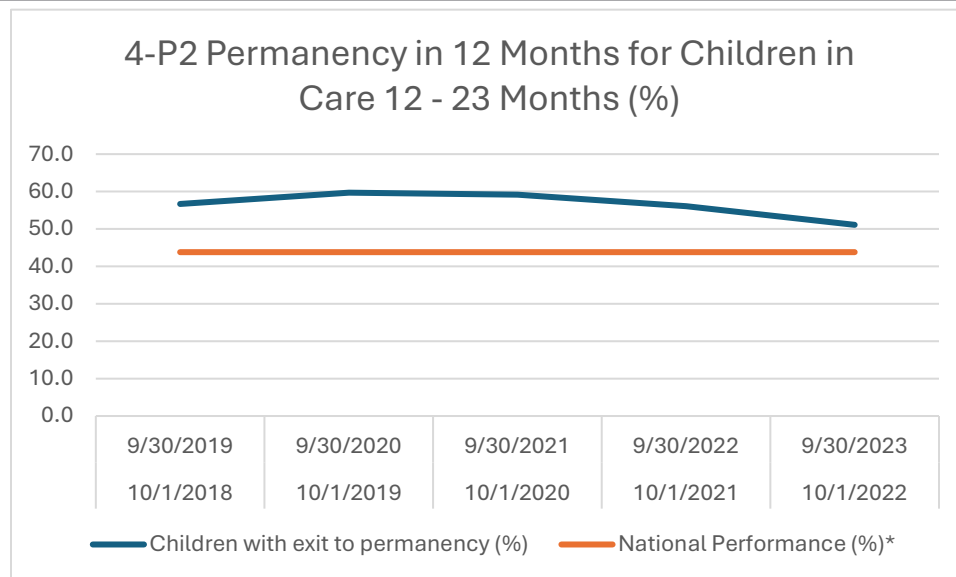
Conclusion

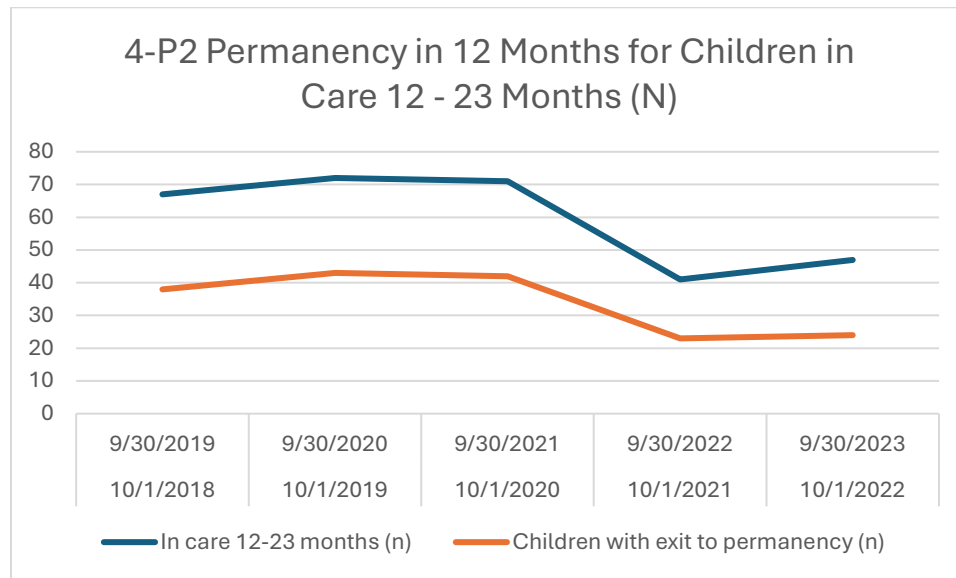
The County of San Luis Obispo has struggled to meet the national standard for P1: Permanency in 12 Months for probation youth, with rates consistently below the benchmark. The data suggests systemic challenges in achieving timely permanency, particularly for youth placed in non-relative care and those from underrepresented ethnic groups. Age-specific patterns further indicate a need for differentiated strategies to support older youth and those in the 11–15 age range. Moving forward, the department should focus on strengthening family connections, addressing placement disparities, and implementing targeted reunification efforts to improve permanency outcomes.

4-P2 Permanency in 12 Months (In Care 12-23 months)

The 4-P2 Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 12–23 Months measures the percentage of children in foster care for 12–23 months who achieve permanency (reunification, adoption, or guardianship) within one year. The national performance standard benchmark for this measure is greater than 43.8%.

CWS





4-P2 Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Foster Care					
National Performance > 43.8					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Children with exit to permanency (%)	56.7%	59.7%	59.2%	56.1%	51.1%
In care 12-23 months (n)	67	72	71	41	47
Children with exit to permanency (n)	38	43	42	23	24

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/P2.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P2>

Trends (2018–2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently exceeded the national benchmark of 43.8% for permanency in 12 months for children in care for 12–23 months. Over the five-year period, the county achieved its highest permanency rate of 59.7% in 2019–2020 (43 children out of 72), while the most recent rate in 2022–2023 was 51.1% (24 children out of 47). Although the rates have slightly declined since their peak in 2019–2020, they remain well above the national benchmark. This demonstrates the county's continued efforts to ensure timely permanency for children in this cohort.

Age Group

Permanency rates varied by age group, with younger children (ages 0–5 years) consistently achieving higher rates compared to older children. For example, children ages 0–5 achieved an average permanency rate of 77.5% over the five-year period, compared to older youth (ages 6–17), who averaged 47%. In 2022–2023, children aged 0–5 years exited to permanency at a rate of 66.7%, whereas children aged 6–17 achieved a rate of 41.4%. These findings highlight the ongoing challenge of achieving timely permanency for older youth.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in permanency outcomes by race and ethnicity are evident in the data. White children consistently achieved the highest rates of permanency, with 22 exits to permanency in 2022–2023,

followed by Latino children with 6 exits. Black children had fewer exits, with an average of 1 per year, reflecting challenges in equitable outcomes for this group. The small population sizes for certain racial groups, such as Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children, make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. However, the disparities underscore the need for culturally responsive practices to address systemic inequities.

Exit Type

The primary paths to permanency for children in this cohort were reunification, adoption, and guardianship. Over the five-year period, adoption emerged as the most common exit type, with an average of 6 exits per year. Reunification was slightly less frequent, averaging 5 exits per year, while guardianship remained steady at an average of 4 exits annually. In 2022–2023, exits to both reunification and adoption were notably lower, with only 3 and 1 exits, respectively, which marks a significant decline compared to prior years. This drop suggests potential barriers in facilitating timely court processes, maintaining stable placements, or providing adequate support to families and resource parents to achieve permanency goals.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently performed above the national benchmark for permanency in 12 months for children in care for 12–23 months, achieving an average rate of 56.5% over the five-year period. Younger children (ages 0–5) and those exiting to adoption had the highest rates of permanency, while older youth and children from minority groups faced greater challenges.

Feedback from focus groups highlighted several factors relevant to achieving permanency for children in care for 12–23 months. Participants noted delays in achieving permanency due to challenges in timely court proceedings and resource parent turnover. Resource parents also expressed a need for more training to address trauma-related behaviors.

The county will continue to address the challenges faced by older youth and children from minority populations. These findings emphasize the need for targeted efforts to recruit and retain resource families for older youth. Our efforts also include enhancing family finding initiatives to identify and engage relatives or close connections for older youth and continue recruiting additional resource family homes that are equipped and willing to care for older youth and children with higher needs.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: P2 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (12-23 Months)					
Federal Standard $\geq 43.8\%$	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Children with exits to permanency (%)	M	M	M	.	M
Children with exits to permanency (N)	M	M	M	.	M
Children in Care (N)	M	M	M	.	M

Probation: P2 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (12-23 Months)					
Age Group	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
	N	N	N	N	N
11 – 15	N/A	M	N/A	N/A	N/A
16 – 17	M	M	M	N/A	M
Total	M	M	M	N/A	M

Probation: P2 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (12-23 Months)					
Ethnic Group	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Black	.	.	.	.	.
White	M	.	.	.	.
Latino	M	M	M	.	M
Asian / Pacific Islander	.	.	.	.	.
Native American	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	.	M

Probation: P2 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (12-23 Months)					
Sex at Birth	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Female	.	.	.	.	M
Male	M	M	M	.	.
Intersex	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	.	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/P2/MTSG/r/Fed/l>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently fallen below the Federal Standard of 43.8% over the past five years. Given the small sample size over the past five years, it is difficult to identify any trends, with the exception that Probation involved youth in San Luis Obispo County are typically older than 11 years of age, are of White or Latino heritage, and male at birth. These trends are reflected in the general make-up of youth referred to Probation, as noted in this report (see Table 29).

Age

Probation is rarely involved with youth under the age of 13, and those that do enter the Juvenile Justice Court at a young age, between 11-15, are rarely removed by Probation. While age does appear to play a factor in this outcome for youth referred to Probation who are between the ages of 11-17, it is difficult to identify any other trends as the sample size each year has been under ten, and in some years, there were one or no youth included.

Race/Ethnicity

The youth(s) included in this measure are of either White or Latino descent, which is typical of Probation involved youth noted in the general heritage of make-up of San Luis Obispo County's demographics.

Gender

Probation involved youth are typically identified as being male at birth.

Placement Type

Placement type does appear to influence permanency outcomes, as youth placed in home-based care tend to have higher rates of attaining permanency within 12-23 months, compared with those youth placed in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). Youth placed in a STRTP often have more complex needs, such as requiring residential sex-offender treatment, than youth placed in home-based care. Additionally, youth placed in home-based care typically score lower in terms of being at risk of reoffending, compared with youth placed in STRTPs.

Conclusion

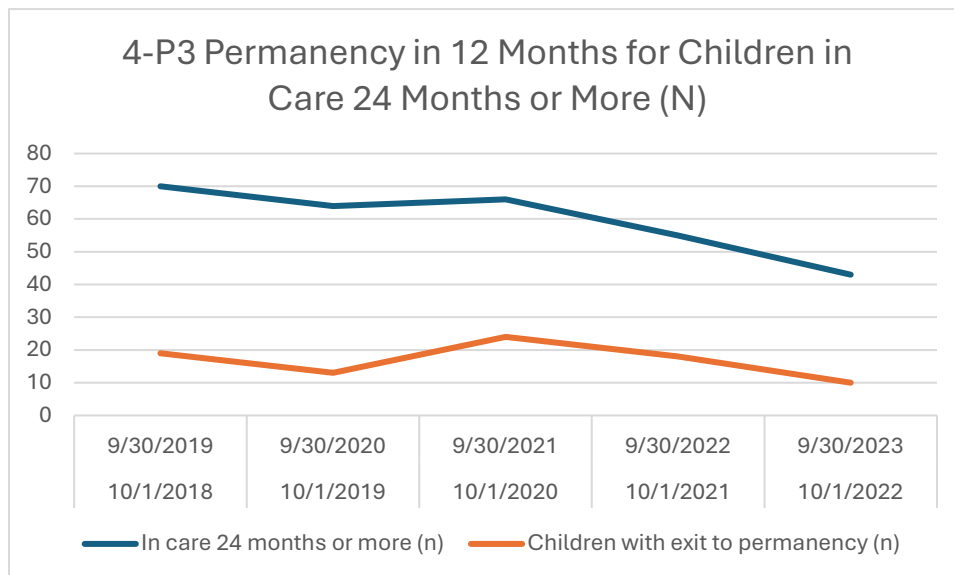
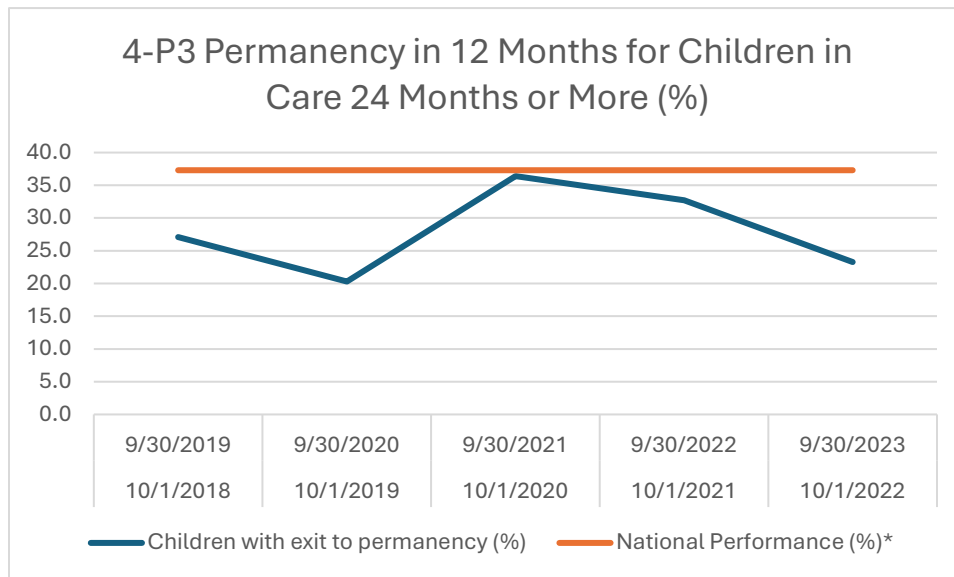
While individual factors may have contributed to a small number of Probation involved youth exiting to permanency within 12-23 months, the overall trend of Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently fallen below the Federal Standard of 43.8% over the past five years. Small sample sizes make it challenging to identify trends. However, the data suggests that Probation involved youth in San Luis Obispo County are typically older than 11 years of age, are of White or Latino heritage, and male at birth. In general, Probation involved foster youth generally have more intensive needs than non-probation foster youth and often need more time in specialized residential treatment programs and are generally more challenging to place. However, youth placed in home-based care appear to have a high rate of attaining permanency within 12-23 months of being in care. As noted in the analysis for Outcome Measure P1-Probation, Probation youth generally benefit from participating in treatment services, which may delay their ability to attain permanency. Increasing efforts to meet, or exceed, the Federal Standard in this measure will likely improve Probation's performance in other measures, such as P1 and P3. Focusing efforts on strengthening family connections and placing youth in home-based care will likely have a positive impact on youth attaining permanency within 12 months. Probation plans to continue engaging in Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) efforts, connecting youth and their families with services, such as Wraparound and

Parent Teen Mediation, and connecting youth with services that can be provided in a home-based setting, such as sex-offender treatment provided via videoconferencing.

4-P3 Permanency in 12 months (In Care 24+ months)

The 4-P3 Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 24 Months or More measure assesses the percentage of children in foster care for 24 months or more who achieve permanency within 12 months. Permanency, defined as reunification, adoption, or guardianship, is critical to ensuring stability and long-term well-being for children in extended foster care. The national performance benchmark for this measure is greater than 37.3%.

CWS



4-P3 Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Care 24 Months or More					
National Performance >37.3					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Children with exit to permanency (%)	27.1	20.3	36.4	32.7	23.3
In care 24 months or more (n)	70	64	66	55	43
Children with exit to permanency (n)	19	13	24	18	10

*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/P3.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P3>

Trends (2018–2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo has struggled to consistently meet the national benchmark of 37.3% for permanency in 12 months for children in care for 24 months or more. Over the five-year period, the county's performance peaked in 2020–2021, achieving a rate of 36.4% (24 children out of 66), coming close to the national benchmark. However, in the most recent reporting period (2022–2023), the permanency rate fell to 23.3% (10 children out of 43), marking a significant decline from prior years. These trends indicate challenges in maintaining consistent outcomes for this cohort, particularly in the most recent years.

Age Group

Permanency outcomes varied significantly by age group, with older youth (ages 11–17) facing greater challenges in achieving timely permanency. For example, children aged 11–15 and 16–17 made up a notable proportion of the cohort but achieved lower rates of permanency compared to younger children. This trend highlights the continued difficulty in identifying and supporting permanency pathways for older youth, particularly those who have been in care for extended periods.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in outcomes by race and ethnicity were evident. White children accounted for the majority of exits to permanency over the five-year period, with 34.8% exiting in 2022–2023. Latino children made up the next largest group, with 'm' exits during the same period, while Black children and other racial/ethnic groups had minimal or no exits to permanency. These disparities emphasize the need for targeted efforts to address inequities and ensure equitable outcomes for all children in care.

Placement Type

The type of placement influenced permanency outcomes, with children in relative or NREFM (Non-Related Extended Family Member) placements and resource homes achieving the majority of exits to permanency. For instance, in 2022–2023, 70% of the exits to permanency were from relative placements, indicating the importance of these stable, family-like environments in facilitating permanency. However, children in Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes and other placements showed fewer exits, suggesting a need for increased support and resources for these settings.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has faced challenges in meeting the national benchmark for permanency in 12 months for children in care for 24 months or more, with performance fluctuating over the five-year period. While the county achieved a peak rate of 36.4% in 2020–2021, recent

declines to 23.3% in 2022–2023 indicate the need for renewed focus on supporting this cohort. Older youth and children from minority populations continue to face significant barriers, reflecting the need for targeted interventions.

Feedback from focus groups underscored several barriers to achieving permanency for this cohort. Resource parents highlighted challenges in managing long-term placements, particularly for older youth with complex behavioral or emotional needs. Parents and youth emphasized the importance of maintaining strong connections to biological families and community supports, which could facilitate timely permanency.

The county will continue to address the challenges faced by older youth and children from minority populations. These findings emphasize the need for targeted efforts to recruit and retain resource families for older youth. Our efforts also include enhancing family finding initiatives to identify and engage relatives or close connections for older youth and continue recruiting additional resource family homes that are equipped and willing to care for older youth and children with higher needs.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: P3 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (24+ Months)					
Federal Standard $\geq 37.3\%$	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Children with exits to permanency (%)	M	M	M	M	M
Children with exits to permanency (N)	M	M	M	M	M
Children in Care 24+ Months (N)	M	M	M	M	M
Probation: P3 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (24+ Months)					
Age Group	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
	N	N	N	N	N
11 – 15	.	.	M	.	.
16 – 17	M	M	M	M	M
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Probation: P3 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (24+ Months)					
Ethnic Group	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023

	N	N	N	N	N
Black	.	.	.	.	.
White	M	M	.	.	.
Latino	M	M	M	M	M
Asian / Pacific Islander	.	.	.	.	.
Native American	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Probation: P3 – Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care (24+ Months)					
Sex at Birth	Oct 2018- Sep 2019	Oct 2019- Sep 2020	Oct 2020- Sep 2021	Oct 2021- Sep 2022	Oct 2022- Sep 2023
	N	N	N	N	N
Female	.	.	.	.	.
Male	M	M	M	M	M
Intersex	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.
Total	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/P2/MTSG/r/Fed/I>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P2>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance on P3: Permanency in 12 Months for youth in care for 24 or more months reveals consistent challenges in achieving timely permanency. Over the five-year reporting period, of eligible youth in care for 24+ months, none exited to permanency, resulting in a permanency rate of 0.0% throughout the entire period, significantly below the Federal Standard of 37.3%.

Age

As noted in other Juvenile Probation outcome measures, probation involved foster youth are typically in the 11-15 or 16-17 age group.

Race/Ethnicity

The youth(s) included in this measure are of either White or Latino descent, which is typical of Probation involved youth noted in the general heritage of make-up of San Luis Obispo County's demographics.

Gender

Probation involved youth are typically identified as being male at birth.

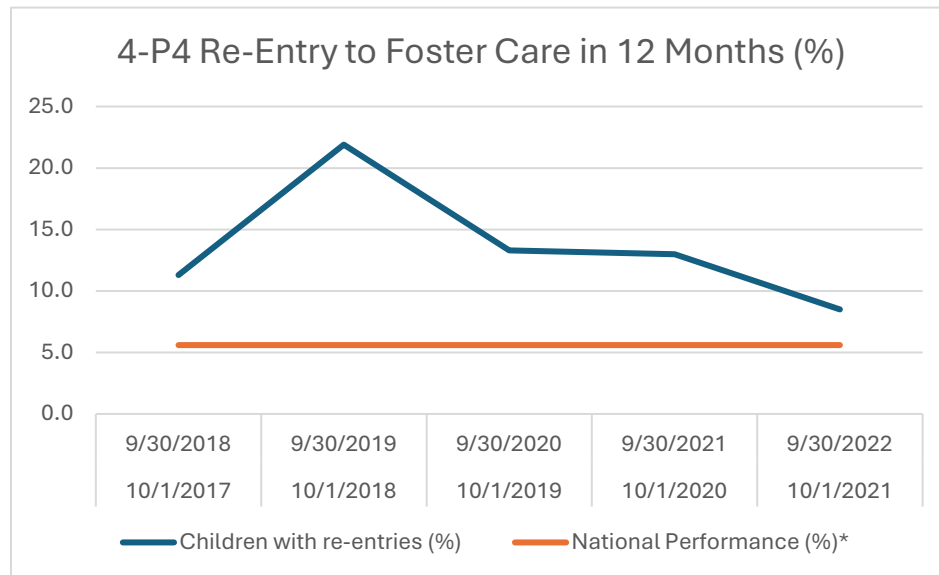
Conclusion

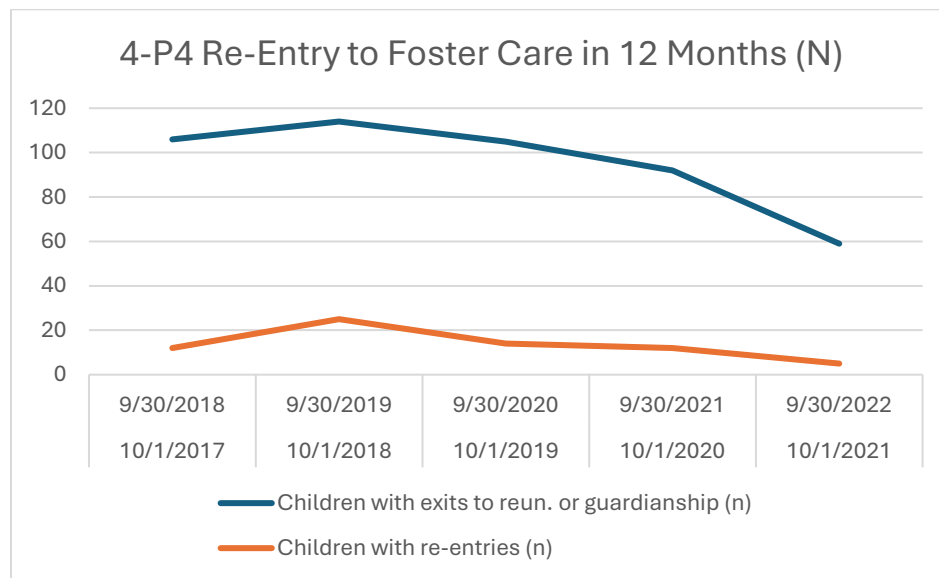
A number of youth captured in the measure required long-term residential treatment, making attaining permanency challenging. Additionally, being probation involved and typically older than non-probation involved youth, can present some challenges with attaining permanency. Specifically, some probation involved youth have victimized family members in their home and returning there could be detrimental to the youth or family members' well-being. Probation involved youth's older age often results in them not being considered by potential adoptive parent(s) looking to adopt a youth. Finally, some probation involved youth are nearing the age of majority and focused on transitioning to independence and attaining their own living arrangement. Agreeing to reside in a home-based foster setting often feels too restrictive and thus in conflict with their personal goals.

4-P4 Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months

The P4 Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months measure reflects the percentage of children who enter care in the 12-month period who discharge within 12-months to reunification or guardianship and then re-enter care within 12-months. The national performance benchmark is less than 5.6%.

CWS





4-P4 Re-Entry to Foster Care in 12 Months					
National Performance < 5.6					
From	10/1/2017	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Children with re-entries (%)	11.3%	21.9%	13.3%	13.0%	8.5%
Children with exits to reunification or guardianship (n)	106	114	105	92	59
Children with re-entries (n)	12	25	14	12	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/P4.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P4>

Trends (2017–2022)

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently struggled to meet the national benchmark for Measure 4-P4, which requires re-entries to foster care within 12 months to remain below 5.6%. From 2017 to 2022, the county's performance varied significantly, with re-entry rates peaking at 21.9% in 2018–2019 (25 children out of 114) and showing a marked improvement in 2021–2022, where re-entries declined to 8.5% (5 children out of 59). While this represents progress, the county's performance has remained above the national benchmark throughout the five-year period, indicating ongoing challenges in sustaining permanency outcomes for children exiting to reunification or guardianship.

Age Group

Re-entry patterns across age groups revealed that younger children (ages 0–5) were more likely to re-enter care compared to older children. For instance, a significant portion of re-entries in 2018–2019 and 2021–2022 were children under the age of five. This trend underscores the need for targeted support and services for families with younger children to address the underlying issues contributing to re-entries.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in re-entry outcomes by race and ethnicity were evident in the data. White children made up the majority of re-entries over the five-year period, followed by Latino children. For example, in

2021–2022, 8.5% of exits were re-entries, and these were disproportionately represented by White and Latino children. No Black or Native American children were reported as re-entering during this period, though their overall representation in the child welfare population may be low.

Placement Type

Placement type also influenced re-entry rates. Children exiting from resource homes or relative/NREFM (Non-Related Extended Family Member) placements were more likely to re-enter care compared to those exiting from other placement types. In 2021–2022, children exiting from resource homes accounted for the majority of re-entries, suggesting that these settings may require enhanced support and monitoring to prevent disruptions following reunification or guardianship.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made notable progress in reducing re-entry rates over the five-year period, with the rate decreasing to 8.5% in 2021–2022 from a high of 21.9% in 2018–2019. However, the county continues to exceed the national benchmark of 5.6%. Younger children, families from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds, and those exiting foster care placements remain vulnerable to re-entries.

The county is addressing these challenges by expanding post-reunification services, increasing family finding and engagement efforts, and providing additional training and support for resource families to ensure stable and lasting permanency outcomes. Future efforts should focus on strengthening partnerships with community organizations to deliver culturally competent services and addressing systemic barriers to stability for families.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract. <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/P4/STSG/r/Fed/>

Probation: P4 – Reentry into Foster Care					
Federal Standard ≤ 5.6%	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Reentry in less than 12 months	.	0.0%	.	.	0.0%
No reentry within 12 months	.	M	.	.	M
Total	.	100.0	.	.	100.0

Trends

Juvenile Probation has consistently maintained a rate of 0.0% for youth reentering foster care within 12 months over the five-year reporting period. This performance aligns with the Federal Standard rate of less than 5.6%. Probation's small sample size makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions about trends.

Conclusion

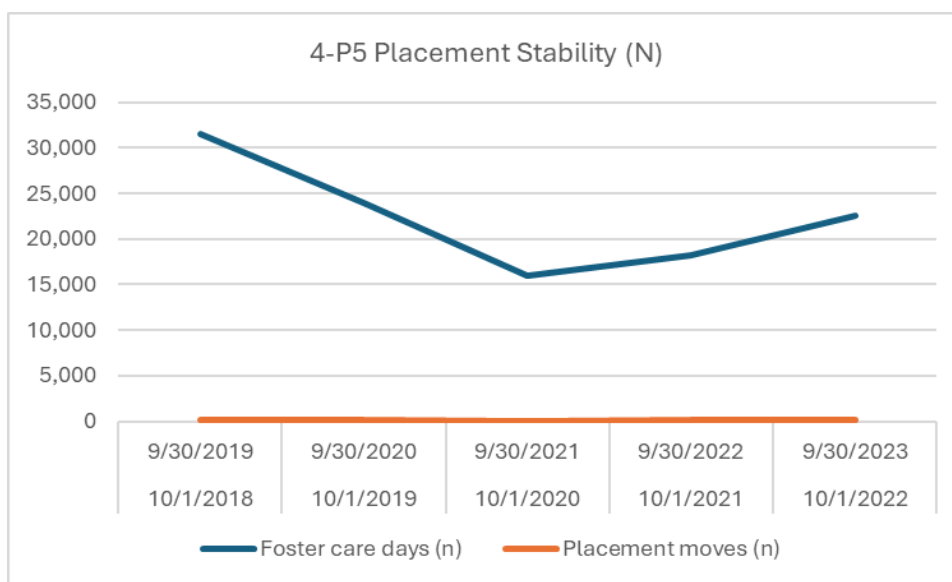
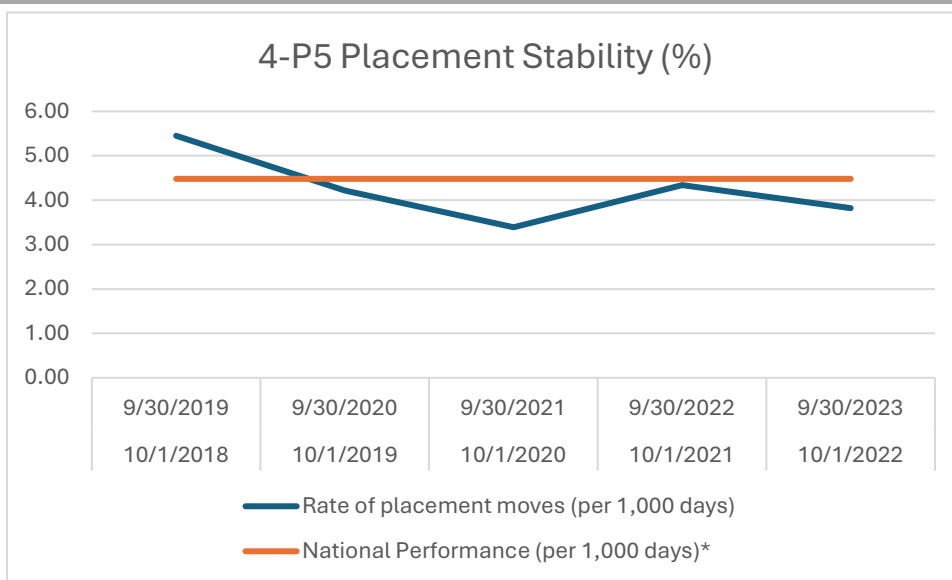
While Juvenile Probation has maintained a rate of 0.0%, which adheres to the Federal Standard of 5.6%, the small number of probation involved youth who've exited to reunification or guardianship

indicates a need to continue finding ways to support probation involved youth with home-based care and reunification efforts.

4-P5 Placement Stability

The P5 Placement Stability measure used to evaluate the stability of foster care placements. It tracks the number of placement moves children in foster care experience per 1,000 days in care. The national performance standard benchmark is less than 4.48 placement moves per 1,000 days in care.

CWS



4-P5 Placement Stability					
National Performance (per 1,000 days) < 4.48					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023

Rate of placement moves per 1,000 days (n)	5.45	4.22	3.39	4.34	3.82
Foster care days (n)	31,548	23,932	15,952	18,185	22,502
Placement moves (n)	172	101	54	79	86

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P5>

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract

Trends (2018-2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently demonstrated a commitment to meeting the federal Placement Stability standard of fewer than 4.48 placement moves per 1,000 foster care days during the five-year period from October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2023. The rate of placement moves began at 5.45 in 2018–2019, reflecting 172 placement moves across 31,548 foster care days. This marked the only year during the reporting period that the county exceeded the federal standard. Over the next four years, the county achieved substantial improvements, with rates falling to 4.22 in 2019–2020, 3.39 in 2020–2021, and 4.34 in 2021–2022. Most recently, in 2022–2023, the rate improved again to 3.82, based on 86 placement moves and 22,502 foster care days. These trends reflect a 30% reduction in placement move rates over the five years, showcasing significant progress and ongoing efforts to ensure stability for children in care.

Age Group

Placement stability outcomes varied significantly by age group, with younger children consistently experiencing fewer placement moves than older youth. Children aged 0 to 5 years averaged 3.00 moves per 1,000 foster care days, demonstrating the greatest placement stability. Children aged 6 to 10 years experienced slightly higher rates, with an average of 3.80 moves. Placement stability decreased further for children aged 11 to 15 years, who experienced an average of 4.50 moves. Youth aged 16 to 17 years encountered the highest rates of instability, averaging 5.30 moves per 1,000 days. These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions for older youth, who often face placement challenges due to complex behavioral needs, limited placement options, or other systemic factors.

Race/Ethnicity

Placement stability outcomes also revealed disparities across racial and ethnic groups. White children, Black children, and Asian/Pacific Islander children achieved stability rates below the federal benchmark, averaging 3.60, 3.50, and 3.00 moves per 1,000 days, respectively. Latino children experienced higher rates of placement moves, averaging 4.10 moves per 1,000 days, while Native American children faced the greatest challenges, with an average rate of 5.10 moves. These disparities suggest systemic inequities and highlight the need for culturally responsive approaches to improve placement stability, particularly for Latino and Native American children who may be at greater risk of disruption.

Conclusion

From October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2023, County of SLO consistently met the federal Placement Stability standard, demonstrating substantial progress in reducing placement move rates over the five-year period. The county achieved its best performance in 2020–2021 with a rate of 3.39 placement moves per 1,000 foster care days and maintained a rate below the national benchmark in the most recent reporting period (2022–2023), with 3.82 placement moves. However, disparities remain evident across age groups, with older youth experiencing higher rates of placement instability compared to younger children. Similarly, Native American and Latino children faced greater challenges in achieving

stable placements, highlighting the need for focused strategies to address these disparities. These findings emphasize the importance of ongoing efforts to sustain and improve placement stability for all children in foster care, particularly for older youth and historically underserved populations.

The county has made great improvements with foster parent engagement. The Parent Engagement Newsletter (PEN), which is distributed monthly, provides ongoing updates, resources, and support to foster parents. Additionally, the county organizes enrichment activities for foster youth at no cost, fostering a sense of community and connection. Additionally, the foster support unit offers guidance on navigating questions and concerns, as well as access to referrals, resources, and advocacy. Families consistently report feeling well-supported by the foster support staff and express appreciation for the program's knowledge, skills, and responsiveness. The unit has become an essential element of the county's efforts to improve placement stability, ensuring that both resource families and staff are equipped to provide care for the community's most vulnerable children.

These combined efforts reflect the county's commitment to fostering placement stability through proactive engagement, trauma-informed care, and robust support systems for resource families and foster youth. These initiatives continue to lay the foundation for long-term improvements in stability, family connections, and overall well-being for children in foster care.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/P5/STSG/r/Fed/I/>

Probation: P5 – Placement Stability					
Federal Standard ≤ 4.48% (per 1,000 days)	Oct 2018- Sep 2019	Oct 2019- Sep 2020	Oct 2020- Sep 2021	Oct 2021- Sep 2022	Oct 2022- Sep 2023
Placement moves (N)	0	0	0	0	0
Rate of placement moves per 1,000 days (N)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Foster care days (N) – Age: 11-15	264	0	46	175	167
Foster care days (N) – Age: 16-17	0	144	89	251	132
Foster care days (N) – Total	264	144	135	426	299

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/Default.aspx?report=P5>

Trends

Juvenile Probation has demonstrated exceptional performance on P5: Placement Stability over the five-year reporting period, achieving a rate of 0.0% placement moves per 1,000 foster care days in all years. This consistently meets and exceeds the Federal Standard rate of less than 4.48% placement moves per 1,000 days. Over the five-year period of review, there were no recorded placement moves for probation involved foster youth, indicating a high level of stability for youth in the system.

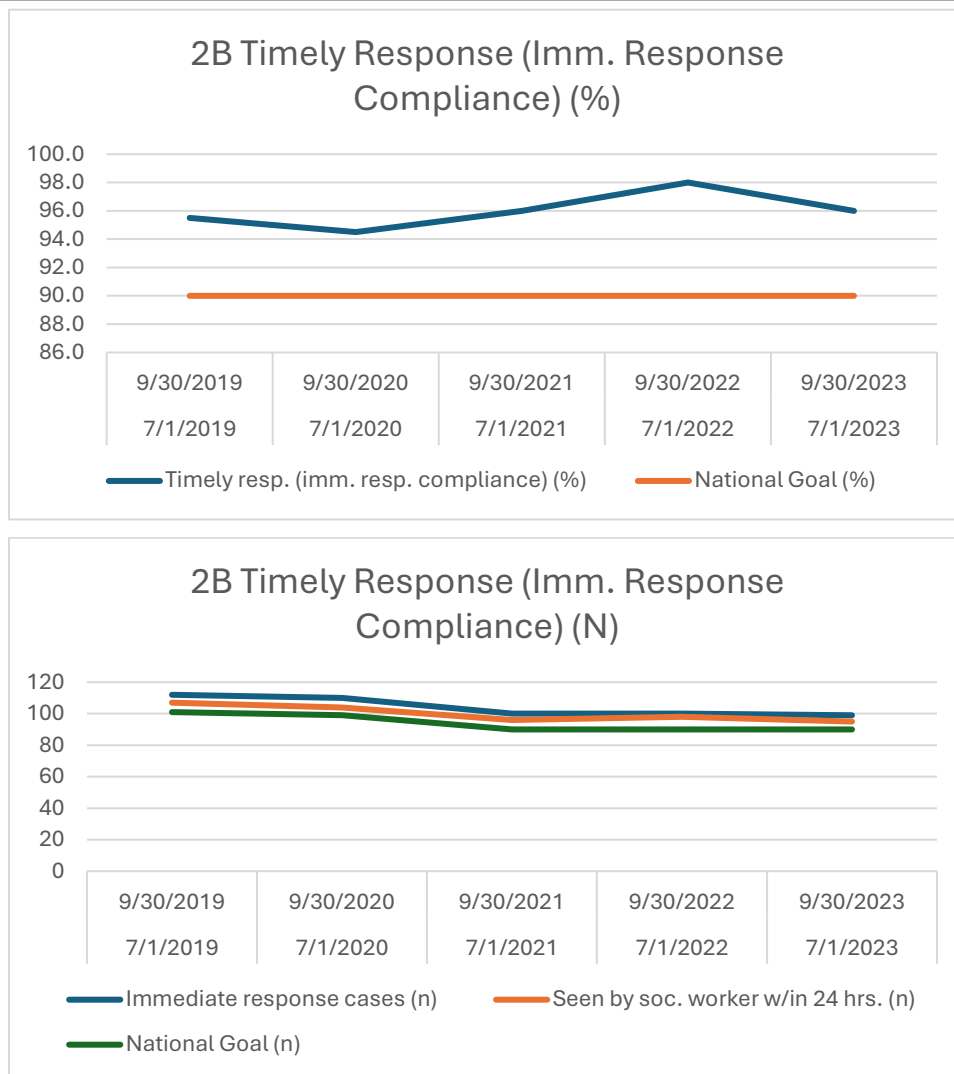
Conclusion

Over the five-year period of review, Juvenile Probation has maintained a placement stability rate of 100% per 1,000 foster care days for probation involved foster youth. This performance reflects Juvenile Probation's success in providing stable environments for youth and minimizing disruptions during their time in care.

2B Timely Response (Immediate Response Compliance)

The 2B Timely Response (Immediate Response Compliance) outcome measure counts both the number of child abuse and neglect referrals that require, and then receive, an in-person investigation within the timeframe specified by the referral response type. Referrals with status "attempted" or "completed" are included in the numerator.

CWS



2B Timely Response (Immediate Response Compliance)					
National Goal > 90.0					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023

To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Timely resp. (imm. resp. compliance) (%)	95.5%	94.5%	96.0%	98.0%	96.0%
Immediate response cases (n)	112	110	100	100	99
Seen by a social worker w/in 24 hrs. (n)	107	104	96	98	95
National Goal (n)	101	99	90	90	90

*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2B.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2B>

Trends

The percentage of timely responses for immediate response compliance the County of San Luis Obispo has consistently exceeded the national goal of 90% over the five-year period. In 2019, the compliance rate was 95.5%, slightly declining to 94.5% in 2020. It rose again to 96.0% in 2021 and peaked at 98.0% in 2022, before settling at 96.0% in 2023. Despite these slight fluctuations, the County maintained its position above the national standard each year. The total number of immediate response cases also varied, ranging from 112 in 2019 to 100 in 2021 and 2022, and slightly decreasing to 99 cases in 2023. These trends demonstrate consistent performance in meeting the national goal and ensuring timely responses, even as case volumes shifted slightly over time.

Age Group

Timely response compliance showed slight variation across age groups, with younger children generally receiving more consistent timely responses. In the July 1 to September 30, 2023, period, all cases for children under 1 year old received a timely response, achieving 100% compliance. Similarly, children aged 1–2 years also had perfect compliance, with all cases receiving timely responses. For children aged 3–5 years, 87% of cases were compliant, highlighting a slight decline compared to younger age groups. Older youth, particularly those aged 11–15 years and 16–17 years, demonstrated strong compliance rates, with 91% and 100% of cases, respectively, receiving timely responses. These age-based trends reflect prioritization across all groups, though areas such as the 3–5-year age range may benefit from targeted attention to close gaps in compliance.

Race/Ethnicity

Timely response compliance across ethnic groups varied slightly but remained consistently high. White children averaged the highest number of timely responses, with 96% compliance over the reporting years. Latino children followed closely, averaging 97% compliance. Black and Asian/Pacific Islander children had perfect compliance rates, with all cases reported receiving timely responses. Native American children had limited data, but no reported cases were non-compliant during the reporting period. Cases with missing ethnicity data averaged 91% compliance, indicating a slight gap.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently met and exceeded the national goal of 90% for immediate response compliance over the past five years. The county's performance reflects a strong commitment to timely investigations, with compliance rates consistently above 95%. Younger children and youth from historically underserved ethnic groups have also benefited from high compliance rates, demonstrating the department's dedication to equitable service delivery. Ongoing communication between Emergency Response social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers has been a key factor in maintaining timely responses, which has always been the

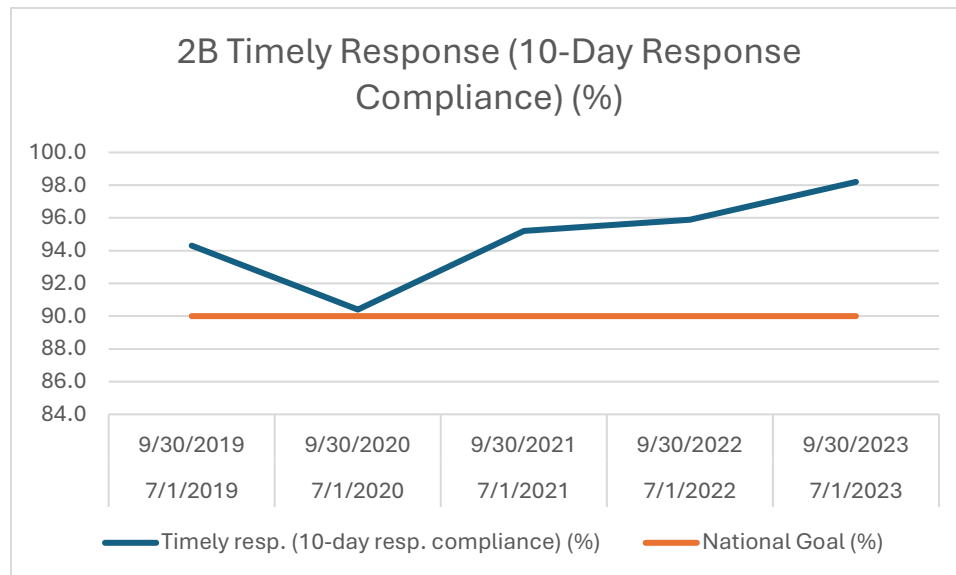
department's practice. Immediate responses require an in-person investigation within two hours of assignment. To support this, social worker supervisors use SafeMeasures during monthly conferences with their social workers to monitor outcomes and ensure timely responses.

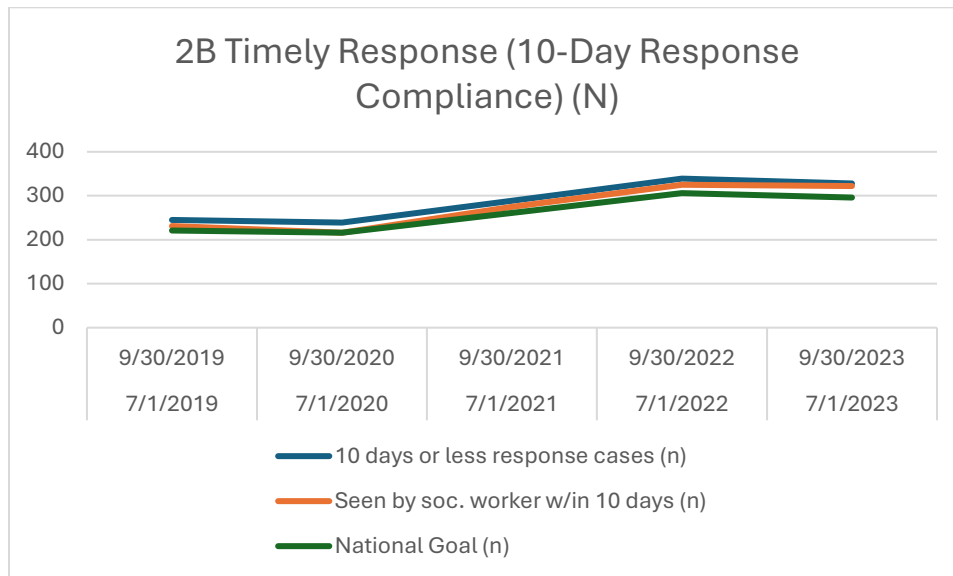
Additionally, CWS holds an ongoing monthly work group for Intake and ER staff and managers to identify barriers that social workers face in performing their job duties and to collaboratively develop solutions. These work groups also serve as opportunities to provide training on new or updated policies and procedures. Moving forward, the County will continue leveraging these tools and collaborative efforts to maintain high compliance rates, address minor gaps in response times, and ensure that all children and families receive prompt and effective responses in critical situations.

2B Timely Response (10-Day Response Compliance)

The 2B Timely Response (10-Day Response Compliance) outcome measure counts both the number of child abuse and neglect referrals that require, and then receive, an in-person investigation within the timeframe specified by the referral response type. Referrals with status "attempted" or "completed" are included in the numerator.

CWS





2B Timely Response (10-Day Response Compliance)					
National Goal > 90.0					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Timely resp. (10-day resp. compliance) (%)	94.3%	90.4%	95.2%	95.9%	98.2%
10 days or less response cases (n)	245	239	289	339	328
Seen by a soc. worker w/in 10 days (n)	231	216	275	325	322
National Goal (n)	221	216	261	306	296

*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2B.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2B>

Trends

The compliance rates for 10-Day Response in the County of San Luis Obispo have remained consistently above the National Goal of 90.0% over the past four years. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, the timely response rate was 94.3%, with 231 out of 245 cases seen within 10 days. The rate slightly dipped to 90.4% in 2020 but rebounded to 95.2% in 2021 and increased further to 95.9% in 2022. The total number of referrals requiring a 10-day response has also shown an upward trend, increasing from 245 cases in 2019 to 339 cases in 2022. The consistent performance demonstrates the department's commitment to ensuring timely investigation of child welfare referrals.

Age Groups

Compliance rates across age groups were strong in all reporting years. In the most recent reporting period ending September 30, 2023, younger children (under 1 year old and 1–2 years old) consistently had timely response rates at or near 100%. For example, in the same period, all 24 children under 1 year old and 34 children aged 1–2 years were seen within the required timeframe. However, older

youth (16–17 years and 18–20 years) had slightly lower rates in previous years, with a few cases not meeting the timeline. For instance, in 2020, two out of the 31 referrals for youth aged 16–17 years were not seen within 10 days. While these discrepancies are minimal, they highlight the importance of maintaining equity across all age groups to ensure comprehensive service delivery.

Race/Ethnicity

Timely response rates by ethnicity reveal positive outcomes for most groups, with compliance consistently above 90%. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2023, White children represented the largest group of timely responses, with 154 out of 158 cases (97.5%) completed within 10 days. Latino children followed closely, with 102 out of 104 cases (98.1%) meeting the timeline. Black children also achieved strong compliance, with all 4 cases completed within 10 days. However, some small discrepancies were observed in the Missing category, with 61 out of 61 cases achieving timely compliance, although the totals are relatively small. The County's strong performance across all ethnic groups reflects an equitable approach to case prioritization and timely responses.

Conclusion

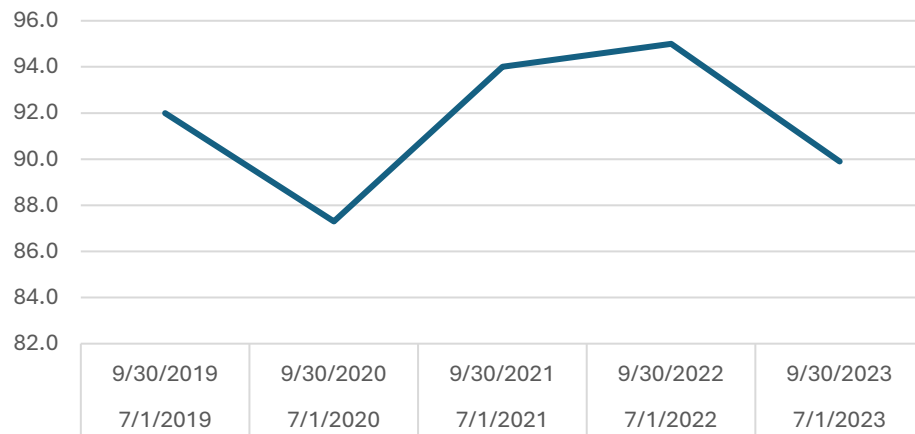
The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently met and exceeded the National Goal of 90.0% for 10-Day Response Compliance, achieving rates ranging from 90.4% to 95.9% between 2019 and 2022. Younger children and major ethnic groups, including White and Latino children, consistently had the highest rates of timely responses, indicating a strong adherence to response timelines. Ongoing challenges appear to be minimal, with only isolated cases of delayed responses noted for older youth and small subgroups.

The County continues to leverage SafeMeasures and regular staff supervision to monitor performance and identify barriers to timely responses. Monthly case reviews with social worker supervisors ensure that response times remain compliant, while periodic training sessions address updates in policies and procedures. Additionally, the department actively engages in continuous quality improvement through data monitoring and the use of collaborative work groups with Emergency Response staff. These practices underscore the County's commitment to delivering timely and equitable responses to all children and families in need.

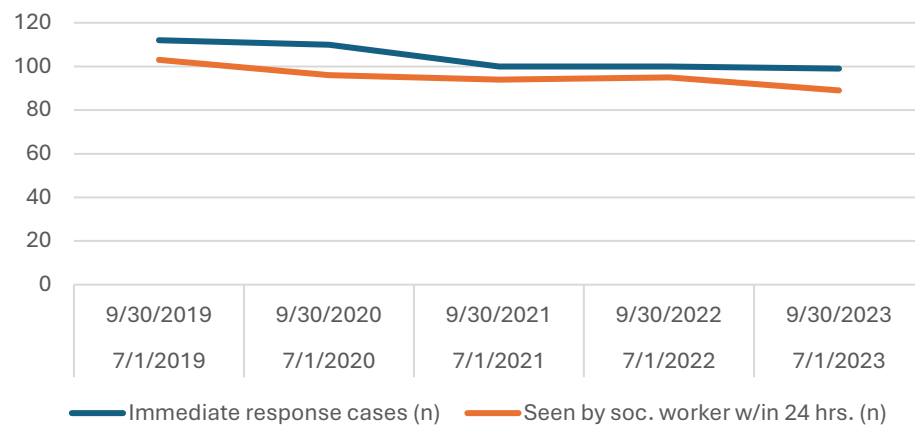
2D Timely Response – Completed (Immediate Response Compliance)

The 2D Timely Response – Completed (Immediate Response Compliance) outcome measure counts both the number of child abuse and neglect referrals that require, and then receive, an in-person investigation within the timeframe specified by the referral response type. Referrals with status “completed” are included in the numerator.

2D Timely Response Completed (Immediate Response Compliance) (%)



2D Timely Response Completed (Immediate Response Compliance) (N)



2D Monthly Caseworker Visits (Immediate Response Compliance)					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Timely response compliance (immediate response compliance) (%)	92.0%	87.3%	94.0%	95.0%	89.9%
Immediate response cases (n)	112	110	100	100	99
Seen by a social worker w/in 24 hrs. (n)	103	96	94	95	89

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2D.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2D>

Trends

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently achieved high compliance rates for Immediate Response Completed Contacts over the past five years, meeting or exceeding 87.3% compliance in all reporting periods. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, the timely response rate was 92.0%, with 103 out of 112 cases completed within the required timeframe. While a slight decline was observed in 2020 with an 87.3% compliance rate (96 out of 110 cases), subsequent years showed significant improvement, reaching 94.0% in 2021 and 95.0% in 2022. The overall trend demonstrates a steady commitment to ensuring timely responses to immediate referrals despite minor fluctuations.

Age Groups

Timely response rates vary by age group, with younger children consistently receiving higher rates of timely responses. For instance, in the most recent reporting period ending September 30, 2023, children under 1 year old had a timely response rate of 88.9% (8 out of 9 cases), while children aged 3–5 years and 6–10 years also demonstrated strong compliance at 82.6% (19 out of 23 cases) and 100% (24 out of 24 cases), respectively. However, older youth, particularly those aged 16–17 years, experienced a slight dip in compliance, with 86.7% (13 out of 15 cases) of referrals meeting the timeline in the same period. While performance remains high across all age groups, these discrepancies indicate opportunities to address specific challenges in meeting timely responses for older youth.

Race/Ethnicity

Timely response compliance rates by ethnicity show positive trends, with most ethnic groups achieving high compliance. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2023, White children had the highest number of timely responses, with 44 out of 49 cases (89.8%) meeting the required timeline. Latino children followed with 31 out of 34 cases (91.2%) completed on time. Black children achieved a 100% compliance rate with 3 timely responses, and Asian/Pacific Islander children also had all 2 cases completed within the required timeframe. However, minor delays were observed in the Missing category, where 9 out of 11 cases (81.8%) met the timeline. These results reflect a consistent and equitable approach across most racial and ethnic groups, with continued room for improvement in smaller subgroups.

Conclusion

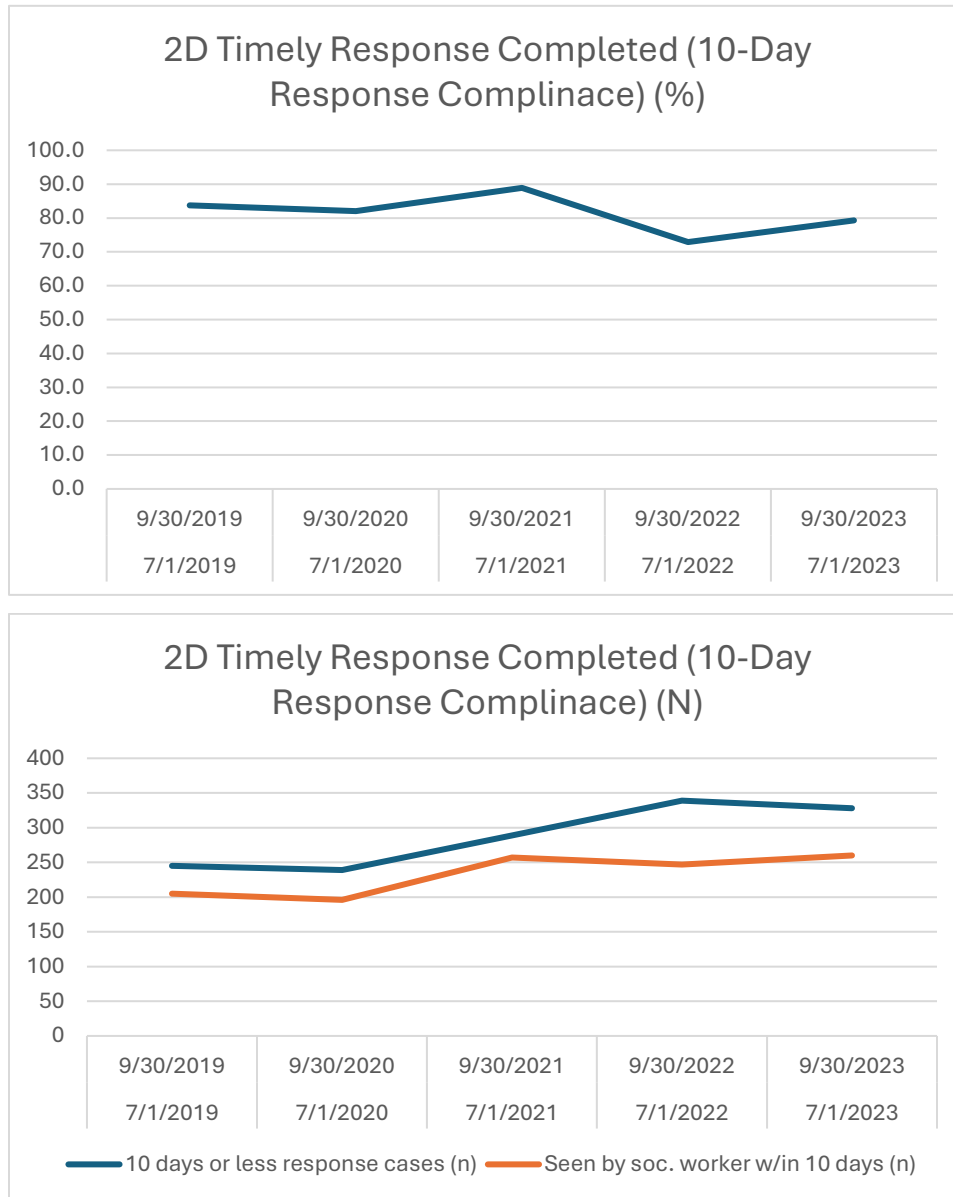
The County of San Luis Obispo has demonstrated strong performance in meeting Immediate Response Completed Contact requirements, with compliance rates consistently above 87% and reaching as high as 95% in recent years. Younger children and major ethnic groups such as White and Latino children consistently had the highest rates of timely responses, reflecting the department's effective prioritization and resource allocation. However, older youth and small subgroups such as those categorized as Missing experienced minor delays, presenting an opportunity for targeted interventions.

The County attributes its success to ongoing collaboration between emergency response staff and managers. Monthly case conferences and the use of SafeMeasures have been instrumental in monitoring performance and addressing barriers to timely responses. Additionally, the County's emphasis on staff training and procedural clarity has contributed to sustained improvement. Moving forward, the County will continue leveraging these practices to maintain high compliance rates and address identified gaps in service delivery.

2D Timely Response - Completed (10-Day Response Compliance)

The 2D Timely Response outcome measure counts both the number of child abuse and neglect referrals that require, and then receive, an in-person investigation within the timeframe specified by the referral response type. Referrals with status "completed" are included in the numerator.

CWS



2D Timely Response Completed (10-Day Response Compliance)					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023

Timely response compliance (10-Day) (%)	83.7%	82.0%	88.9%	72.9%	79.3%
10 days or less response cases (n)	245	239	289	339	328
Seen by a soc. worker w/in 10 days (n)	205	196	257	247	260

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2D.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2D>

Trends

The timely response compliance for 10-day investigations in the County of San Luis Obispo has shown fluctuations over the past five years. Compliance rates peaked at 88.9% in 2021, before declining to 72.9% in 2022. In the most recent reporting period ending September 30, 2023, compliance improved to 79.3%, reflecting the County's ongoing efforts to address this measure. The number of investigations completed within 10 days has followed a similar pattern, increasing from 205 timely responses in 2019 to 257 in 2021, and then declining slightly to 247 in 2022 and 260 in 2023. These trends underscore the need for continued focus to ensure timely responses.

Age Groups

Timely response rates vary significantly by age group. Younger children, particularly those under six years old, consistently receive timely investigations at higher rates. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2023, children under 1 year old had the highest timely response rates, with 20 out of 24 investigations completed on time (83%). In contrast, older youth aged 16–17 years had lower rates, with 24 of 37 investigations (65%) completed within 10 days. This disparity highlights the need for targeted support to improve response times for older youth.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in timely response compliance are evident across racial and ethnic groups in San Luis Obispo County. In the most recent reporting period, White children accounted for the majority of timely investigations, with 123 out of 159 responses completed within 10 days (77.4%). Latino children followed, with 86 of 103 timely responses (83.5%). However, Black children experienced slightly lower compliance rates, with 3 out of 4 investigations completed on time (75%). Asian/Pacific Islander children and Native American children had no timely responses recorded, while children in the "Missing" category had a compliance rate of 77%. These patterns indicate a need for equitable attention across all racial and ethnic groups.

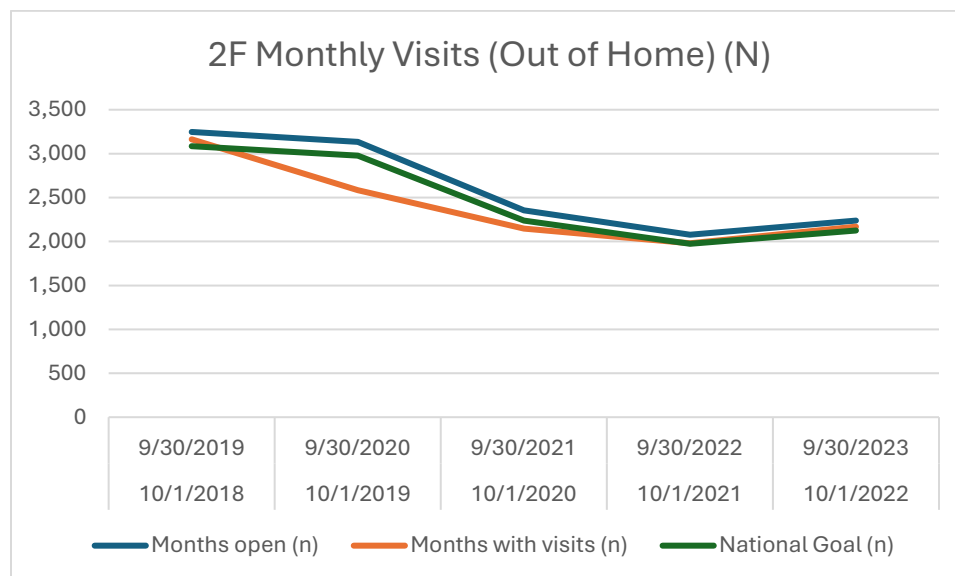
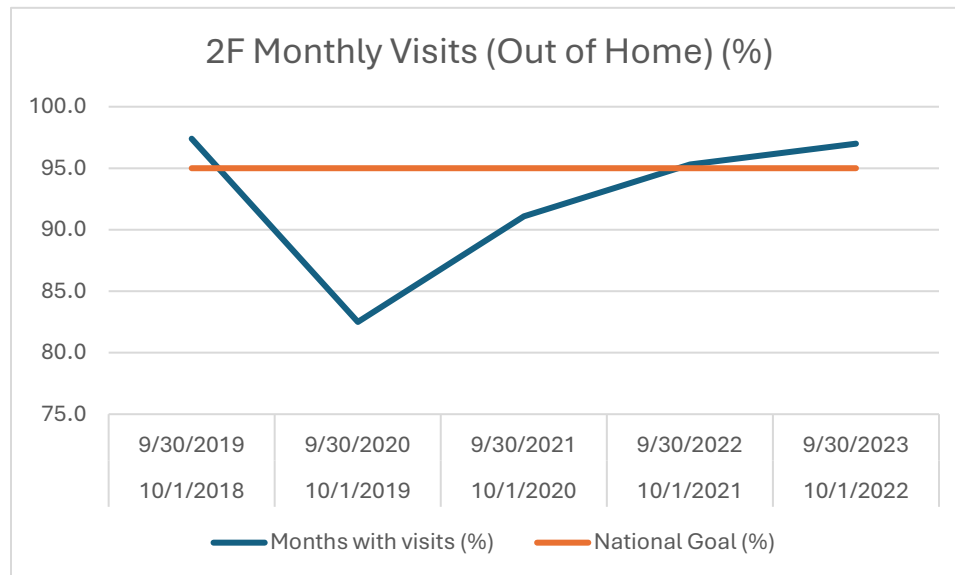
Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo continues to focus on improving timely response compliance for 10-day investigations. While the County has made progress in recent years, particularly with younger children, disparities persist for older youth and some racial and ethnic groups. To address these challenges, the County is committed to ongoing communication among social workers, supervisors, and managers to identify barriers and implement solutions. Monthly workgroups and targeted trainings will continue to be a priority to ensure consistent compliance and equitable access to services for all children and families in San Luis Obispo County.

2F Monthly Visits (Out of Home)

The 2F Monthly Visits (Out of Home) outcome measure calculates the percentage of children in placement who are visited by case workers. Each child placement for an entire month must be visited at least once. This outcome measure summarizes monthly data by 12-month periods.

CWS



2F Monthly Visits (Out of Home)					
National Goal > 95.0					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Months with visits (%)	97.4%	82.5%	91.1%	95.3%	97.0
Months open (n)	3,247	3,135	2,355	2,077	2,237
Months with visits (n)	3,163	2,585	2,146	1,980	2,170

National Goal (n)	3,085	2,979	2,238	1,974	2,126
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*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2F.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2F>

Trends

The data reveals fluctuations in the percentage of timely monthly social worker visits in the County of San Luis Obispo over the five-year period. From the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, the compliance rate was 97.4%, exceeding the national goal of 95%. However, the compliance rate dropped sharply to 82.5% in 2020, likely due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. After this dip, the percentage rebounded to 91.1% in 2021 and continued to improve in subsequent years, reaching 95.3% in 2022 and 97.0% in 2023. Despite the initial challenges, the County demonstrated a commitment to ensuring compliance, achieving rates that either met or exceeded the national goal in three of the five years.

Age Group

The analysis of timely monthly social worker visits by age group indicates varying levels of compliance. In the most recent reporting period (October 2022 to September 2023), children under 1 year old had the highest number of months with visits (342), showing significant attention to infants. Other age groups, such as children aged 6–10 years, also had a substantial number of visits (469). In contrast, older youth aged 16–17 years consistently had fewer visits, with only 245 months with visits in the same period. This trend suggests that younger children receive more frequent monitoring, while older youth may require targeted strategies to ensure consistent visits.

Race/Ethnicity

Timely visits also varied by racial and ethnic groups. White children had the highest number of months with visits in the most recent reporting period (1,240), followed by Latino children (737). Black children, though fewer in number, saw a decline in visits over the five years, with only 47 months with visits in 2023 compared to 124 in 2019. Notably, the number of visits for Native American children increased to 42 in 2023 from 22 in 2019, reflecting an improvement in monitoring efforts for this group. Visits for children with missing or unreported ethnicity also showed a decrease, indicating better data accuracy and service targeting.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently demonstrated resilience and improvement in achieving timely monthly social worker visits, even amidst challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Strong communication between Family Maintenance (FM) and Family Reunification (FR) social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers has been a cornerstone of this success. Social worker supervisors utilize SafeMeasures during monthly conferences with their social workers to monitor outcomes and ensure consistent monthly visits. Additionally, the County hosts an ongoing monthly workgroup for FM/FR social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers to identify and address barriers impacting social worker performance. This collaborative platform also provides opportunities for training on new or updated policies and procedures, further strengthening the department's capacity to meet goals.

Key programs such as Safety Organized Practice (SOP), Trauma-Informed Care, and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings have significantly contributed to the County's success in meeting this measure. These programs not only shape policies and procedures but also foster a culture of thoughtful implementation among social workers. Staff members understand the research-backed benefits of

these programs, which extend beyond mere policy compliance, reinforcing their commitment to achieving positive outcomes for children and families in care.

The use of tools like the Case Deadlines Report further supports FM/FR and adoption/permanency social workers by providing clear due dates to keep them on track with case requirements. This proactive approach ensures that social workers can maintain high levels of performance, contributing to the County's ability to exceed the national goal of 95% for timely monthly visits in three of the last five years. While disparities remain among age groups and racial/ethnic categories, these established practices and programs position the County well to continue addressing challenges and improving outcomes for all children in out-of-home care.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: 2F – Monthly Visits (Out of Home)					
Federal Standard ≥ 95%	Oct2018-Sep2019	Oct2019-Sep2020	Oct2020-Sep2021	Oct2021-Sep2022	Oct2022-Sep2023
Months with visits (%)	100%	79.5%	75.9%	89.2%	97.7%
Months open (n)	58	39	29	37	44
Months with visits (n)	58	31	22	33	43
Children in out-of-home placement (n)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/2F/MTSG/r/sd/>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2F>

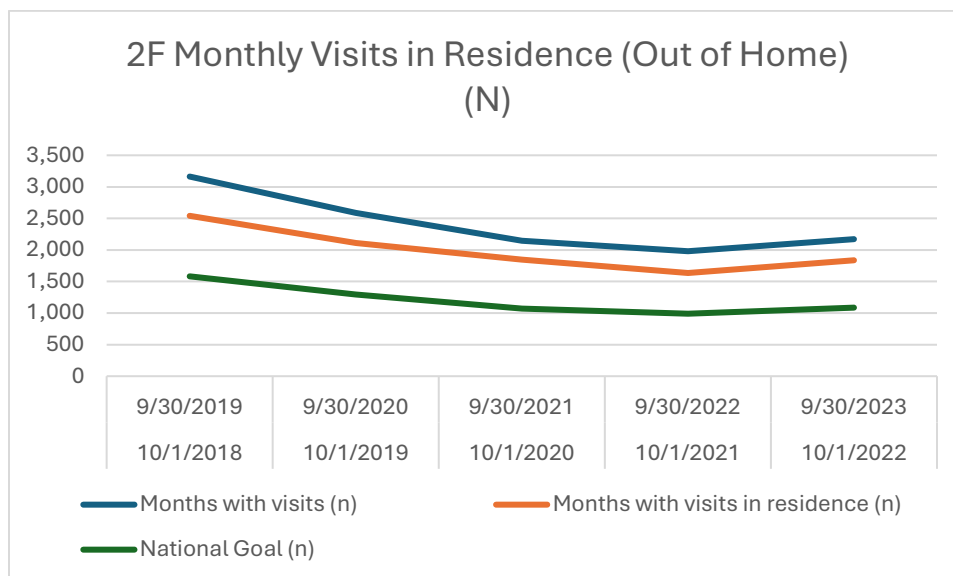
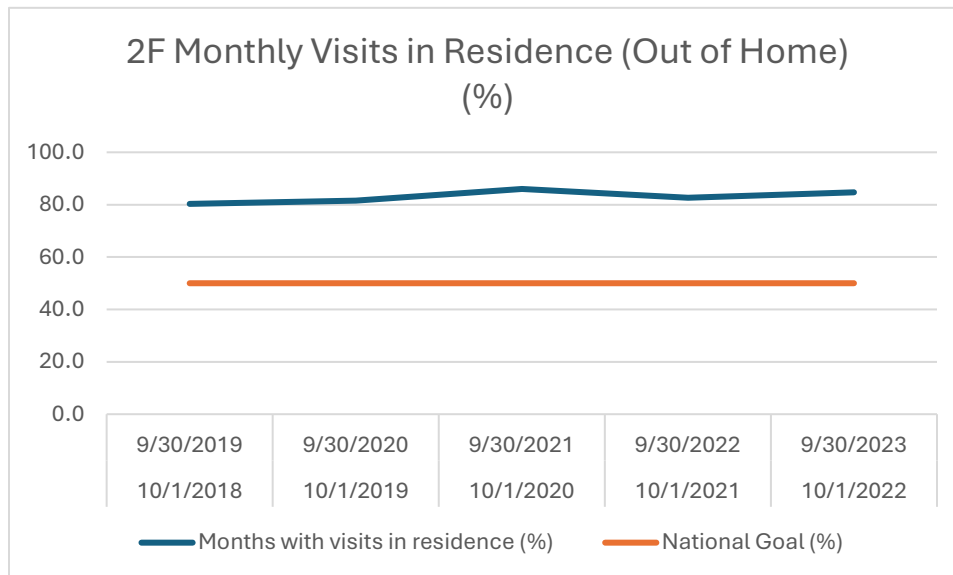
Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance on 2F: Monthly Visits (Out of Home) varied over the five-year period of review. In 2018–19, Juvenile Probation achieved a perfect compliance rate of 100%, exceeding the Federal Standard rate 95%; however, compliance declined significantly in 2019–20 (79.5%) and 2020–21 (75.9%) before improving to 89.2% in 2021–22 and 97.7% in 2022–23, once again exceeding the Federal Standard. A review of the data indicated during the decline in performance during the COVID-19 Pandemic appears to be related to missing contacts among a few Non-Minor Dependents (NMDs) who were allowed to remain in Extended Foster Care (EFC) past their 21st birthday, an extension granted by the State in response to the pandemic. Additionally, while Deputy Probation Officers were encouraged to have face to face contact with these 21+ EFC youth, it was not a requirement. As stated in the All County Letter (ACL) 20-117, monthly contacts with 21+ EFC youth could occur through remote methods, such as email, text, phone calls, or videoconferencing. While monthly contacts, or attempts to contact, 21+ EFC youth were recorded in Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS), those contacts were counted as missed contacts in the U.C. Berkeley data, as they were not face to face.

2F Monthly Visits in Residence (Out of Home)

The 2F Monthly Visits in Residence (Out of Home) outcome measure calculates the percentage of children in placement who are visited by caseworkers. Each child placement for an entire month must be visited at least once. This outcome measure summarizes monthly data by 12-month periods.

CWS



2F Monthly Visits in Residence (Out of Home)					
National Goal > 50.0					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Months with visits in residence (%)	80.3%	81.5%	86.0%	82.6%	50.0%
Months with visits (n)	3,163	2,585	2,146	1,980	2,170

Months with visits in residence (n)	2,541	2,108	1,846	1,635	1,839
National Goal (n)	1,582	1,293	1,073	990	1,085

*National Performance. For details see CFSR Technical Bulletin 13.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2F.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2F>

Trends

The data for Measure 2F, which tracks monthly visits in the residence for children in out-of-home placements, reflects variability in performance across the five-year period in the County of San Luis Obispo. The percentage of timely monthly visits conducted in the residence peaked at 86.0% in the reporting period ending September 30, 2021, before declining to 82.6% in 2022 and 50.0% in 2023. Despite this decline, the County consistently exceeded the national goal of 50% in all years. The total number of months with visits in residence followed a similar trend, with a decline from 2,541 months in 2019 to 1,634 months in 2022, before recovering to 1,841 months in 2023. These fluctuations highlight both challenges and successes in maintaining compliance over time.

Age Group

The analysis of timely monthly visits by age group shows significant differences in performance. In the most recent reporting period (October 2022 to September 2023), infants under 1 year old had the highest number of months with visits (283), demonstrating the County's focus on providing intensive oversight for the youngest children. Other age groups, such as children aged 6–10 years, also received substantial attention, with 385 months of visits recorded. Older youth aged 16–17 years consistently had fewer visits, with only 218 months recorded in 2023. This trend suggests that younger children are prioritized for frequent monitoring, while older youth may require targeted strategies to ensure consistent engagement and visits.

Race/Ethnicity

Performance also varied across racial and ethnic groups. White children accounted for the highest number of months with visits in the residence in the most recent reporting period, with 1,061 months recorded in 2023, followed by Latino children with 615 months. Black children, though fewer in number, experienced a decline in visits over the five-year period, with 44 months in 2023 compared to 111 months in 2019. Meanwhile, visits for Native American children showed consistent improvement, increasing from 22 months in 2019 to 36 months in 2023. Children with missing or unreported ethnic data had fewer visits over time, reflecting improved data accuracy and targeted services.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has consistently exceeded the national goal for timely monthly visits conducted in the residence. Strong communication and collaboration between Family Maintenance (FM) and Family Reunification (FR) social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers have been integral to this success. Social worker supervisors leverage tools such as SafeMeasures during monthly conferences to track outcomes and maintain compliance. An ongoing monthly workgroup for FM/FR social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers provides a forum to identify and address barriers, deliver training on updated policies and procedures, and ensure alignment with the County's goals.

Key programs such as Safety Organized Practice (SOP), Trauma-Informed Care, and Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings have significantly contributed to achieving success in this measure. These

programs not only influence policies and procedures but also foster a culture of thoughtful implementation among social workers. Staff members are committed to these research-backed practices, understanding their benefits beyond compliance with policy requirements. Continued efforts to address disparities in performance by age and ethnicity will further enhance the County's ability to provide timely and equitable in-residence visits for children in out-of-home care.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values 1 to 10.

Probation: 2F – Monthly Visits in Residence (Out of Home)					
Federal Standard \geq 50%	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Months with visits in Residence (%)	94.8%	87.1%	95.5%	81.8%	95.3%
Months open (n)	58	39	29	37	44
Months with visits in Residence (n)	55	27	21	27	41
Children in out-of-home placement (n)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/2F/MTSG/r/sd/>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2F>

Trends

Juvenile Probation has consistently exceeded the Federal Standard rate of 50% for Monthly Visits in Residence (Out of Home).

Age Group

Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently been above the Federal Standard. As such, age does not appear to be a factor.

Race/Ethnicity

Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has consistently been above the Federal Standard. As such, race or ethnicity do not appear to have been a factor.

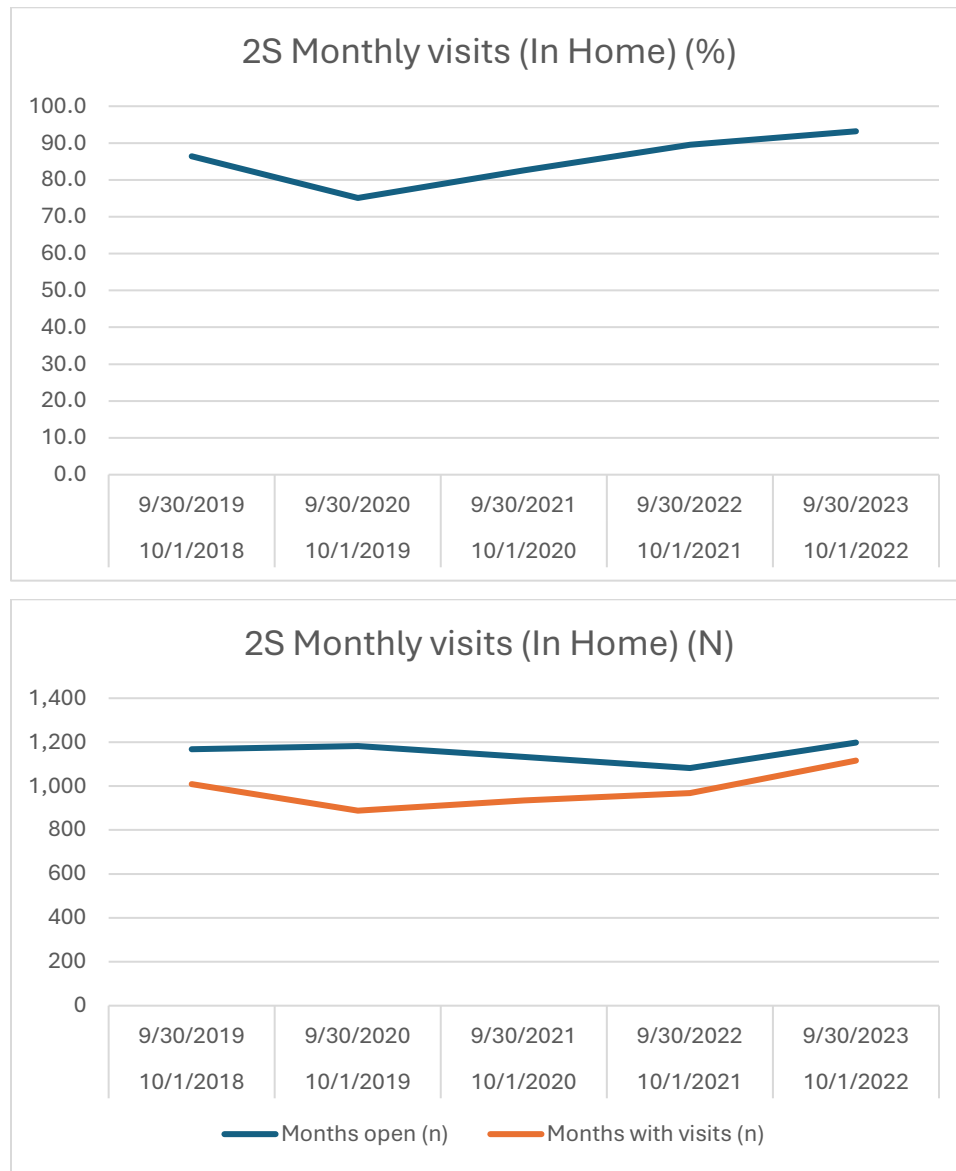
Conclusion

While Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure has exceeded the Federal Standard, there still exists an opportunity to strengthening youth connection to services and exits to permanency through increased monthly visits.

2S Monthly Visits (In Home)

The 2S Monthly Visits (In Home) outcome measure calculates the percentage of children receiving in-home services who are visited by caseworkers. Each child receiving services for an entire month must be visited at least once. This outcome measure summarizes monthly data by 12-month periods.

CWS



2S Monthly Visits (In Home)					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Months with visits (%)	86.4%	75.1%	82.6%	89.5%	93.2
Months open (n)	1,168	1,182	1,132	1,082	1,198
Months with visits (n)	1,009	888	935	968	1,116

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2S.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2S>

Trends

The data for Measure 2S, which tracks timely monthly social worker visits for in-home cases in the County of San Luis Obispo, shows a consistent upward trend in compliance over the five-year reporting period. In the period ending September 30, 2019, the compliance rate was 86.4%. This percentage declined to 75.1% in 2020, likely due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, subsequent years reflected significant improvement, with compliance rates increasing to 82.6% in 2021, 89.5% in 2022, and 93.2% in 2023. The total number of months with visits followed a similar pattern, increasing from 1,009 in 2019 to 1,124 in 2023, reflecting the County's sustained efforts to meet and exceed performance expectations.

Age Group

An analysis by age group reveals important trends in social worker visits for in-home cases. In the most recent reporting period (October 2022 to September 2023), children aged 11–15 years had the highest number of months with visits (309), highlighting strong monitoring efforts for this age group. Children under 1 year old also received significant attention, with 146 months of visits recorded. Similarly, children aged 6–10 years had 253 months of visits, showing a strong focus on younger children. Conversely, older youth aged 16–17 years consistently had fewer visits, with only 67 months recorded in 2023. This pattern emphasizes the need for targeted strategies to ensure consistent engagement with older youth while maintaining robust oversight for other age groups.

Race/Ethnicity

The data also highlights disparities in timely monthly visits across racial and ethnic groups. White children consistently accounted for the highest number of months with visits, with 591 recorded in 2023, followed by Latino children with 444 months. Visits for Black children declined over the years, with only 10 months recorded in 2023 compared to 24 in 2019. However, Native American children saw an increase in visits, from 7 months in 2019 to 26 months in 2023, reflecting improved monitoring efforts for this group. Children with missing or unreported ethnicity data showed fluctuations in visits, with a notable decrease to 43 months in 2023, which may indicate improved data accuracy and focused service delivery.

Conclusion

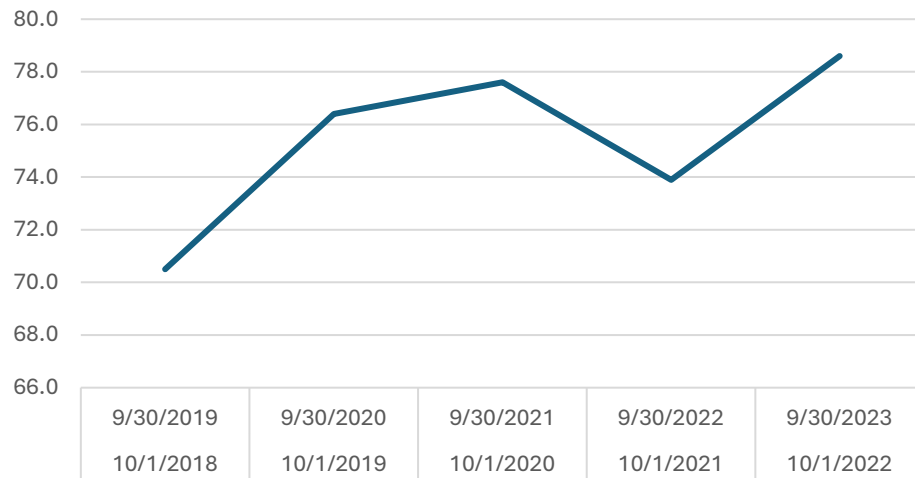
The County of San Luis Obispo has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving timely monthly social worker visits for in-home cases, with notable progress in compliance rates over the five-year period. Effective communication and collaboration between Family Maintenance (FM) and Family Reunification (FR) social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers have been key drivers of success. Social worker supervisors use tools like SafeMeasures during monthly conferences to monitor outcomes and address any gaps. Additionally, an ongoing monthly workgroup provides a platform to identify barriers, deliver training on new or updated policies and procedures, and align staff efforts with departmental goals.

Programs such as Safety Organized Practice (SOP), Trauma-Informed Care, and Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings have played a significant role in achieving success in this measure. These initiatives not only shape policies and procedures but also enhance implementation and performance among social workers. Staff understand the research-backed benefits of these programs, which go beyond compliance requirements. Continued focus on addressing disparities in visits by age and ethnicity will further strengthen the County's ability to provide consistent and equitable monitoring for all in-home cases.

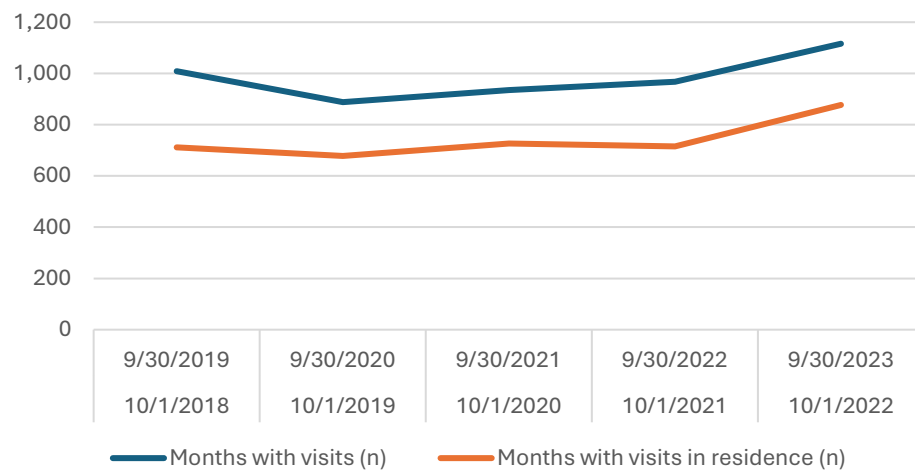
2S Monthly Visits in Residence (In Home)

The 2S Monthly Visits in Residence (In Home) outcome measure calculates the percentage of children receiving in-home services who are visited by caseworkers. Each child receiving services for an entire month must be visited at least once. This outcome measure summarizes monthly data by 12-month periods.

2S Monthly Visits in Residence (In Home) (%)



2S Monthly Visits in Residence (In Home) (N)



2S Monthly Visits in Residence (In Home)					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Months with visits (%)	70.5%	76.4%	77.6%	73.9%	78.6%
Months with visits (n)	1,009	888	935	968	1,116
Months with visits in residence (n)	711	678	726	715	877

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2S.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS2S>

Trends (2018-2023)

The data for Measure 2S, which tracks monthly social worker visits in residence for in-home cases, reflects gradual improvements over the five-year period in the County of San Luis Obispo. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, the compliance rate was 70.5%. This increased steadily, reaching 77.6% in 2021. However, there was a slight decline to 73.9% in 2022 before climbing again to 78.6% in 2023. The total number of months with visits in residence followed a similar trend, increasing from 711 in 2019 to 875 in 2023. These gains highlight the County's ongoing efforts to improve compliance with timely monthly visits for in-home cases.

Age Group

Analysis by age group reveals distinct patterns in social worker visits. In the most recent reporting period (October 2022 to September 2023), children aged 11–15 years had the highest number of months with visits in residence (251), indicating strong monitoring efforts for this group. Children under 1 year old also received substantial attention, with 114 months of visits recorded. In contrast, older youth aged 16–17 years consistently had fewer visits, with only 34 months recorded in 2023. This trend underscores the need for targeted strategies to ensure consistent engagement with older youth while maintaining strong oversight for other age groups.

Race/Ethnicity

The data also highlights variations in timely monthly visits across racial and ethnic groups. White children consistently had the highest number of months with visits in residence, with 483 recorded in 2023. Latino children followed, with 321 months recorded in the same period. Visits for Black children declined over time, with only 8 months recorded in 2023 compared to 24 in 2019. Visits for Native American children, on the other hand, increased from 5 months in 2019 to 19 months in 2023, reflecting progress in ensuring monitoring for this group. Children with missing or unreported ethnic data had fewer visits, which may indicate improved data accuracy and focused service delivery.

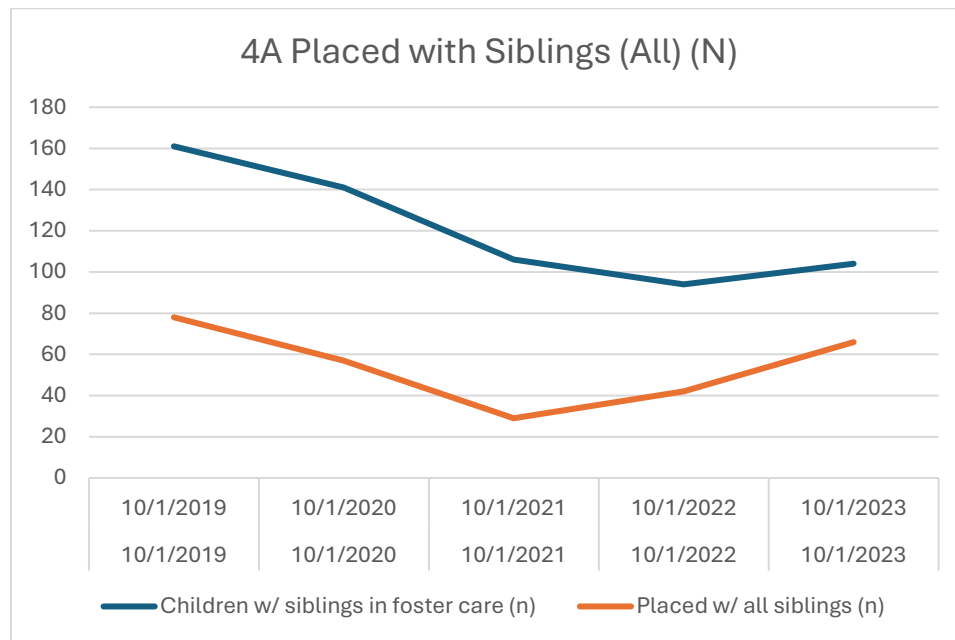
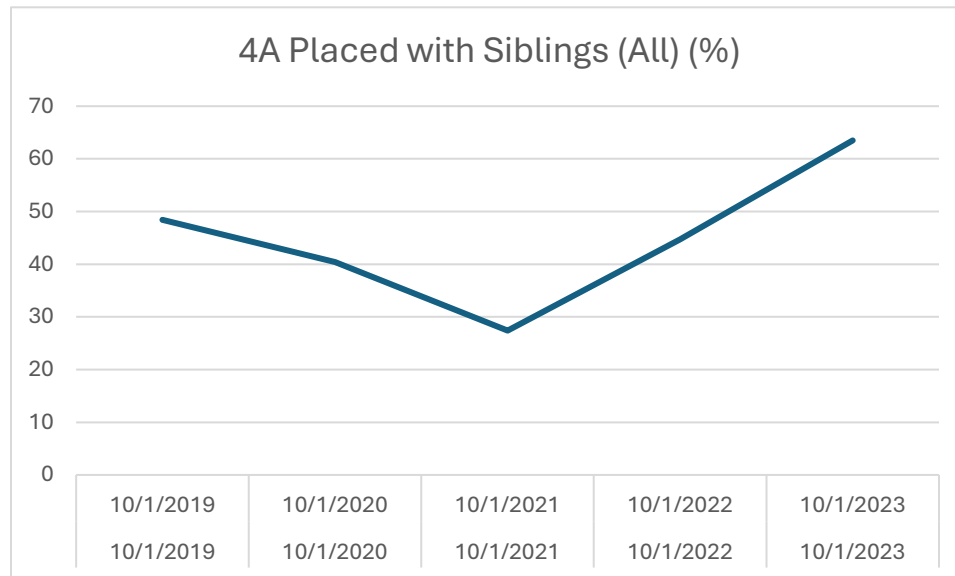
Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has demonstrated progress in meeting the measure for timely monthly social worker visits in residence for in-home cases. Strong communication and collaboration between Family Maintenance (FM) and Family Reunification (FR) social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers have been instrumental in achieving these outcomes. Social worker supervisors utilize tools such as SafeMeasures during monthly conferences to monitor compliance and address any gaps. An ongoing monthly workgroup for FM/FR social workers, social worker supervisors, and managers provides a platform to identify barriers, deliver training on new or updated policies and procedures, and ensure alignment with departmental goals.

Programs like Safety Organized Practice (SOP), Trauma-Informed Care, and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings have also played a key role in fostering success in this measure. These initiatives not only shape policies and procedures but also enhance the implementation and performance of Social Workers. Staff understand the research-backed benefits of these programs, which extend beyond compliance with policy requirements. Continued focus on addressing disparities in visits by age and ethnicity will further strengthen the County's ability to provide consistent and equitable monitoring for all in-home cases.

4A Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care (All)

The 4A Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care (All) outcome measure provides point in time counts of sibling groups placed in Child Welfare supervised foster care.



4A Placed with Siblings (All)					
National Goal = N.A.					
Point in Time	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023
Placed w/ all siblings (%)	48.4%	40.4%	27.4%	44.7%	63.5%
Children w/ siblings in foster care (n)	161	141	106	94	104
Placed w/ all siblings (n)	78	57	29	42	66

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_2S.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=Siblings>

Trends (2019-2023)

The percentage of children placed with all their siblings in foster care has shown significant fluctuation over the past five years in the County of San Luis Obispo. In 2019, 48.4% of children with siblings in foster care were placed with all their siblings, but this percentage dropped to 40.4% in 2020 and then to a concerning low of 27.4% in 2021. However, the County demonstrated notable improvement in subsequent years, with the percentage increasing to 44.7% in 2022 and reaching 63.5% in 2023. These improvements suggest enhanced efforts and strategies to prioritize sibling placements.

Placement Data

The number of children with siblings in foster care has gradually decreased over the five years, from 161 in 2019 to 104 in 2023. Concurrently, the number of children placed with all their siblings dropped significantly from 78 in 2019 to a low of 29 in 2021 but has since recovered to 66 in 2023. These numbers reflect an ongoing commitment by the County to ensure sibling placements, particularly in recent years.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has faced challenges in achieving high percentages of sibling placements over the past five years, but recent improvements reflect ongoing efforts to prioritize keeping siblings together. The significant increase to 63.5% in 2023 demonstrates the County's resilience and effectiveness in addressing this critical area. However, a factor contributing to the earlier decline in sibling placements was the lack of sufficient resource homes within the County. To address this, recruitment efforts have been expanded by participating in multiple community and faith-based events each month to attract and onboard new Resource families.

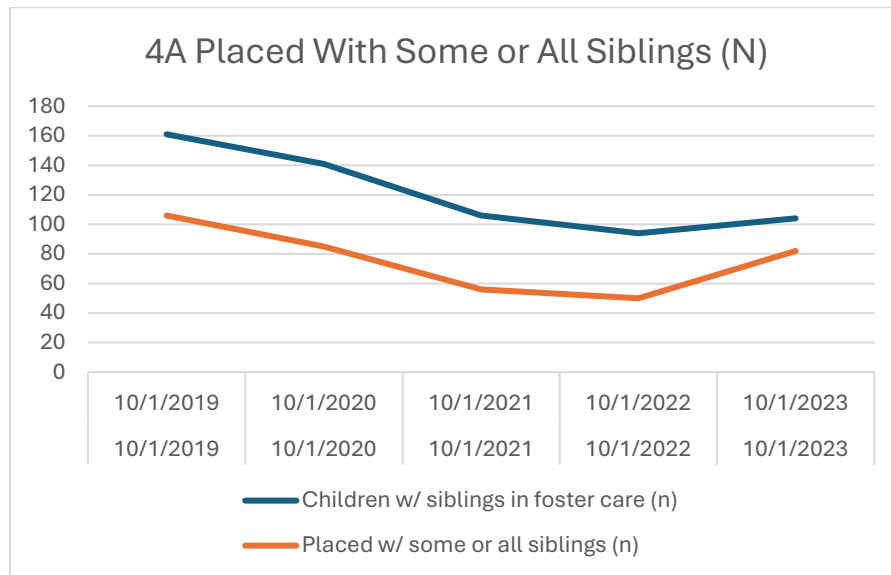
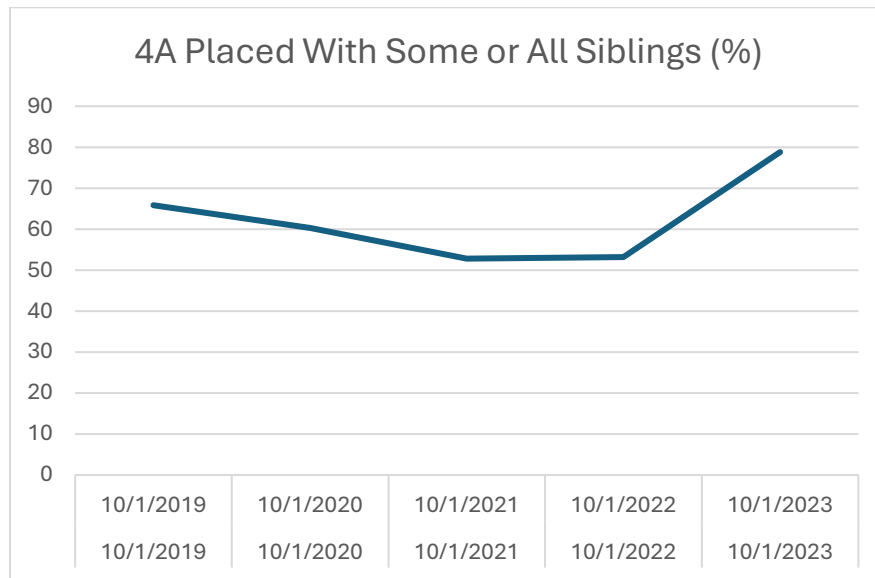
Efforts to enhance sibling placements also focus on engaging individuals and families from diverse backgrounds to ensure that placements reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community. Recruitment campaigns highlight the importance of keeping children connected to their schools, neighborhoods, and support networks, emphasizing the value of maintaining continuity in their lives. The recruitment process includes informational sessions for unmatched applicants, targeted media campaigns, and ongoing collaboration with existing foster parents, who often serve as ambassadors for the program.

Another challenge impacting sibling placements is the increasingly complex needs of families served by CWS. Many siblings present with behavioral issues that some caregivers may not be equipped to handle at the time of placement, resulting in siblings being placed in separate homes. Moving forward, the County's continued focus on recruiting resource homes that can accommodate sibling groups, providing caregivers with the necessary training and support, and maintaining targeted recruitment strategies will be key. Additionally, the ongoing collaboration between Social Workers, Supervisors, and managers will help identify and address barriers to sibling placements, ensuring that these efforts lead to sustained progress in keeping families together.

4A Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care (Some or All)

The 4A Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care (Some or All) outcome measure provides point in time counts of sibling groups placed in Child Welfare supervised foster care.

CWS



4A Placed with Siblings (Some or All) (%)					
National Goal = N.A.					
Point in Time	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023
Placed w/ all siblings (%)	65.8%	60.3%	52.8%	53.2%	78.8%
Children w/ siblings in foster care (n)	161	141	106	94	104
Placed w/ all siblings (n)	106	85	56	50	84

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/SiblingsDynamic.aspx>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=Siblings>

Trends (2019-2023)

The measure for placing siblings together (some or all) in the County of San Luis Obispo has shown significant improvement over the five-year period, culminating in a substantial increase to 78.8% in 2023. The percentage dropped to 52.8% in 2021, the lowest point during the period, but has since rebounded, demonstrating the County's commitment to addressing this important area. This upward

trend, particularly the notable jump from 53.2% in 2022 to 78.8% in 2023, highlights the effectiveness of targeted strategies to improve sibling placements.

Age Group

Data analysis by age group was not provided in the current dataset for this measure; however, the trend of improvement likely reflects a combination of factors, including targeted recruitment efforts and collaboration across various levels of Child Welfare Services.

Race/Ethnicity

Data for sibling placements by racial or ethnic groups was also unavailable for this specific measure. Nevertheless, ongoing efforts to engage families from diverse backgrounds and increase resource home availability aim to address potential disparities and ensure culturally responsive placements for all children in care.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made significant strides in improving sibling placements, with the percentage of children placed with some or all siblings increasing to 78.8% in 2023. This progress reflects the impact of several focused strategies, including increased recruitment efforts and collaboration among Social Workers, Supervisors, and managers. A major factor that previously contributed to lower percentages of sibling placements was the shortage of Resource homes within the County. To address this challenge, Child Welfare Services has been actively recruiting at multiple community and faith-based events each month, highlighting the importance of sibling placements in keeping families connected.

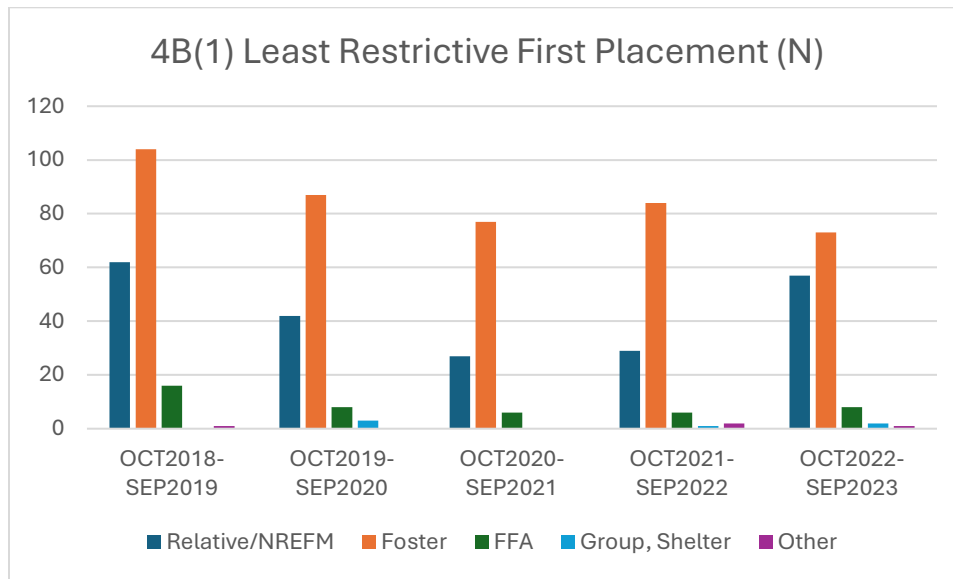
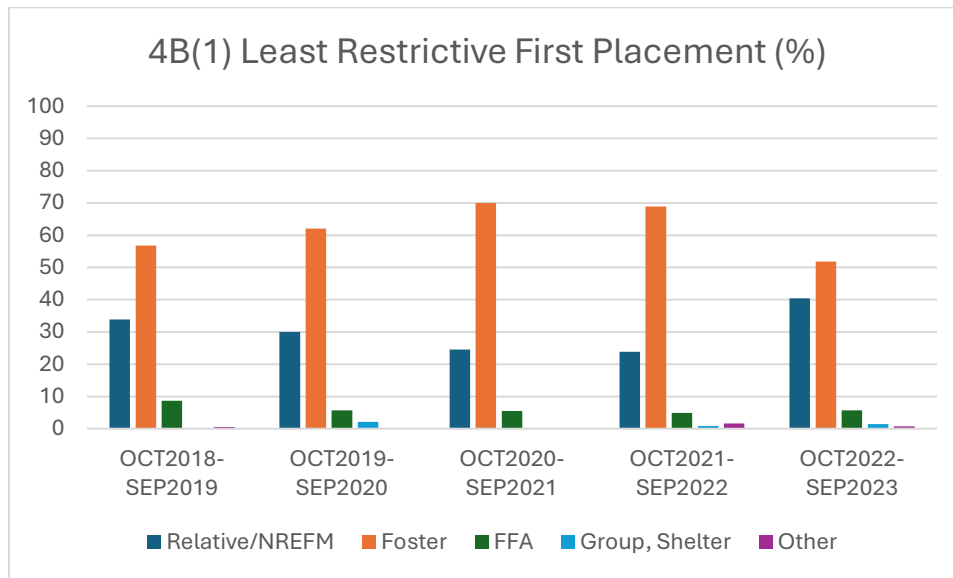
Additionally, efforts focus on engaging individuals and families from diverse backgrounds to reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community. Recruitment campaigns emphasize the benefits of maintaining connections to schools, neighborhoods, and support networks, and include informational sessions, targeted media outreach, and collaboration with existing foster parents who serve as ambassadors for the program.

The County has also recognized that the complexity of family needs, including behavioral challenges among siblings, can sometimes hinder placements together. To mitigate this, ongoing support and training for Resource families have been prioritized. Programs such as Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings and Trauma-Informed Care continue to support these efforts by fostering collaboration and ensuring placements that meet the needs of children and families. Moving forward, the County's continued focus on recruitment, training, and support will be crucial to sustaining and building upon this progress in sibling placements.

4B Least Restrictive Placement (First Placement)

The 4B Least Restrictive Placement (First Placement) outcome measure report is derived from a longitudinal database and provides information on all entries to out of home care during the time period specified.

CWS



4B Least Restrictive (First Placement) Stratified by Placement Type					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	10/1/2017	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Relative/NREFM (%)	33.9%	30%	24.5%	23.8%	40.4%
Foster (%)	56.8%	62.1%	70%	68.9%	51.8%
FFA (%)	8.7%	5.7%	5.5%	4.9%	5.7%
Group, Shelter (%)	.	2.1%	.	0.8%	1.4%
Other (%)	0.5%	.	.	1.6%	0.7%
Relative/NREFM (n)	62	42	27	29	57
Foster (n)	104	87	77	84	73
FFA (n)	16	8	6	6	8
Group, Shelter (n)	0	3	0	1	2
Other (n)	1	0	0	2	1
Total (n)	183	140	110	122	141

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_4B1.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4B2>

Trends (2018-2023)

The data for Measure 4B, which evaluates the least restrictive first placements of children entering foster care in the County of San Luis Obispo, highlights notable shifts over the five-year reporting period. The percentage of children placed with relatives or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) fluctuated significantly, declining from 33.9% in 2018 to 23.8% in 2021, before rising sharply to 40.4% in 2023. Conversely, the percentage of children placed in resource homes increased during the earlier years, peaking at 70% in 2020, before decreasing to 51.8% in 2023. Placements in Foster Family Agencies (FFA) remained relatively stable, ranging between 4.9% and 8.7% over the years, while placements in group or shelter settings were minimal, never exceeding 2.1%. This data underscores the County's efforts to prioritize relative and NREFM placements while addressing resource constraints in foster placements.

Age Group

An analysis by age group reveals that children aged 6–10 years consistently made up a substantial portion of entries into foster care, with 36 entries recorded in the most recent reporting period (October 2022 to September 2023). Similarly, children aged 11–15 years and those under 1 year old accounted for a significant share, with 29 and 21 entries, respectively, in 2023. In contrast, entries for older youth aged 16–17 years decreased to 9 entries in 2023, reflecting challenges in securing local placements for this age group. These trends highlight the need for targeted recruitment of resource families capable of supporting adolescents and teens, as well as the importance of concurrent planning efforts to ensure the stability of first placements.

Race/Ethnicity

The data by race and ethnicity shows that White children consistently accounted for the highest number of entries into foster care, with 84 entries in 2023, followed by Latino children with 45 entries. Placements for Black children declined to 0 entries in 2023, compared to 6 in 2021, while entries for Native American children increased from 1 in 2018 to 4 in 2023, reflecting progress in culturally appropriate placements. Children with missing or unreported ethnicity data saw a decrease in entries, with only 5 recorded in 2023, down from a peak of 23 in 2020.

Placement Type

The County of San Luis Obispo continues to prioritize placing children with relatives or NREFMs whenever possible. In 2023, 40.4% of first placements were with relatives or NREFMs, up from 23.8% in 2021. Foster care placements decreased to 51.8% in 2023, highlighting the County's efforts to reduce reliance on non-relative foster care. The consistent use of FFA placements and minimal reliance on group or shelter settings further demonstrate the County's commitment to the least restrictive placements. However, the data also underscores the challenges posed by a lack of local resource families, especially for adolescents and teens.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring children entering foster care are placed in the least restrictive and most stable environments. Initiatives such as Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, concurrent planning, and ongoing recruitment of resource families have been instrumental in supporting these efforts.

To address this, the County has intensified recruitment efforts, including participation in community and faith-based events, to identify families who can provide culturally and socially diverse placements. These efforts are further supported by campaigns that emphasize the importance of maintaining connections to schools, neighborhoods, and support networks. With continued focus on these initiatives, the County is well-positioned to enhance outcomes for children and families involved in the foster care system.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values 1 to 10.

Probation: 4B – Least Restrictive (First Placement)					
Placement Type	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Relative/NREFM (N)	.	.	M	M	.
Relative/NREFM (%)	.	.	25.0%	30.0%	.
Foster (N)	M	M	M	M	.
Foster (%)	100%	100%	25%	10%	.
FFA (N)	.	.	M	M	M
FFA (%)	.	.	50.0%	40.0%	66.7%
Group/Shelter (N)	.	.	.	M	M
Group/Shelter (%)	.	.	.	10.0%	33.3%
Other (N)	.	.	.	.	.
Other (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Missing (N)	.	.	.	.	.
Missing (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Total (N)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/4B1/MTSG/r/fcp/>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4B1>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance on 4B: Least Restrictive (First Placement) for probation involved foster youth has shifted from Group/Shelter in the previous CSA, can be attributed to the San Luis Obispo County Probation's Coastal Valley Academy (CVA), an in-custody treatment program which opened in March of 2017. Additionally, San Luis Obispo County Probation developed a specialized foster home for probation involved youth as a strategy to improve outcomes for youth in care with being placed in a home-based environment. The vast majority of probation involved foster youth have

consistently had a first placement in a home-based setting (i.e., Relative/NREFM, Foster, or FFA) during the reporting period.

Age

Youth aged 16–17 years consistently represented the majority of first placements.

Race/Ethnicity

Over the five-year reporting period, youth with White or Latino heritage accounted for the majority of youth placed and as mentioned above, most of those placements were in a home-based setting.

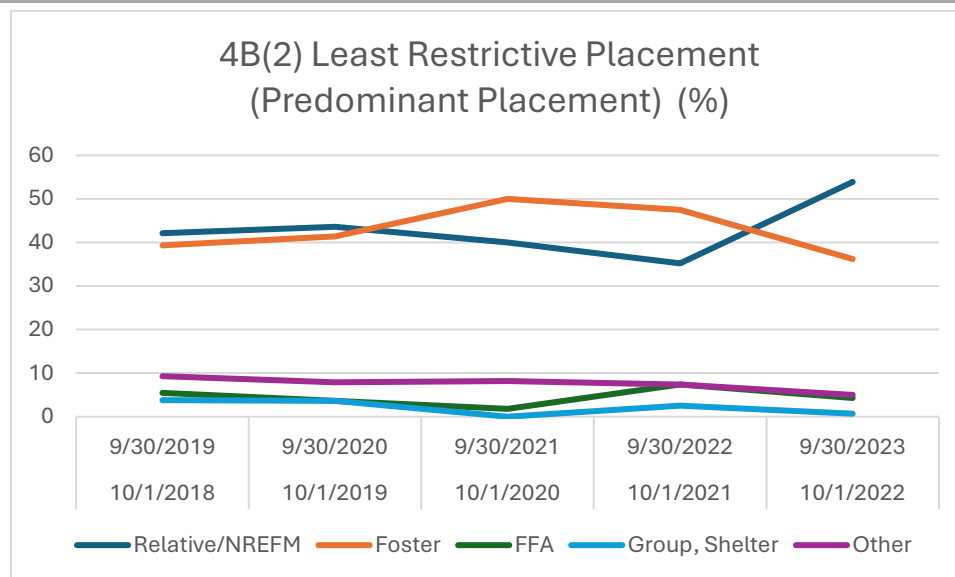
Conclusion

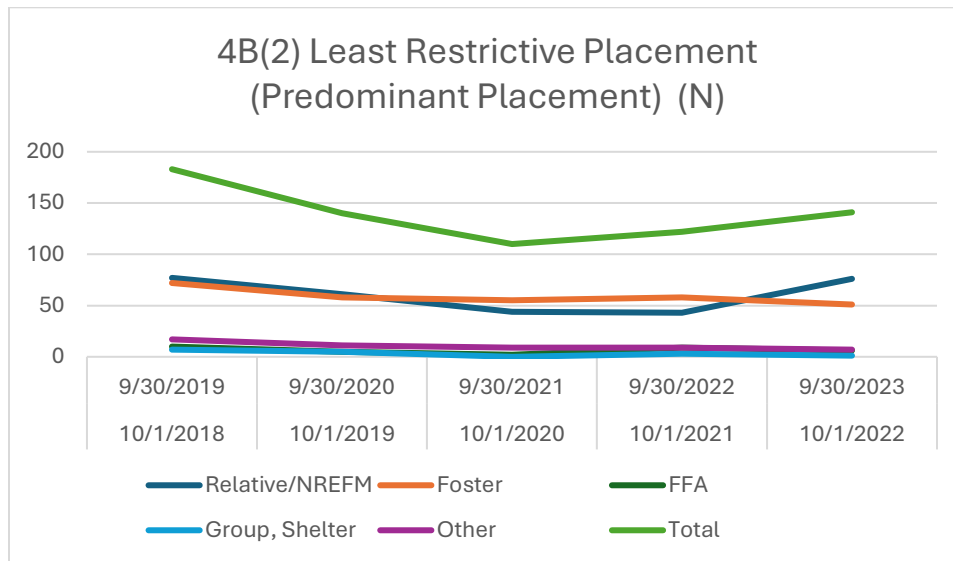
In conjunction with a decrease in the number of youth entering care with a first placement type of Group Care, Probation’s performance in this measure continues to see an increase in the number of youth with first placement types of Relative/NREFM, Foster, FFA, or Other. As noted above, the creation of the CVA in 2017 has had a notable impact on this outcome measure, as youth across all demographics and age categories who would have typically entered care with a first entry type of Group Care now participate in CVA. Most youth exit the CVA into home-based foster care with Wraparound services. The addition of a probation specialized foster home has also increased the number of youth with first placement type of home-based care.

4B Least Restrictive Placement (Predominant Placement)

The 4B Least Restrictive Placement (Predominant Placement) outcome measure report is derived from a longitudinal database and provide information on all entries to out of home care during the time period specified.

CWS





4B Least Restrictive (Predominant Placement)					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Relative/NREFM (%)	42.1%	43.6%	40%	35.2%	53.9%
Relative/NREFM (n)	77	61	44	43	76
Foster (%)	39.3%	41.4%	50%	47.5%	36.2%
Foster (n)	72	58	55	58	51
FFA (%)	5.5%	3.6%	1.8%	7.4%	4.3%
FFA (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Group, Shelter (%)	3.8%	3.6%	0%	2.5%	0.7%
Group, Shelter (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Other (%)	9.3%	7.9%	8.2%	7.4%	5%
Other (n)	17	m	m	m	m
Total (n)	183	140	110	122	141

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_4B1.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4B2>

Trends

The data for Measure 4B highlights the County of San Luis Obispo's ongoing commitment to placing children in the least restrictive settings upon entering foster care. Over the five-year period, the percentage of children placed with relatives or Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) saw fluctuations, rising from 42.1% in 2019 to 53.9% in 2023. Conversely, placements in resource homes peaked at 50% in 2021 before declining to 36.2% in 2023. The use of Foster Family Agencies (FFA) remained minimal, averaging between 1.8% and 7.4%, while placements in group or shelter settings were negligible, falling to 0.7% in 2023. These trends reflect the County's prioritization of relative/NREFM placements as a preferred option, while addressing ongoing challenges such as a shortage of Resource Families.

Age Group

An analysis by age group reveals that children aged 6–10 years accounted for the highest number of entries in 2023, with 36 children placed in foster care. Similarly, children aged 11–15 years constituted a significant portion, with 29 entries recorded in 2023. Younger children under 1 year old also represented a notable group, with 21 entries during the same period. Entries for older youth aged 16–17 years declined to m in 2023, indicating challenges in securing appropriate placements for adolescents. These patterns underscore the need for ongoing recruitment of families capable of meeting the diverse needs of children across all age groups, particularly teens.

Race/Ethnicity

Placements by race and ethnicity demonstrate persistent disparities. White children consistently accounted for the majority of foster care entries, with 84 entries recorded in 2023, followed by Latino children with 45 entries. The number of Black children entering foster care dropped to m in 2023, compared to m in 2022, while entries for Native American children increased from m in 2019 to m in 2023, reflecting improvements in culturally appropriate placements. Entries for children with missing or unreported ethnic data decreased to m in 2023, suggesting progress in data accuracy and targeted service delivery.

Placement Type

Relative/NREFM placements constituted the majority of first placements in 2023, with 53.9% of children placed in these settings, up from 35.2% in 2022. Foster care placements accounted for 36.2% of first placements in 2023, reflecting a reduction in reliance on non-relative resource homes. The use of FFA placements and group/shelter settings remained limited, with only 4.3% and 0.7% of children placed in these categories, respectively. Placements in “other” categories also decreased over time, dropping to 5% in 2023, compared to 9.3% in 2019.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo continues to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring children entering foster care are placed in the least restrictive and most stable environments. Placing children with relatives or NREFMs remains a central strategy, supported by practices such as Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, concurrent planning, and focused recruitment efforts.

To address this, the County has intensified recruitment efforts, including participation in community and faith-based events, to identify families who can provide culturally and socially diverse placements. These efforts are further supported by campaigns that emphasize the importance of maintaining connections to schools, neighborhoods, and support networks. With continued focus on these initiatives, the County is well-positioned to enhance outcomes for children and families involved in the foster care system.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values from 1 to 10.

Probation: 4B – Least Restrictive (Predominant Placement)					
Placement Type	Oct 2018-Sep 2019	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023
Relative/NREFM (N)	.	.	M	M	.

Relative/NREFM (%)	.	.	25.0%	30.0%	.
Foster (N)	.	.	.	.	.
Foster (%)	.	.	.	.	.
FFA (N)	.	.	M	M	M
FFA (%)	.	.	50.0%	40.0%	66.7%
Group/Shelter (N)	.	.	.	M	M
Group/Shelter (%)	.	.	.	10.0%	33.3%
Other (N)	M	M	M	M	.
Other (%)	100%	100%	25.0%	20.0%	.
Missing (N)	.	.	.	.	.
Missing (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Total (N)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/4B1/MTSG/r/fcp/>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4B1>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance on 4B: Least Restrictive (Predominant Placement) for probation involved foster youth aligns with the findings noted in the Outcome Measure 4B: Least Restrictive (First Placement) in that Juvenile Probation has shifted from Group/Shelter placements to more home-based care settings. The addition of the Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) in-custody treatment program in March of 2017 as well as the specialized foster home for probation involved youth provide alternatives to congregate care settings.

Age

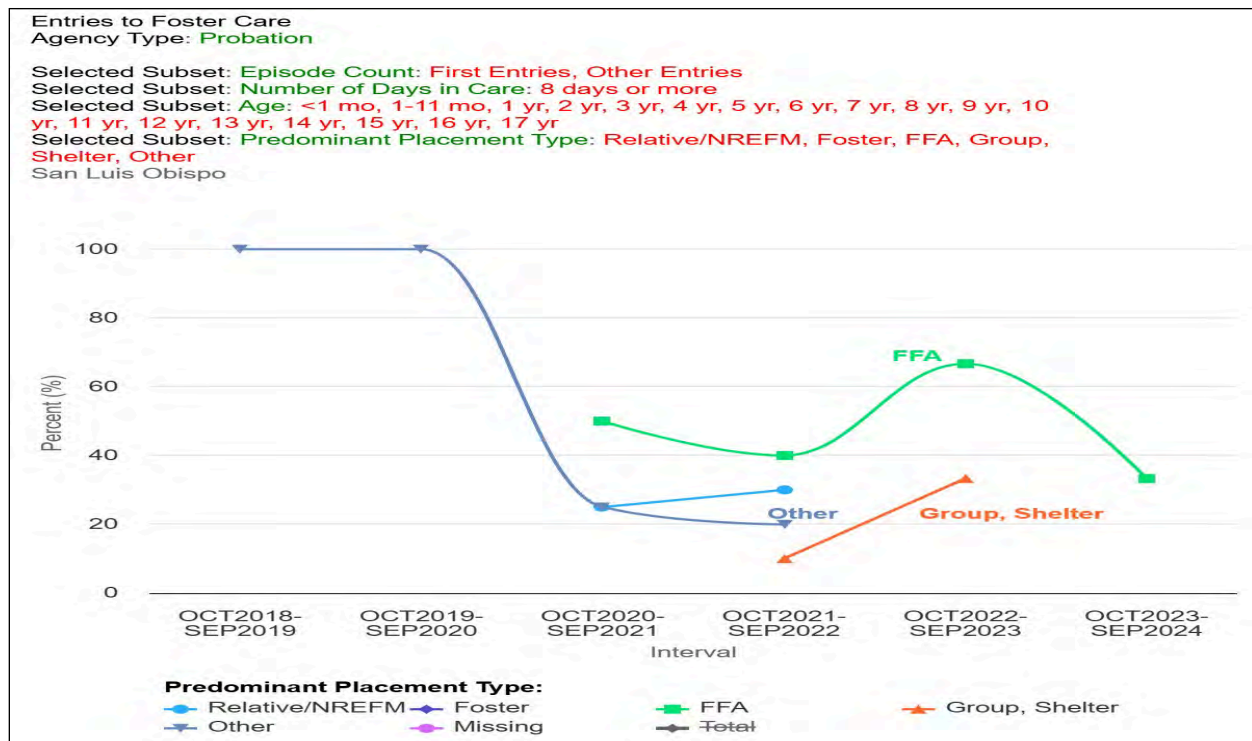
Youth aged 16–17 years consistently represented the majority of youth in care.

Race/Ethnicity

Over the five-year reporting period, youth with White or Latino heritage accounted for the majority of youth placed, and as mentioned above most of those placements were a home-based setting.

Conclusion

In conjunction with a decrease in the number of youth entering care, Probation's performance in this measure continues to see an increase in the number of youth with first placement types of Relative/NREFM, Foster, FFA, or Other. As noted above, the creation of the CVA in 2017 has had a notable impact on this outcome measure, as youth across all demographics and age categories would have typically been placed in Group Care setting now participate in CVA. Additionally, most youth exit CVA into home-based foster care with Wraparound services. The addition of a probation specialized foster home has also increased the number of youth with first placement type of home-based care.



4B Least Restrictive (Predominant Placement) Stratified by Placement Type					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	10/1/2018	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Relative/NREFM (%)	0.0%	0.0%	25	30	0.0%
Foster (%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
FFA (%)	0.0%	0.0%	50	40	66.7
Group, Shelter (%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10	33.3
Other (%)	100	100	25	20	0.0%
Missing (%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Relative/NREFM (n)	M	M	M	M	M
Foster (n)	M	M	M	M	M
FFA (n)	M	M	M	M	M
Group, Shelter (n)	M	M	M	M	M
Other (n)	M	M	M	M	M
Missing (n)	M	M	M	M	M
Total (n)	M	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/4B1/MTSG/r/fcp/l>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4B1>

Trends (2018–2023)

The County of San Luis Obispo's predominant placement patterns for probation youth reflect significant shifts in placement types over the five-year period. From 2018–2019 to 2022–2023, the use

of placements with relatives or non-relative extended family members (NREFM) as the predominant placement type ranged from 0.0% in most years to a peak of 30.0% in 2021–2022. Placements with resource homes remained unused throughout the reporting period. Foster family agency (FFA) placements increased steadily, accounting for 66.7% of placements in 2022–2023, up from 0.0% in 2018–2019. Group homes and shelters began appearing in 2021–2022, representing 10.0% of placements that year and increasing to 33.3% in 2022–2023. Other placement types, which constituted 100% of placements in the initial years, decreased to 0.0% by 2022–2023, reflecting a shift toward more structured placement categories.

Age Group

When examining predominant placements by age, youth aged 16–17 consistently represented the majority of placements, accounting for 50.0% to 80.0% of all placements over the five-year period. Youth aged 11–15 made up a smaller proportion, ranging from 0.0% in 2019–2020 to 33.3% in 2022–2023. No placements were recorded for younger children under 11 years or for youth aged 18–20 during the reporting period. These trends highlight the focus on older youth within probation placements and indicate the need for tailored services to meet their specific needs.

Race/Ethnicity

Placements stratified by race and ethnicity reveal differing trends for White and Latino youth, who accounted for all placements during the reporting period. White youth consistently represented a majority of placements in earlier years, peaking at 100.0% in 2019–2020 and decreasing to 33.3% by 2022–2023. Conversely, placements for Latino youth increased over time, rising from 0.0% in 2019–2020 to 66.7% in 2022–2023. No placements were recorded for Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American youth, suggesting potential disparities or limited representation in the probation system.

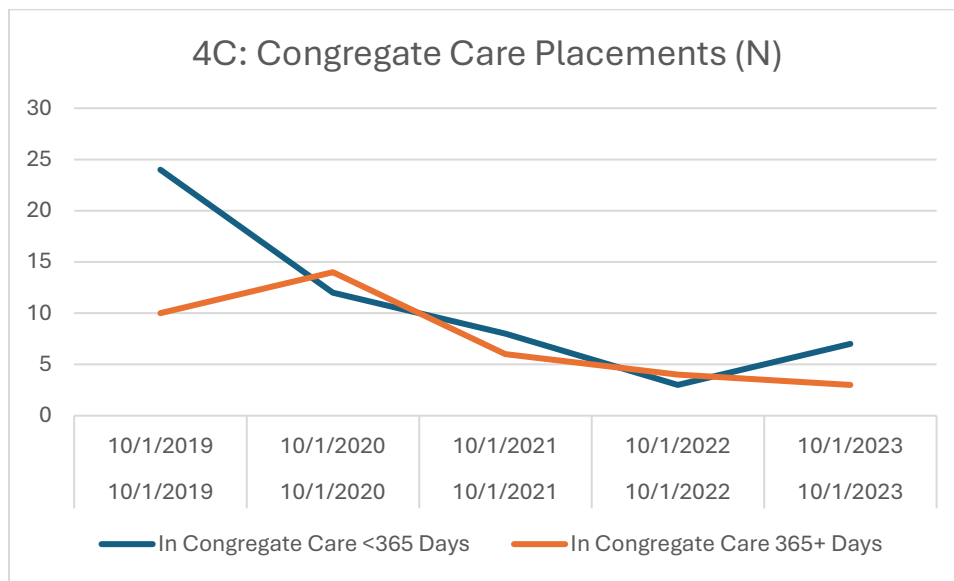
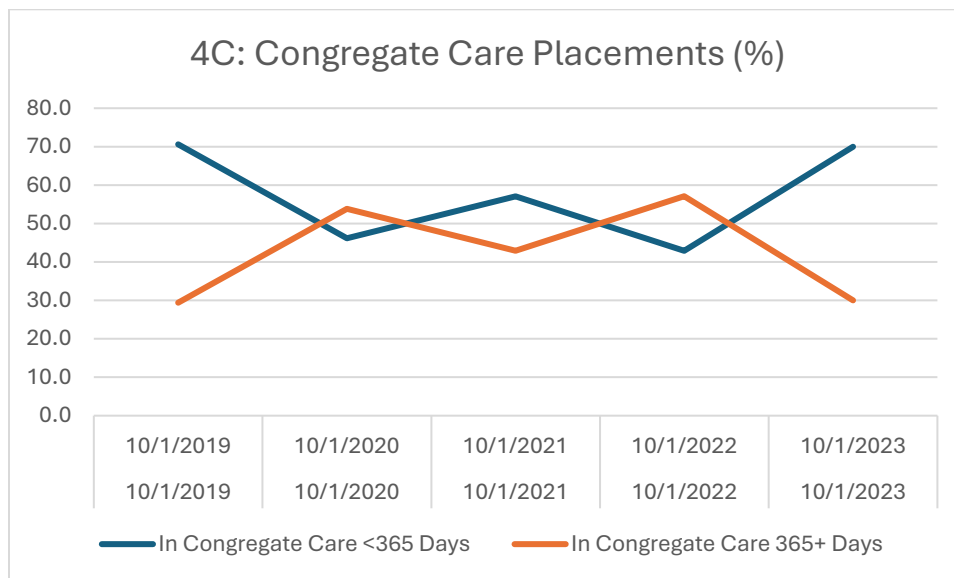
Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo's predominant placements for probation youth have shifted significantly, with an increasing reliance on FFAs and group homes/shelters and a decline in the use of relative/NREFM placements and other categories. These trends highlight the county's efforts to align placements with structured care environments, particularly for older youth aged 16–17 years. The rise in placements for Latino youth reflects changing demographics or placement strategies but warrants further review to ensure equitable access and outcomes for all racial groups. Sustaining the use of the least restrictive placements, particularly for younger youth and underrepresented populations, remains a priority for improving outcomes.

4C Congregate Care Placements: One Year or More

The 4C Congregate Care Placement One Year or More measure calculates the percentage of children and youth in congregate care on a selected day, who spent at least 365 of the preceding 400 days in congregate care settings.

CWS



4C Congregate Care Placements: One Year or More					
National Goal = N.A.					
Point In Time	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023
In Congregate Care <365 Days (%)	70.6%	46.2%	57.1%	42.9%	70%
In Congregate Care 365+ Days (%)	29.4%	53.8%	42.9%	57.1%	30%
In Congregate Care <365 Days	24	12	m	m	m
In Congregate Care 365+ Days	m	14	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=P5>

Trends (2019–2023)

Over the five-year period, the County of San Luis Obispo demonstrated varying trends in congregate care placements for both durations of less than 365 days and 365 or more days. In 2019, 29.4% of children were in congregate care for 365 or more days. This percentage increased to a peak of 57.1% in 2022, indicating a higher proportion of children experiencing extended stays in congregate care. However, a notable improvement occurred in 2023, with the proportion decreasing to 30%. Concurrently, placements lasting less than 365 days fluctuated, with 70% of children experiencing shorter stays in 2023, aligning with efforts to reduce reliance on congregate care.

Age Group

Age-specific trends reveal that older youth (ages 16–17 and 18–21) were disproportionately represented in congregate care, particularly for stays lasting 365 days or more. For example, in 2022, all children in this category fell within the 16–21 age group. These findings highlight the continued need for targeted interventions and family-based placement options for older youth, who often face challenges transitioning out of congregate care. Conversely, children under the age of 15 were more likely to have shorter durations in congregate care, reflecting a stronger focus on placing younger children in home-based family settings or reunifying them promptly.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities by race and ethnicity persist in congregate care placements. Over the five-year period, White and Latino children consistently made up the majority of children in congregate care, with Latino children comprising 42.9% of placements lasting 365 days or more in 2022. Black children were less represented in congregate care overall, but when present, they often experienced shorter stays. The data emphasizes the need for culturally responsive practices and recruitment of foster families from diverse backgrounds to ensure equitable outcomes for all children in care.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made significant progress in reducing prolonged stays in congregate care, as evidenced by the decline in placements lasting 365 days or more from 57.1% in 2022 to 30% in 2023. These improvements reflect a commitment to aligning with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and minimizing the use of congregate care as a long-term solution. Key strategies, such as conducting Qualified Individual (QI) assessments and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, have supported timely transitions to family-based or less restrictive placements.

The county has implemented enhanced oversight measures to ensure compliance with FFPSA requirements for Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs). These efforts include collaboration with Behavioral Health for Qualified Individual (QI) assessments, tracking and verifying placement compliance, and maintaining robust accountability through regular reviews. The county also emphasizes providing alternatives to congregate care, such as expanding recruitment for Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) homes and partnering with Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) to adopt innovative care models.

Additionally, DSS is integrating Motivational Interviewing (MI) into its framework to foster systemic improvements and empower both clients and staff. Efforts to sustain this program include identifying trainer candidates and collaborating with community partners to establish training cycles. These initiatives, alongside trauma-informed practices and culturally sensitive approaches, highlight the county's proactive commitment to improving outcomes for youth in care.

Through these combined efforts, DSS continues to reduce reliance on congregate care, ensure appropriate placements, and prioritize family-centered, culturally responsive care for children and youth. These strategies support systemic improvements while fostering stability and well-being for the most vulnerable populations in the county.

Probation

Values of 1 to 10 and calculations based on values of 1 to 10 are masked ('M'). In stratified views of the data, additional values (the lowest available) are masked to prevent calculation of values 1 to 10.

Probation: 4C – Congregate Care Placements: One Year or More					
Point in Time	Oct 2019-Sep 2020	Oct 2020-Sep 2021	Oct 2021-Sep 2022	Oct 2022-Sep 2023	Oct 2023-Sep 2024
In Congregate Care < 365 Days (N)	.	M	M	M	M
In Congregate Care < 365 Days (%)	.	100%	100%	50.0%	100%
In Congregate Care 365+ Days (N)	.	.	.	M	.
In Congregate Care 365+ Days (%)	.	.	.	50.0%	.
Total (N)	.	M	M	M	M

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/4C/MTSG/r/fcp/>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=4C>

Trends

Juvenile Probation's performance with foster youth placed in congregate has decreased since the creation of San Luis Obispo County Probation's Coastal Valley Academy (CVA) in 2017. While congregate care remains a viable option for youth in care, Probation typically only recommends it for youth who require residential treatment, such as for juvenile's who've sexually offended. The relatively small number of youth under a foster care order as a probation involved youth continues to decline; however, the placement of one or two youth in congregate care can have a significant impact on Juvenile Probation's performance in this measure.

Duration of Placement

From 2020–2021 through 2023–2024, the majority of probation involved foster youth placed in congregate care had stays of less than 365 days.

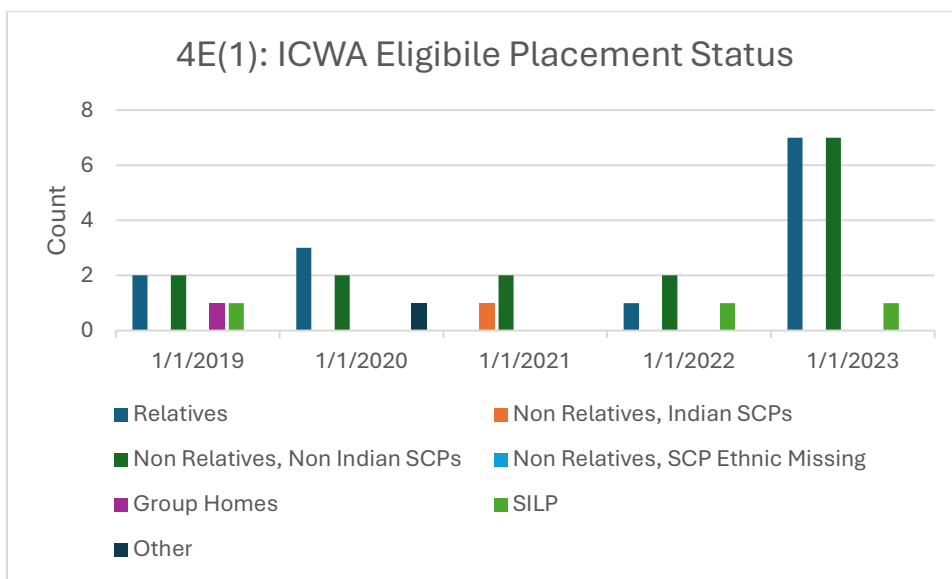
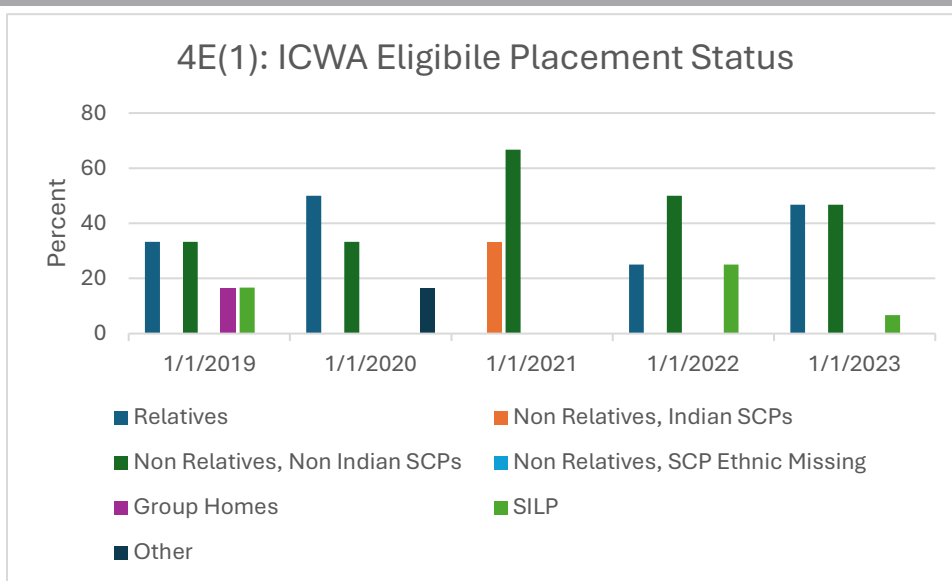
Conclusion

Juvenile Probation reserves the use of congregate care, such as Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) for youth's whose needs could need be adequately met in a less restrictive setting, such as home-based foster care, or those youth who were deemed to not be an appropriate candidate for CVA. As noted above, most youth placed in a congregate setting exited in less than 365 days.

4E (1) ICWA Eligible Placement Status

The 4E (1) ICWA Eligible Placement Status outcome measure examines the placement status of Indian Children Welfare Act eligible children. Placement status takes placement type, child relationship to substitute care provider, and substitute care provider ethnicity into account. The resulting placement status categories are placements with relatives, with non-relative, Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative, non-Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative substitute care providers with ethnicity missing in CWS/CMS; in group homes (ethnicity cannot be determined); and in other placements.

CWS



4E(1) - Placement Status for Children with ICWA Eligibility					
National Goal = N.A.					
Point In Time	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023
Relatives (%)	33.3%	50%	.	25%	46.7%
Relatives (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non Relatives, Indian SCPs (%)	.	.	33.3%	.	.

Non-Relatives, Indian SCPs (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCPs (%)	33.3%	33.3%	66.7%	50%	46.7%
Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCPs (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non-Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Non-Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Group Homes (%)	16.7%	.	.	.	.
Group Homes (n)	m	m	m	m	m
SILP (%)	16.7%	.	.	25%	6.7%
SILP (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Other (%)	.	16.7%	.	.	.
Other (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Total (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_4E.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS4E>

Trends (2019–2023)

The placement trends for ICWA-eligible children in the County of San Luis Obispo reflect progress toward ICWA compliance, particularly regarding placements with relatives. In 2019, 33.3% of ICWA-eligible children were placed with relatives. By 2023, this percentage increased significantly to 46.7%, demonstrating a consistent effort to prioritize culturally appropriate placements. Concurrently, placements with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs remained a substantial proportion, accounting for 33.3% in 2019 and increasing to 46.7% in 2023. SILP placements, typically associated with older youth, fluctuated but decreased overall, from 16.7% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2023. Group home placements were minimal and only recorded for 'm' child in 2019. These trends underscore the county's progress in increasing relative placements but also highlight the ongoing challenge of reducing non-relative, non-Indian SCP placements.

Age Group

Placement patterns differ significantly by age group. Younger children, particularly those under five years old, were more likely to be placed with relatives or non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs. For example, in 2023, children in the under-1 and 1–2 age groups were predominantly placed with relatives or non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs. Older youth (18–21 years) were often placed in SILPs or with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs, reflecting a lack of ICWA-compliant placement options for this cohort. The absence of relative placements for older youth over several years highlights the need for targeted recruitment and support to secure culturally appropriate placements for adolescents. These findings emphasize the critical need to develop tailored strategies to address the unique placement challenges faced by older youth.

Race/Ethnicity

Disparities in placement outcomes for ICWA-eligible children are evident across racial and ethnic groups. In 2019, Native American children were primarily placed with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs (3 children), while relative placements were minimal (1 child). Over the years, placements with relatives for Native American children increased, reaching 46.7% (7 children) in 2023, signaling progress in adhering to ICWA guidelines. Black and Latino children had limited representation, often

placed with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs or in SILPs. White children experienced a more even distribution between relative and non-relative, non-Indian SCP placements. The absence of placements with non-relative, Indian SCPs for all racial groups over the five years underscores a critical gap in tribal caregiver recruitment. Addressing these disparities requires culturally sensitive recruitment practices and robust support systems for Native American families.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made commendable progress in increasing placements with relatives, rising from 12.5% in 2018 to 46.7% in 2023. This improvement reflects ongoing efforts to align with ICWA's guidelines. However, the reliance on non-relative, non-Indian SCPs remains significant, particularly for Native American children, who continue to face placement disparities. Older youth also experience limited culturally appropriate placement options, with a higher reliance on SILPs and non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs.

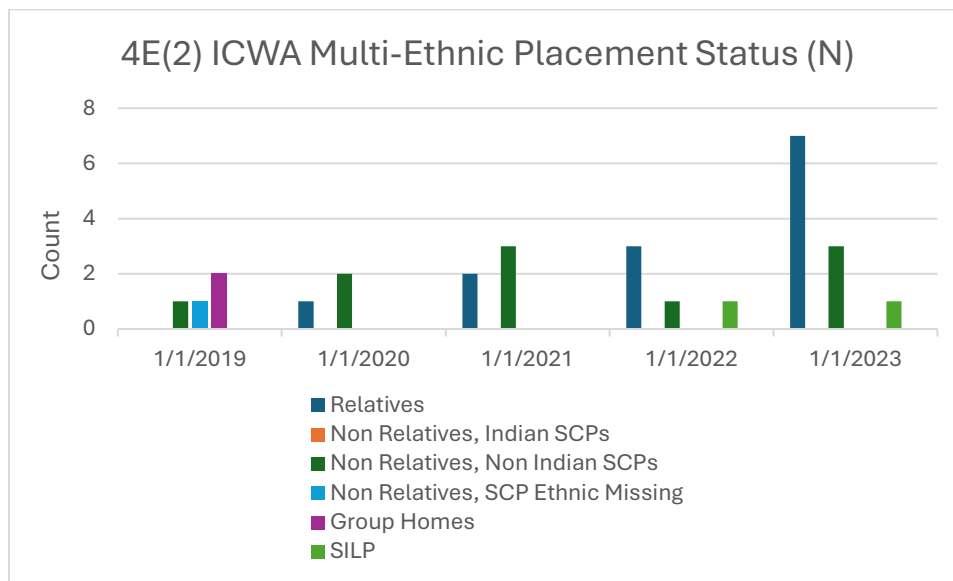
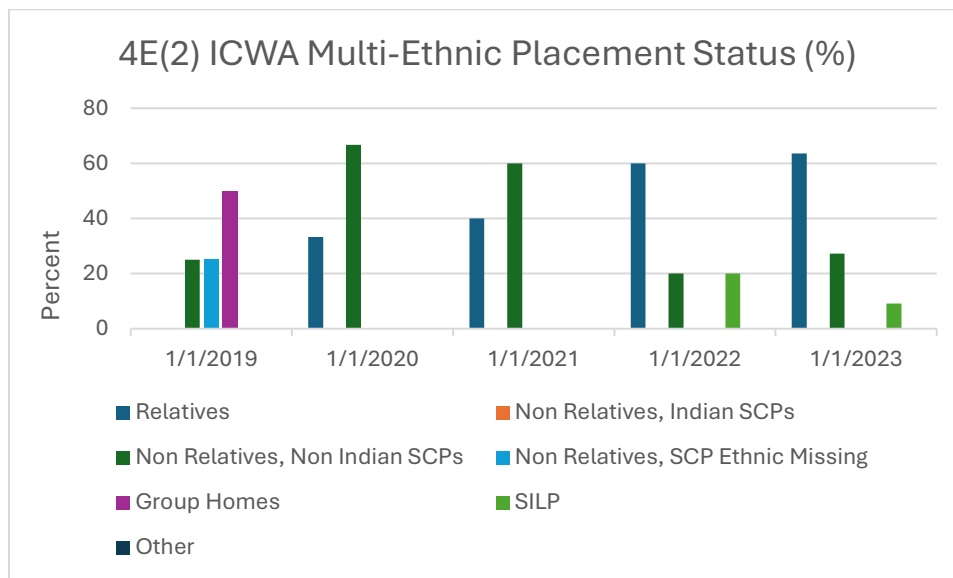
To address these gaps, the county has taken proactive steps to enhance compliance, including the participation of all supervisors and some identified staff in the UC Davis ICWA Specialist Training Program. This program, developed in partnership with the California Tribal Families Coalition (CTFC) and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), equips participants with specialized skills to serve in tribal liaison roles, Indian specialty units, and other tribal service positions within county child welfare agencies. The training program is interactive, and spans was forty hours over the course of a six-week period, emphasizing leadership engagement to ensure effective outcomes. The inclusion of county leadership in parts of the training underscores San Luis Obispo's commitment to prioritizing culturally competent practices.

Moving forward, the county will continue to focus on family finding initiatives to identify and engage relatives or close connections for older youth. Efforts will also emphasize recruiting resource family homes that are equipped and willing to care for older youth and children with higher needs. By leveraging the expertise gained through the ICWA Specialist Training and continuing to strengthen tribal partnerships, the county aims to improve outcomes, ensure ICWA compliance, and preserve the cultural identity and connections of all eligible children.

4E (2) ICWA Multi-Ethnic Placement Status

The 4E (2) ICWA Multi-Ethnic Placement Status outcome measure examines children with primary or mixed (multi) ethnicity or American Indian. Placement status takes placement type, child relationship to substitute care provider, and substitute care provider ethnicity into account. The resulting placement status categories are placements with relatives, with non-relative, Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative, non-Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative substitute care providers with ethnicity missing in CWS/CMS; in group homes (ethnicity cannot be determined); and in other placements.

CWS



4E(2) ICWA Multi-Ethnic Placement Status (%)					
National Goal = N.A.					
Point in Time	10/1/2019	10/1/2020	10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023
Relatives (%)	.	33.3	40	60	63.6
Relatives (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non-Relatives, Indian SCPs (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Non-Relatives, Indian SCPs (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCPs (%)	25	66.7	60	20	27.3
Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCPs (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Non Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Non Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing (%)	25	.	.	.	.
Group Homes (%)	50	.	.	.	.
Group Homes (n)	m	m	m	m	m
SILP (%)	.	.	.	20	9.1
SILP (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Other (%)	.	.	.	.	.
Other (n)	m	m	m	m	m
Total (n)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 2 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_4E.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS4E>

Trends (2019-2023)

The updated data October 1, 2019, to October 1, 2023, showing changes in placement trends and progress toward ICWA compliance. Relative placements increased significantly from 0% in 2019 to 63.6% in 2023. This improvement reflects the county's focused efforts to prioritize culturally appropriate placements for children with American Indian ethnicity. Placements with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs decreased from 25% in 2019 to 27.3% in 2023, showing a gradual decline in reliance on non-preferred placement options. SILP placements emerged in 2022, accounting for 20%, and declined to 9.1% in 2023. No placements were reported with non-relatives, Indian SCPs, or group homes during the observed period.

These trends underscore the county's ongoing efforts to improve ICWA compliance, as demonstrated by the significant increase in relative placements. However, the persistent reliance on non-relative, non-Indian SCP placements indicates the need for enhanced recruitment and engagement of ICWA-compliant caregivers to fully align with the measure's objectives.

Age

Age data reveals disparities in placement patterns, with younger children benefiting more from relative placements. In 2023, children aged 0–10 years represented the majority of relative placements, while older youth (ages 11–21) were placed with non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs or in SILPs. This highlights the need for targeted efforts to engage relatives and tribal caregivers for older youth, who often face barriers to culturally appropriate placements due to their age and higher care needs.

Race/Ethnicity

The measure focuses on children with a primary or mixed American Indian ethnicity. While the increase in relative placements reflects progress, the lack of placements with non-relatives, Indian SCPs highlights systemic barriers in tribal caregiver recruitment. The reliance on non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs for a significant portion of children in this group raises concerns about the availability of ICWA-compliant caregivers. Furthermore, disparities in placement patterns across racial and ethnic groups suggest a need for targeted recruitment strategies to address gaps in culturally appropriate placements.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has made notable progress in increasing relative placements for children with a primary or mixed American Indian ethnicity, rising from 0% in 2019 to 63.6% in 2023. This improvement demonstrates the county's commitment to aligning with ICWA's guidelines. However, reliance on non-relative, non-Indian SCPs, while declining, remains a concern. Older youth continue to face limited options for culturally appropriate placements, with a reliance on SILPs for young adults and non-relatives, non-Indian SCPs. The absence of placements with non-relatives, Indian SCPs highlights systemic gaps in tribal caregiver recruitment and engagement.

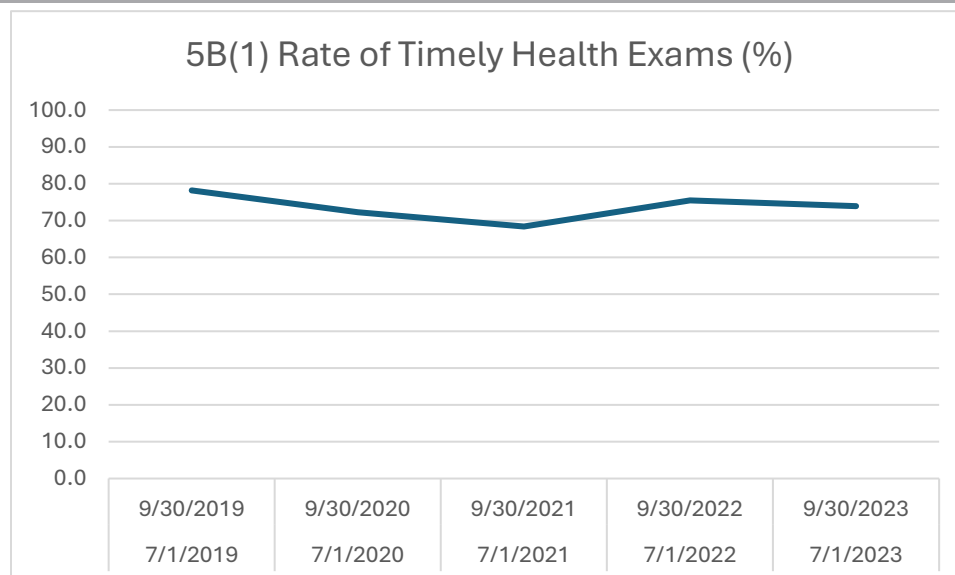
To address these challenges, the county has invested in training through the UC Davis ICWA Specialist Training Program, in partnership with the California Tribal Families Coalition and the California Department of Social Services. This 40-hour training equips supervisors and staff with the skills needed to improve ICWA compliance, strengthen tribal partnerships, and support culturally appropriate placements. By enhancing staff capacity and leadership engagement, the county is better positioned to expand recruitment of ICWA-compliant caregivers and implement targeted family finding initiatives for older youth.

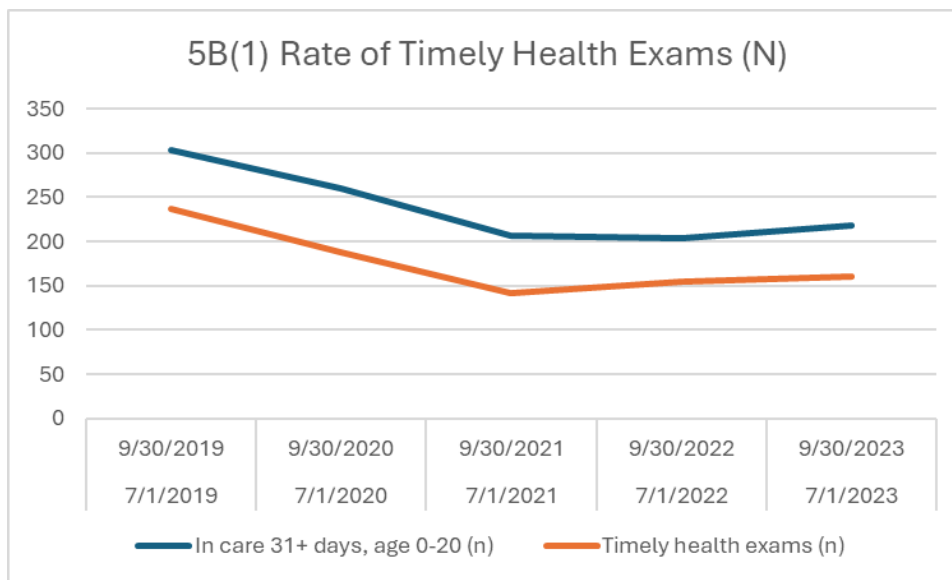
Continued emphasis on these efforts will further reduce reliance on non-ICWA-preferred placements and ensure stronger cultural connections and outcomes for Native American children in the foster care system.

5B (1) Rate of Timely Health Exams

The 5B (1) Rate of Timely Health Exams outcome measure provides the percentage of children meeting the schedule for health exams.

CWS





5B (1) Rate of Timely Health Exams					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Rate of timely health exams (%)	78.2%	72.3%	68.4%	75.5%	73.9%
In care 31+ days, age 0-20 (n)	303	260	206	204	218
Rate of timely health exams (%)					
Timely health exams (n)	237	188	141	154	161

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_5B.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS5B>

Trends (2019-2023)

The rate of timely health exams fluctuated over the five-year period. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, 78.2% of children in care received timely medical exams, representing 237 of the 303 children in care. This percentage declined to a low of 68.4% in 2021 before recovering slightly to 73.9% in 2023. The number of timely health exams followed a similar trend, with the highest number (237) in 2019 and the lowest (141) in 2021. Although there has been some improvement in recent years, the data underscores ongoing challenges in ensuring consistent and timely medical care for children in foster care.

Age Group

Timely medical exam rates vary significantly by age group. Younger children, particularly those under 1 year old, consistently receive timely exams at higher rates. For example, in July 1 to September 30, 2023, reporting period, 14 of the 17 children under 1 year old (82%) received timely exams. In contrast, older youth, especially those aged 16–17 years and 18–20 years, had much lower completion rates. For youth aged 16–17 years, 78% received timely exams, while only 24% of youth aged 18–20 years received timely medical exams during the same period. These disparities highlight the need for targeted outreach and support for older youth to ensure they receive appropriate health care services.

Race/Ethnicity

The data also reveals disparities in timely medical exams based on race and ethnicity. White children had the highest number of timely exams in 2023, with 124 of the 154 children receiving care, translating to a completion rate of 80.5%. Latino children followed, with 92 out of 117 (78.6%) receiving timely exams. In contrast, Black children and Native American children had lower completion rates. Of the Black children in care, only 75% received timely exams, while 33% Native American children were timely. Asian/Pacific Islander children showed similar outcomes, with 40% of children in care receiving timely exams. These disparities highlight the need for equitable access to health care services for all racial and ethnic groups in foster care.

Conclusion

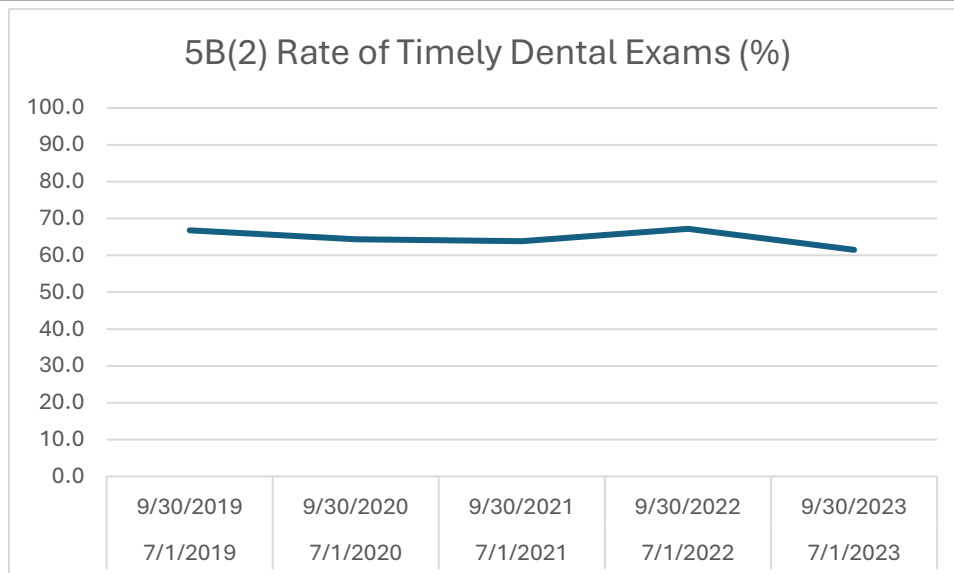
The County of San Luis Obispo has demonstrated variability in the rate of timely health exams for children in foster care over the five-year period, with rates fluctuating between 68.4% and 78.2%. Although this measure does not have a Federal Standard, the County recognizes that this outcome hovers very close to the state average. Younger children under 1 year old consistently had higher completion rates, while older youth aged 16–20 years faced significant barriers to receiving timely health exams. Disparities were also evident across racial and ethnic groups, with Black, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander children experiencing lower rates of timely exams compared to their White and Latino peers.

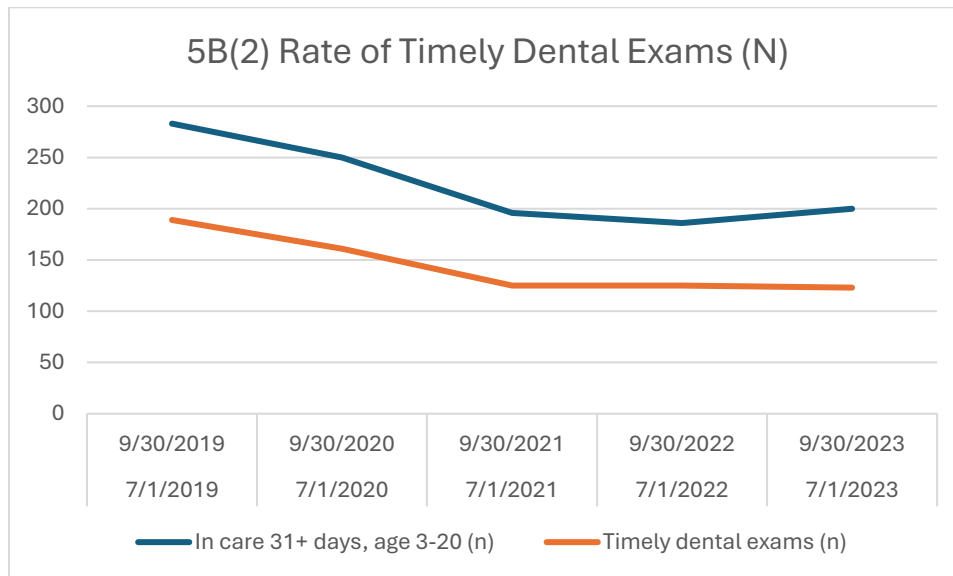
To address these challenges, the County will work with staff to ensure that resource parents have the correct tools and support to facilitate timely health exams. Additionally, the County benefits from the expertise of two public health nurses who are embedded within the department and actively monitor medical exam compliance and outcomes. The County will also enhance training for both staff and resource parents to improve understanding of timely medical exam requirements and strategies to ensure compliance. These efforts aim to create a more cohesive system of care, improving timely health exam rates and ensuring equitable access to health care for all children in care.

5B (2) Rate of Timely Dental Exams

The 5B (2) Rate of Timely Dental Exams outcome measure provides the percentage of children meeting the scheduled dental exams.

CWS





5B (2) Rate of Timely Dental Exams					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Rate of timely dental exams (%)	66.8%	64.4%	63.8%	67.2%	61.5%
In care 31+ days, age 3-20 (n)	283	250	196	186	200
Timely dental exams (n)	189	161	125	125	123

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_5B.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS5B>

Summary

Measure 5B (2) evaluates the percentage of children aged 3–20 in foster care who have been in care for 31+ days and received timely dental exams. Dental exams are critical for addressing oral health issues, preventing complications, and supporting the overall well-being of children in care. This measure tracks the percentage and number of children receiving timely dental exams while examining disparities by age and ethnicity.

Trends

From July 1, 2019, to September 30, 2023, the rate of timely dental exams fluctuated significantly. In the July to September 2019 period, 66.8% of children in care received timely dental exams (189 out of 283 children). This rate declined steadily to 63.8% in 2021. Although a slight improvement to 67.2% was observed in 2022, it dropped to a five-year low of 61.5% in 2023. Over this period, the total number of children eligible for dental exams decreased, from 283 in 2019 to 200 in 2023. Likewise, the number of children receiving timely exams dropped from 189 in 2019 to 123 in 2023. These trends underscore ongoing challenges in ensuring timely dental care for children in foster care.

Age Groups

Timely dental exam rates varied significantly by age group. Younger children aged 3–5 years consistently demonstrated higher compliance rates. For example, in the July to September 2023 period, 21 out of 27 children in this age group (77.8%) received timely dental exams. Conversely, older youth aged 16–20 years faced substantial barriers. In 2023, only 8 out of 37 youth aged 18–20 years

(21.6%) received timely dental exams, and only 24 out of 32 youth aged 16–17 years (75%) completed their exams. These disparities highlight the need for targeted efforts to engage older youth and address their unique barriers to accessing dental care.

Race/Ethnicity

Analysis by race and ethnicity continues to reveal disparities in timely dental exam rates. In the July to September 2023 period, White children had the highest number of timely dental exams, with 81 out of 120 children (67.5%) receiving timely exams. Latino children followed, with 44 out of 69 (63.8%) receiving timely exams. Black children and Native American children experienced lower rates. Of the Black children in care, 33.3% received timely exams, while 'm' Native American children received timely exams. Asian/Pacific Islander children also had relatively low compliance, with 50% receiving timely exams. These findings highlight the inequities in access to dental care and emphasize the importance of equitable outreach and culturally responsive support for underserved groups.

Conclusion

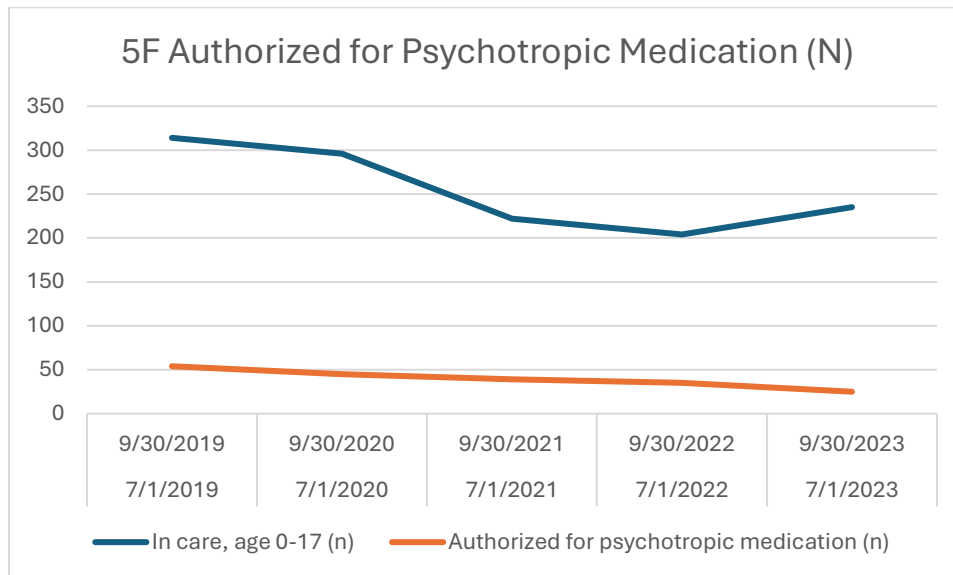
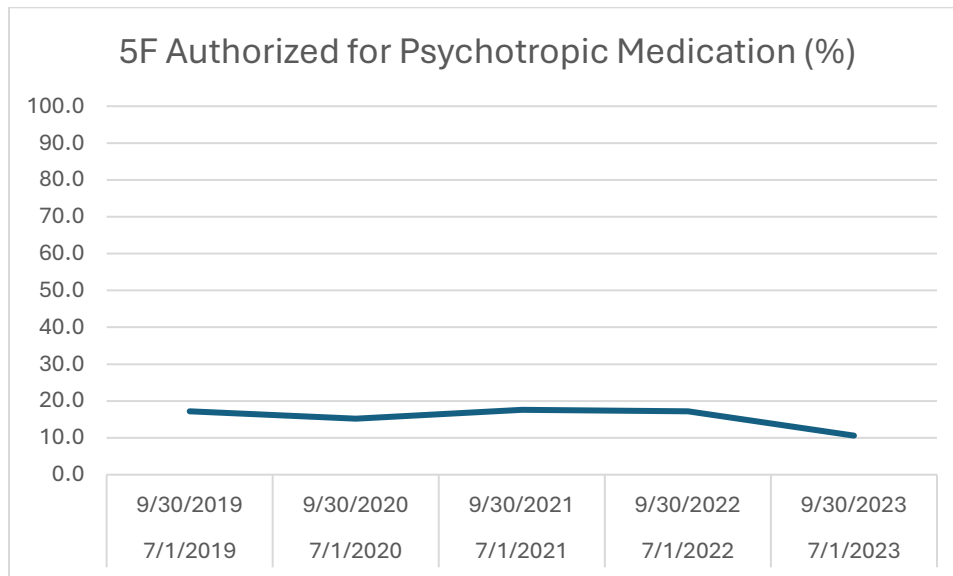
County of SLO has faced challenges in maintaining consistent rates of timely dental exams for children in foster care over the past five years. Although this measure does not have a Federal Standard, the County recognizes that this outcome hovers very close to the state average. While compliance rates peaked at 67.2% in 2022, they declined to 61.5% in 2023, with older youth aged 16–20 years experiencing the lowest rates of compliance. Disparities across racial and ethnic groups persist, with White and Latino children having higher rates of timely dental exams compared to Black, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander children.

To address these challenges, the county will work closely with staff to ensure resource parents have the correct tools and knowledge to support timely dental care. Public health nurses embedded within the department will continue to monitor compliance and support staff in addressing barriers. Additionally, the county will provide enhanced training for both staff and resource parents to emphasize the importance of dental care and strategies for engaging older youth. These efforts aim to improve dental care access and outcomes, ensuring equitable and timely care for all children in foster care.

5F Psychotropic Medications

The 5F Psychotropic Medications measure reflects the percentage of children in placement episodes with a court order or parental consent that authorizes the child to receive psychotropic medication.

CWS



5F Authorized for Psychotropic Medication					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Authorized for psychotropic medication (%)	17.2%	15.2%	17.6%	17.2%	10.6%
In care, age 0-17 (n)	314	296	222	204	235
Authorized for psychotropic medication (n)	54	45	39	35	25

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_5F.aspx

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS5F>

Trends

The percentage of children in care authorized for psychotropic medication has fluctuated over the five-year period but shows a general decline. In the reporting period ending September 30, 2019, 17.2% of children in care were authorized for psychotropic medication, representing 54 out of 314 children. This rate decreased to 15.2% in 2020, before rising again to a peak of 17.6% in 2021. However, the rate declined in subsequent years, falling to 17.2% in 2022 and sharply to 10.6% in 2023, with only 25 of the 235 children in care authorized for psychotropic medication.

Of note, a significant percentage of children in care who are on psychotropic medication were already prescribed these medications when they entered foster care. For example, in 2017 and 2018, an average of 42% of children on psychotropic medication in care came into the system with existing prescriptions. This historical context suggests that a notable portion of the population requiring psychotropic medication enters care with established mental health treatment needs. The decline in psychotropic medication authorizations in 2023 may reflect stricter oversight.

Additional Observations

The number of children in care (ages 0–17) has decreased over the five years, from 314 in 2019 to 235 in 2023. While the total number of children authorized for psychotropic medication has also declined, the sharp drop in 2023 suggests a notable shift. This is due to stricter authorization processes and changes in clinical guidelines for prescribing psychotropic medications.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo has seen a significant decrease in the percentage of children authorized for psychotropic medication, particularly in 2023, where the rate dropped to 10.6%. Although there is no Federal Standard for this measure, the decline may reflect efforts to reduce reliance on psychotropic medications for children in foster care.

The county will continue monitoring these trends and ensuring that psychotropic medication is used appropriately, with an emphasis on alternative mental health supports. Further analysis may be needed to determine the impact of these changes on the overall mental health and well-being of children in care, particularly as the reduction in medication may indicate a shift toward non-pharmaceutical interventions. Social Services and Mental Health in San Luis Obispo County have maintained open channels of communication and prioritized the monitoring of psychotropic medication prescriptions. The foster care nurse plays a critical role in this process, reviewing all JV 220s (the legal form authorizing psychotropic medication for youth in foster care) and working closely with both mental health professionals and social workers to address any issues that arise.

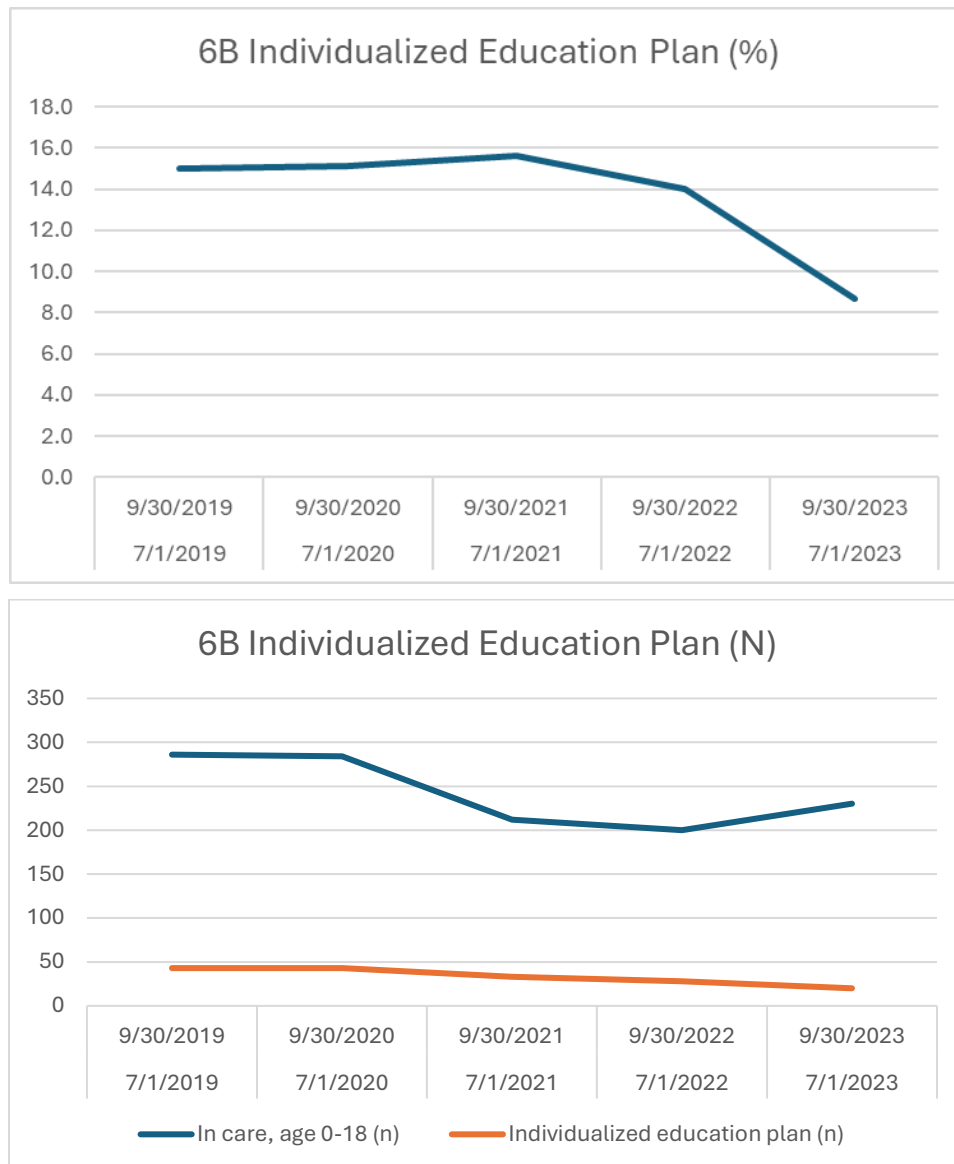
In addition to ongoing oversight, the foster care nurse has participated in internal case reviews alongside mental health professionals to ensure the appropriate use of psychotropic medications. Regular meetings between the foster care nurse, the program manager overseeing psychotropic medications, and mental health staff have helped refine processes and resolve challenges identified during audits. These collaborative efforts have included discussions of the JV 220 process and identifying areas for improvement.

Moving forward, the department focus will be on ensuring that metabolic screenings are ordered for youth on psychotropic medication. These screenings are essential for monitoring the physical health effects of these medications and ensuring comprehensive care for children in foster care. By maintaining strong partnerships and continuing to emphasize oversight, the department aims to ensure the appropriate and effective use of psychotropic medication while exploring alternative therapeutic approaches for children with mental health needs.

6B Individualized Education Plan

The 6B Individualized Education Plan outcome measure provides the number of children in out-of-home placements who have ever had an IEP.

CWS



6B Individualized Education Plan					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022	7/1/2023
To	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022	9/30/2023
Individualized education plan (%)	15.0%	15.1%	15.6%	14.0%	8.7%
In care, age 0-18 (n)	286	284	212	200	230

Individualized education plan (n)	43	43	33	28	20
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Data Source: CWS/CMS 2024 Quarter 3 Extract <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/reports/6B/STSG/r/sd/>

Methodology: <http://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS6B>

Trends (2019-2023)

Over the five-year period from July 2019 to September 2023, there has been a notable decline in the percentage of foster children in San Luis Obispo County with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In 2019, 15.0% of children in foster care had an IEP, increasing slightly to 15.1% in 2020 and 15.6% in 2021. However, the percentage declined sharply to 14.0% in 2022 and dropped further to 8.7% in 2023. This steady decrease suggests a potential reduction in access to or identification of special education needs for foster youth over time.

Age Group

The breakdown by age group reveals some interesting patterns. Older children, particularly those aged 6-10 and 11-15, have consistently represented the majority of those with IEPs. For instance, in 2019, m children aged 6-10 and 24 children aged 11-15 had IEPs. However, by 2023, these numbers had decreased to m and m, respectively. The decrease is also reflected across all other age groups, with significant reductions seen in the 16-17 age group. This trend raises concerns about whether all age groups are being equitably assessed and supported in their educational needs.

Ethnicity

The data also highlights disparities in the provision of IEPs across ethnic groups. White foster children consistently had the highest number of IEPs each year, representing a significant portion of the total. For example, in 2019, 22 White children had an IEP, while only 'm' Black children and 16 Latino children did. By 2023, the numbers for White children had fallen to 'm', with Black and Latino children also showing reductions to 'm' and 'm', respectively. The consistent decrease across ethnic groups, combined with the lower numbers for minority populations, suggests potential barriers to equitable access to IEP assessments and services.

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

In terms of the overall numbers, the total foster care population in San Luis Obispo County fluctuated over the five years, with a peak of 286 children in 2019 and a low of 200 in 2022. However, the number of children with IEPs declined each year, from 43 in 2019 and 2020 to just 20 in 2023. The percentage of children with IEPs fell most sharply in the last two years, which may indicate a gap in the identification, evaluation, or provision of educational services to foster youth, particularly as trauma and instability can often exacerbate educational challenges.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo is not meeting this measure, as evidenced by the declining percentage of foster children with IEPs, which fell sharply to 8.7% in 2023. Historically, DSS has struggled with accurately documenting this measure. However, with the integration of the Foster Focus database, DSS anticipates that data will more accurately reflect the number of youth receiving special education services through an IEP. The department continues its collaboration with the SLOCOE Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) and encourages staff to utilize the Foster Focus database more consistently. Social workers are expected to review and include educational information in youth court reports, a process supported by tools like the Education Progress Summary (EPS) reports.

The county remains committed to improving educational outcomes for foster youth by hosting quarterly meetings with district foster youth liaisons, SELPA, and County Foster Youth Liaison

Coordinating Program staff. Additionally, DSS actively participates in quarterly education meetings focused on the secondary education transition for youth in care. These efforts aim to strengthen cross-agency collaboration and improve service delivery.

To further address the challenges related to this measure, the department is undertaking a substantial data clean-up and update of CWS/CMS to ensure that the name and contact information for each youth's educational rights holder is accurate and up to date. This initiative is critical, as it will help identify youth who have or may need an IEP more quickly and ensure that they or their representatives can participate in IEP meetings. By addressing these documentation gaps, enhancing staff training, and refining its processes, the department aims to improve the identification and support of foster youth with special education needs and work toward achieving this important measure.

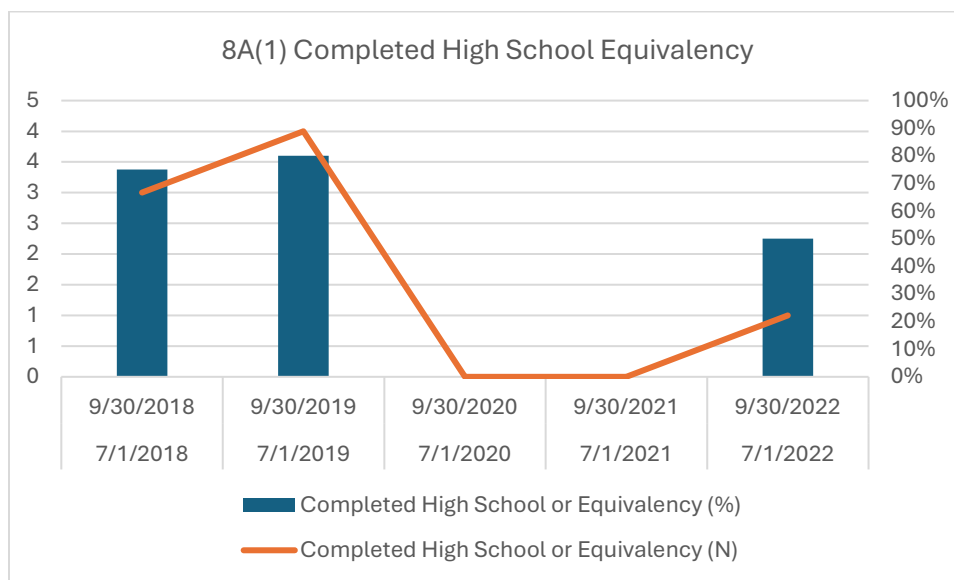
Probation

The County of San Luis Obispo did not measure probation youth with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) during the reporting period, as it was not a required metric. However, moving forward, the department will begin tracking this data to better understand and address the educational needs of probation youth.

8A Outcomes for Nonminor Dependents Child Welfare/Probation Youth Exiting Foster Care

Completed High School Equivalency (CWS and Probation)

The Completed High School Equivalency outcome measure provides the percentage of youth who are exiting foster care at age 18 or older, who have completed a high school equivalency.



8A Completed High School or Equivalency					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2018	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Completed High School or Equivalency (%)	75%	80%	N.A.	N.A.	50%
Completed High School or Equivalency (N)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_8A.aspx

405X Report Data: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/childrens-programs-data-tables/soc405x>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS8A>

Trends

The data for youth aged 18-21 in foster care who completed high school or an equivalency program shows inconsistent progress over the five years. In 2018, 75% of youth successfully completed high school or earned an equivalency. This percentage increased to 80% in 2019. However, there was no recorded data for 2020 or 2021, indicating potential gaps in tracking or reporting. In 2022, the percentage dropped significantly to 50%, highlighting a concerning decline in educational outcomes for this age group.

Age

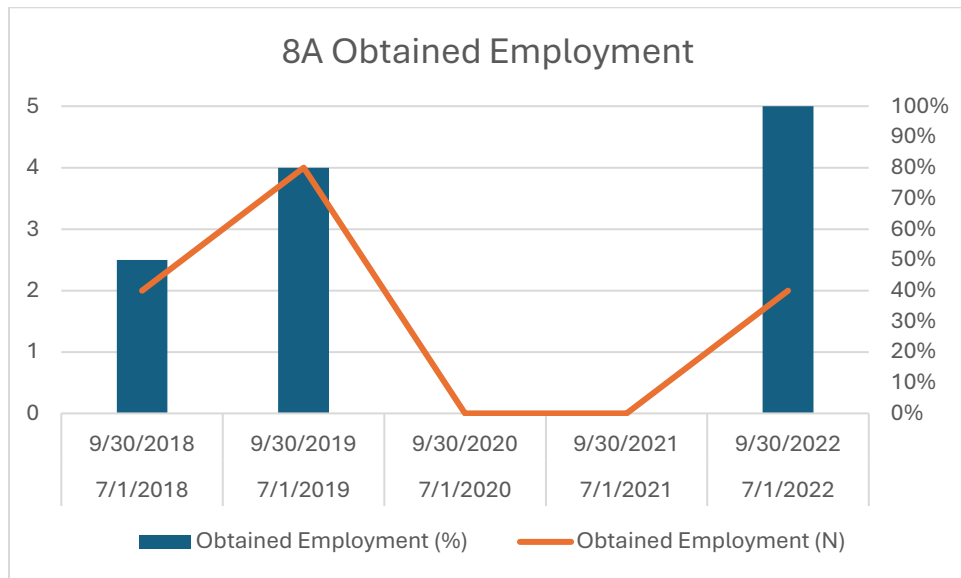
The analysis indicates that the measure specifically tracks youth aged 18-21. The declining percentage of high school or equivalency completion for this age group in 2022 points to challenges faced by non-minor dependents (NMDs) in meeting educational milestones. Targeted interventions for this transitional age group could help address these barriers and improve outcomes.

Conclusion

The County of San Luis Obispo is falling short in ensuring that foster youth aged 18-21 achieve high school completion or equivalency, particularly with the sharp decline to 50% in 2022. The absence of data for 2020 and 2021 underscores the need for improved documentation and tracking. Efforts should focus on strengthening educational support systems, particularly for NMDs transitioning out of care, to reverse this trend and meet educational goals for foster youth.

Obtained Employment (CWS and Probation)

The Obtained Employment outcome measure provides the percentage of youth who are exiting foster care at age 18 or older, who obtained employment.



8A Obtained Employment					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2018	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Obtained Employment (%)	50%	80%	N.A.	N.A.	100%
Obtained Employment (N)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_8A.aspx

405X Report Data: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/childrens-programs-data-tables/soc405x>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS8A>

Trends

The data for youth aged 18-21 in foster care obtaining employment shows steady improvement over the five years. In 2018, only 50% obtained employment. This percentage increased significantly to 80% in 2019, with no recorded data for 2020 and 2021. In 2022, 100% of the tracked population secured employment, demonstrating substantial progress in supporting foster youth in achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Ages

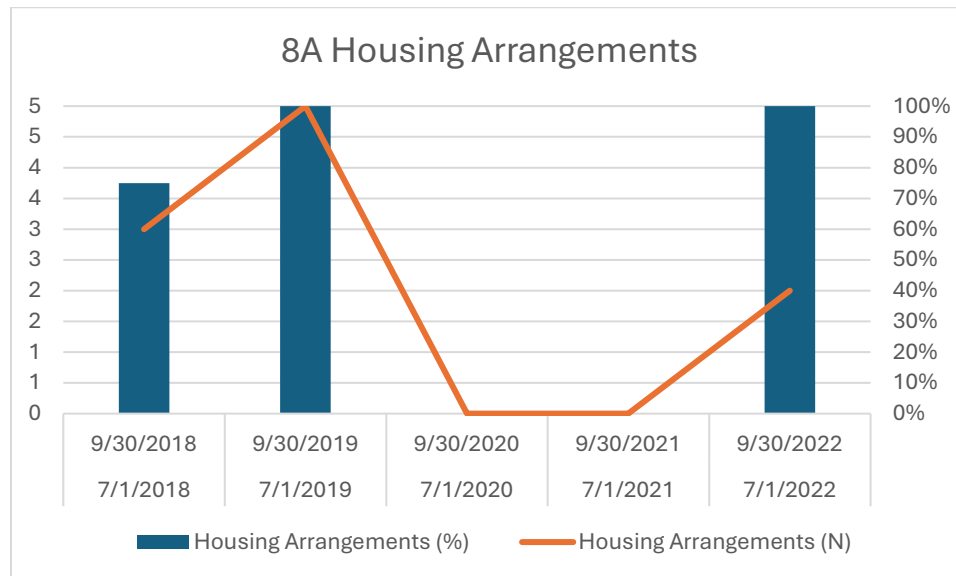
The data explicitly identifies youth aged 18-21 as the focus for this measure. The improvement in 2022 suggests that efforts to support employment for NMDs have been effective. Continued investment in job readiness programs and partnerships with local employers could sustain and build upon this success for this transitional age group.

Conclusion

San Luis Obispo County has made significant progress in helping foster youth aged 18-21 obtain employment, with 100% success in 2022 for the youth included in the data. While this is a positive outcome, the lack of data for 2020 and 2021 remains a challenge. Continued focus on employment programs and partnerships with local employers will be essential to maintaining and expanding this success.

Housing Arrangements (CWS and Probation)

The Housing Arrangements outcome measure provides the percentage of youth who are exiting foster care at age 18 or older, who have housing arrangements.



8A Housing Arrangements					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2018	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Housing Arrangements (%)	75%	100%	N.A.	N.A.	100%
Housing Arrangements (N)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_8A.aspx

405X Report Data: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/childrens-programs-data-tables/soc405x>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS8A>

Trends

The percentage of youth aged 18-21 in foster care with stable housing arrangements shows a marked improvement over the five years. In 2018, 75% had stable housing, increasing to 100% of youth in 2019. There was no data recorded for 2020 and 2021, but in 2022, the percentage remained at 100%. This demonstrates sustained success in ensuring that foster youth transitioning out of care have stable housing.

Ages

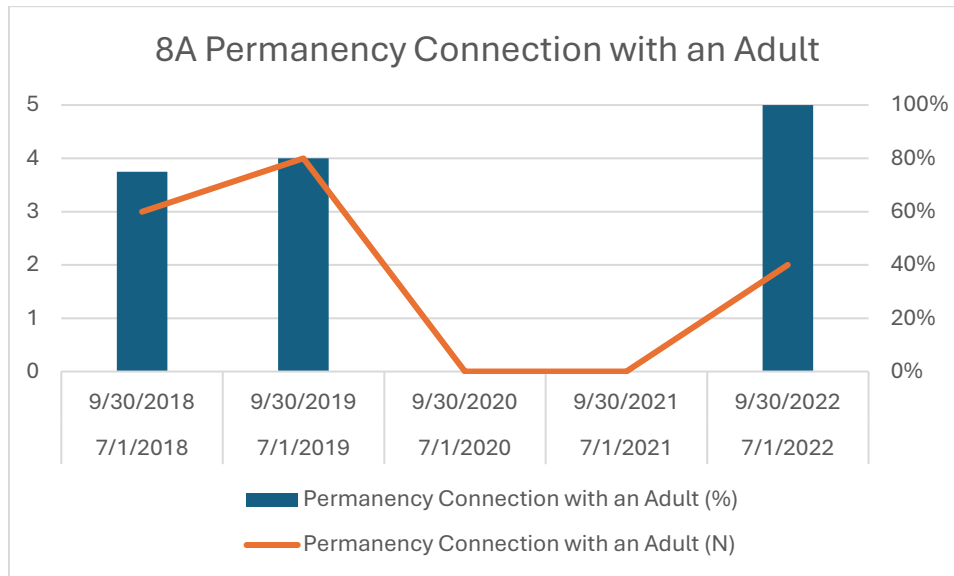
The age range for this measure, 18-21, provides clarity on the population being served. The overall success in securing housing for this group reflects effective programs and resources. However, consistent data collection across years is needed to ensure that all youth in this transitional phase are adequately supported.

Conclusion

San Luis Obispo County has consistently ensured stable housing arrangements for youth aged 18-21 exiting foster care, achieving 100% success in 2019 and 2022. However, the lack of data for 2020 and 2021 highlights the need for more consistent tracking. Continued collaboration with housing programs and transitional housing initiatives will be critical to maintaining this success for all foster youth in this age group.

Permanency Connection with an Adult (CWS and Probation)

The Permanency Connection with an Adult outcome measure provides the percentage of youth who are exiting foster care at age 18 or older, who have a permanent connection with an adult.



8A Permanency Connection with an Adult					
National Goal = N.A.					
From	7/1/2018	7/1/2019	7/1/2020	7/1/2021	7/1/2022
To	9/30/2018	9/30/2019	9/30/2020	9/30/2021	9/30/2022
Permanency Connection with an Adult (%)	75%	80%	N.A.	N.A.	100%
Permanency Connection with an Adult (N)	m	m	m	m	m

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2023 Quarter 3 Extract https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/secure/CDSS_8A.aspx

405X Report Data: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/childrens-programs-data-tables/soc405x>

Methodology: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/methodologies/default.aspx?report=CDSS8A>

Trends

The data for youth aged 18-21 in foster care maintaining a permanent connection with an adult demonstrates consistent improvement. In 2018, 75% had a permanency connection, which increased to 80% in 2019. As with other measures, there was no data recorded for 2020 and 2021. In 2022, the percentage reached 100%, indicating that efforts to establish meaningful connections with supportive adults have been effective.

Ages

This measure specifically focuses on youth aged 18-21. The upward trend reflects a concerted effort to connect NMDs with stable, supportive adult relationships as they transition out of care.

Conclusion

San Luis Obispo County has made steady progress in ensuring permanency connections for foster youth aged 18-21, achieving 100% success in 2022. This is a crucial achievement, as connections with supportive adults are essential for youth transitioning out of care. Efforts should continue to focus on mentorship programs and family reunification initiatives to sustain and expand these outcomes. The lack of data for 2020 and 2021 remains a limitation, and improved tracking systems are needed to ensure all youth are accounted for and supported.

Summary of Findings

Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

The data presented in the County Self-Assessment (CSA) identifies several populations within County of San Luis Obispo that are at the greatest risk of maltreatment. Children under the age of one experience the highest rate of entries into foster care, with 12.9 entries per 1,000 children, and a significant percentage of substantiations (18.9 per 1,000 children). Black children face disproportionately high rates of maltreatment allegations, with an incidence rate of 172 per 1,000 children, followed by Native American children at 90.3 per 1,000. Substantiations for Black children also remain disproportionately high relative to their population. Additionally, children aged 6-10 and 11-15 have the highest rates of allegations, with 74.5 and 77.5 per 1,000 children, respectively, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in these age groups.

Children from families experiencing housing instability and substance abuse were also identified as high-risk groups. Housing insecurity was highlighted through the continued impact of homelessness on maltreatment, with 161 families experiencing homelessness in 2023. Families with unmet mental health needs or substance abuse disorders, particularly involving opioids, also represent a significant proportion of child welfare cases. The ongoing effects of socioeconomic challenges and limited access to services in rural and isolated areas exacerbate vulnerabilities among these populations.

County Strengths

County of San Luis Obispo demonstrated strengths in several areas critical to improving child welfare outcomes. The county has established robust collaborative frameworks with stakeholders, including the System of Care Interagency Teams (SOCIT) and the Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, to address systemic barriers and ensure cohesive service delivery. Programs such as the Independent Living Program (ILP) and Bringing Families Home (BFH) have effectively supported youth transitioning to independence and families facing housing instability.

The county's commitment to trauma-informed practices is evident through the implementation of Safety Organized Practice (SOP) and Motivational Interviewing (MI), which have strengthened family engagement and case planning. Additionally, the county's efforts in expanding culturally competent services, including Spanish-language parenting programs and outreach to underserved populations such as Mixteco speakers, highlight a continued focus on equitable service delivery.

The integration of tools like SafeMeasures and Structured Decision Making (SDM) has enhanced the ability of social workers to make data-driven decisions and monitor case progress effectively. The emphasis on community partnerships, including collaboration with local tribes and behavioral health organizations, further strengthens the county's ability to address the complex needs of families.

Areas Needing Improvement

Despite these strengths, areas requiring improvement remain evident. One significant challenge is the disproportionate rates of maltreatment among Black and Native American children, indicating the need for enhanced equity-focused strategies. The county also faces barriers in engaging fathers and

paternal relatives in case planning, which presents missed opportunities for strengthening family networks.

Another area of concern is the inconsistency in post-reunification support for families, which has contributed to an elevated risk of recurrence of maltreatment. Transportation challenges and the geographic distribution of services disproportionately affect families in rural areas, limiting access to critical supports such as mental health and parenting education programs.

High caseloads and staffing vacancies within Child Welfare Services have hindered the ability of social workers to provide consistent, high-quality support to families. This issue is compounded by the need for ongoing training in cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and engagement strategies, particularly for working with underserved populations such as Indigenous families and Mixteco speakers.

Services Array Gaps and Needs

The assessment identifies notable gaps in the county's service array, particularly in mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and affordable housing options. Long waitlists for mental health providers and the lack of inpatient treatment facilities for substance abuse create barriers to timely and effective intervention. The scarcity of emergency shelter beds for families and limited resources for families with young children further exacerbate these challenges.

For non-English-speaking families, particularly Mixteco speakers, the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate services remains insufficient. This includes a need for more bilingual social workers and expanded outreach efforts. Additionally, the county lacks comprehensive post-reunification support programs to ensure sustained family stability and reduce the risk of reentry into the system.

Outcome Data Measures and Relevant Data Trends

The outcome data for 2023 highlights both progress and ongoing challenges. Placement stability has shown improvement, with a reduction in reentry rates for some age groups; however, older youth aged 11-15 remain disproportionately affected by reentries. Allegations of maltreatment are highest among children aged 6-10 and 11-15, with general neglect accounting for the majority of substantiated cases (84.9%). The data also reveals that Latino children experience a higher rate of allegations compared to their White counterparts, though substantiations are proportionately higher for White children.

Placement trends indicate that the majority of children continue to be placed in home-based family settings, with an increasing focus on relative placements. However, children from minority backgrounds, particularly Black and Native American children, remain underrepresented in these placements. Housing instability continues to be a significant factor influencing maltreatment and placement outcomes, as evidenced by the high number of families engaged in the Bringing Families Home program.

System Factors Effect on Outcome Data Measures and Service Delivery

Systemic factors, such as staffing shortages and high caseloads, directly impact the county's ability to meet child welfare outcome measures. The turnover of experienced staff has led to disruptions in case continuity, which affects placement stability and timely reunification efforts. Furthermore, the

geographic distribution of services, combined with limited transportation options, creates systemic barriers to accessing critical support for families in rural areas.

The integration of evidence-based practices like SDM and SOP has positively influenced service delivery, enabling more consistent risk assessments and case planning. However, systemic inequities, such as bias in-service provision and insufficient bilingual capacity, continue to affect the experiences of families from diverse backgrounds. The county's reliance on contracted service providers has added complexity to service coordination, particularly in areas like mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Progress, Challenges, and Overall Lessons Learned from the 2020 SIP

The previous System Improvement Plan (SIP) focused on enhancing family engagement, placement stability, and cultural competency. Progress has been made in implementing trauma-informed practices and expanding collaborative frameworks like SOCIT and CFTs. The county has also improved its use of data-driven tools, such as SafeMeasures, to monitor and enhance service delivery.

However, challenges remain in addressing disparities in maltreatment and placement outcomes for minority populations. The lack of comprehensive post-reunification support and persistent gaps in mental health and substance abuse services continue to hinder long-term family stability. Lessons learned emphasize the importance of equity-focused strategies, increased staffing support, and targeted outreach to underserved populations. The county's commitment to continuous quality improvement and stakeholder collaboration provides a strong foundation for addressing these challenges in the next SIP cycle.

2025 System Improvement Plan Strategies

Through data analysis gathered from community stakeholder forums, peer reviews, focus groups, and the CSA process, CWS has identified S2 – Recurrence of Maltreatment and Probation has identified P2 – Permanency in 12 Months (for youth in care 12-23 months) as the priority focus areas for the upcoming SIP.

These focus areas align with ongoing themes previously recognized in annual C-CFSR stakeholder meetings and focus groups. Additionally, both CWS and Probation will use these focus areas to drive improvements in related outcome measures, including S1 – Maltreatment in Foster Care, P3 – Permanency in 12 Months (for youth in care 24+ months), and P4 – Re-Entry to Foster Care.

Key areas needing improvement within CWS include recruitment, retention, and training for staff and community partners, expanding resource family availability, enhancing caregiver training, and strengthening family engagement efforts. Probation continues to face challenges in supporting youth in achieving permanency due to its involvement in foster care cases occurring at or after the initial permanency hearing, a shortage of local resource homes willing to accept high-needs Probation youth, and limited family involvement.

To address these challenges, CWS will implement the following strategies:

- Strengthening FM/FR social worker retention efforts
- Enhancing specialized training for staff
- Recruiting and developing specialized resource homes
- Expanding family finding and engagement practices

Probation will focus on the following strategies:

- Recruiting and developing specialized resource homes
- Expanding family finding and engagement efforts