



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
County Administrative Officer
559-675-7703

200 West 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

Board of Supervisors
BRETT FRAZIER
District 1
DAVID ROGERS
District 2
ROBERT POYTHRESS
District 3
MAX RODRIGUEZ
District 4
TOM WHEELER
District 5

August 21, 2018

The Honorable Dale Blea
Supervising Judge of the Grand Jury
Madera County Superior Court
200 S. G Street
Madera, CA 93637

Subject: Response to the 2017-18 Grand Jury Report entitled "Serving Madera County At-Risk Children, Behavioral Health Services, Department of Social Services."

Honorable Judge Blea:

Pursuant to the California Penal Code 933.05, the Madera County Board of Supervisors submits this response to the findings and recommendations in the 2017-18 Madera County Grand Jury report entitled "**Serving Madera County At-Risk Children, Behavioral Health Services, Department of Social Services.**" See Attachment #1.

The following are the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations and the Board of Supervisors' responses:

Finding 1:

Because of a lack of understanding of procedures for procuring the properly prepared releases, it is sometimes difficult for DSS to obtain needed client information from BHS.

Response

Respondent agrees with the finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (1).

Finding 2:

When the Healthy Beginnings Program is no longer funded, children under five will be adversely affected.

Response

Respondent disagrees with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Behavioral Health Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"Behavioral Health Services will back fill the funding cuts that would have been received from First Five, therefore there will be no changes to the services these children are receiving from BHS. "

The response of the Director of Behavioral Health Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 3:

There is a lack of understanding among BHS clinicians regarding the upcoming changes in the Healthy Beginnings Program.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Behavioral Health Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"Behavioral Health Services will back fill the funding cuts that would have been received from First Five, therefore there will be no changes to the services these children are receiving from BHS. The clinicians interviewed may not understand the funding changes."

The response of the Director of Behavioral Health Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 4:

Because the Presumptive Transfer Program is new and BHS and DSS don't always agree on placement/treatment, children are adversely affected.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Behavioral Health Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"While DSS and BHS don't always agree on placement and treatment as each agency has different responsibilities, the team always has the child's best interest in mind. Therefore, the team work through their differences and come to a mutually agreed upon approach."

The response of the Director of Behavioral Health Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 5:

Because there is no provision for DSS social workers to obtain licensure within the agency, professional advancement is inhibited.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"DSS administers state and federal programs which do not require staff to hold a license, therefore there is no professional advancement within DSS that is being inhibited."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 6:

Because social workers don't always attend TDM's, services to children are compromised.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"While it is true that the ongoing social worker does not attend the initial TDM at removal, there are assigned Social Workers who coordinate services. Furthermore, there is a warm hand off from the ER Social Worker to the Ongoing Social Worker."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 7:

Services to children continue to be negatively impacted by the high turnover rate of social workers between 2014-2016.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"While it is true that the considerable turnover of 2014-16 has led to a current workforce with little tenure and experience, staff turnover is not unique to DSS and the department is making considerable recruitment and retention efforts mitigate its impact."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 8:

The 100+ "stale referrals" still open at DSS represent children who have "fallen through the cracks" and not received necessary services.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"While it is correct that we have investigation referrals that have been pending over 60-days which are sometimes termed "stale", these referrals have not fallen through the cracks and been forgotten. We have made considerable progress in eliminating overdue referrals since 2017, from a high of over 1,000 to a current number of less than 110."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Finding 9:

Because Madera County does not require Social Workers and Program Managers to have a master's degree in Social Work or previous social work experience, effectiveness in their positions can be compromised.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

“Pursuant to California Government Code Section 19800 – 19810, the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that counties that receive federal funds for programs within their Social Services and Child Support Services departments adhere to the federal merit principles. CalHR has contracted with CPS HR Consulting (CPS HR) to provide Recruitment and Selection and Classification services that meet the federal mandates by following the Local Agency Personnel Standards (LAPS). Minimum job qualifications are set by CPS HR.

DSS makes every effort to select educated and experienced individuals and even more importantly the department strives to prepare these individuals for their critical responsibilities through training, mentoring and support leading to valuable work force regardless of their background. New social workers have a statewide standardized training curriculum through Regional Training Academies contracted by the California Department of Social Services. Furthermore, new Social Work Supervisors are required to participate and complete [Supervisor Core training](#).

Of our forty-six (46) permanent Child Welfare Social Workers 41.3% have a master’s in social work, 28.2% have a master’s in another field, 26% have a bachelor’s in social work while 71.7% have a bachelors in another related field of study.”

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors’ response.

Finding 10:

Because BHS and DSS have different operational objectives and methods, there can be negative results for children.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

“While DSS and BHS do have different operational objectives and methods the team always has the child’s best interest in mind. Therefore, the team work through their differences and come to a mutually agreed upon approach.”

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors’ response.

Finding 11:

DSS has too many administrators/supervisors for the number of social workers.

Response

Respondent disagrees partially with finding per California Penal Code 933.05 (a) (2). Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated

“Less than a quarter (25%) of our child welfare social workers have even 2 years of experience with the department. Such an inexperienced workforce requires additional training, support and mentorship as they perform their work in a 24-hour operation addressing the needs of children of our community.”

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors’ response.

Recommendation 1:

BHS management develop a plan to continue the services of the Healthy Beginnings Program by fall of 2018.

Response

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Behavioral Health Services will back fill the funding cuts that would have been received from First Five, therefore there will be no changes to the services these children are receiving from BHS.

Recommendation 2:

BHS management meet weekly with clinicians to update and inform them of changes, particularly regarding the Health Beginnings Program, effective immediately.

Response

The recommendation has been implemented. BHS Clinical Supervisors meet weekly with clinicians and other staff. A greater emphasis will be devoted to updates of program changes.

Recommendation 3:

BHS and DSS staff work together to resolve the issues resulting from AB1299 and the Presumptive Transfer Program on an ongoing basis, effective immediately.

Response

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"The recommendation regarding the Presumptive Transfer process has been partially implemented by reinitiating more frequent DSS and BHS meetings and will be fully implemented within the next 30 –days facilitated the State's issuance on June 22, 2018, of All County Letter (ACL No. 18-60), that provides Presumptive Transfer clarification and policy guidance and also includes procedural flowcharts and notification form templates that will significantly assist us in implementing this new legislation."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Recommendation 4:

DSS administration develop a plan to facilitate social worker licensure while working for DSS by fall 2018.

Response

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"DSS facilitating staff to pursue licensure as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) when none of its state and federal programs require staff to hold such a licensure would negatively impact the work it is mandated to perform given that it would require time away from regularly assigned duties."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Recommendation 5:

DSS social workers attend all of their TDM's unless there is an emergency, effective immediately.

Response

The recommendation has been implemented. Staff have been reminded through emailed communication and through unit meetings that they are to be present at any TDM involving a child on their caseload or for which they are serving as the TDM facilitator or in any other role.

Recommendation 6:

DSS administration develop a plan to better retain social workers, by fall of 2018.

Response

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"DSS has taken a number of actions to better retain social workers including the purchase of electronic tools, the establishment of support units for foster parent placement and community resource referral assistance and the establishment of an in-service training unit to better prepare new staff. It is appropriate that the department document its current and future efforts through the writing of a comprehensive plan which will be accomplished with the recommended time frame."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Recommendation 7:

DSS properly close all "stale referrals" and develop strategies to prevent this problem from occurring again, by fall of 2018.

Response

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Under separate cover, the Director of Social Services has responded to this finding and stated:

"DSS has taken a number a number of significant and successful measures to address overdue referrals and while virtually no county in the state can attest to never having overdue referrals, we can certainly strive for perfection and document our "Zero-Tolerance" for referrals to remain pending over 60-days which will be done within the next 30-days."

The response of the Director of Social Services to the above Finding is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors' response.

Recommendation 8:

DSS administration to make a greater commitment to hiring Social Workers and Program Managers with social work education and experience, effective immediately.

Response

The recommendation has been implemented. DSS will continue its efforts to select the best Social Worker and Program Managers from our stream of candidates.

Recommendation 9:

DSS administration annually review the social worker to supervisor ratio in order to reduce management top-heaviness.

Response

The recommendation has been implemented. DSS will continue its continuous evaluation of staffing levels at all levels of the organization.

The Board acknowledges the Grand Jury's review and time involved in this matter, and appreciates the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler".

Tom Wheeler
Chairman of the Board of Supervisors