

**Sonoma County Human Services Department
Sonoma County Probation Department
2014-2019 System Improvement Plan**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **2014-2019 System Improvement Plan** acts as the county’s roadmap for improvements to the child welfare and juvenile probation systems for the next five years. It also serves as the operational agreement between the county and the state in the local implementation of strategies to improve **safety, permanency** and **well-being** outcomes of children and their families.

Development of the System Improvement Plan

The System Improvement Plan is the culmination of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, which is a mandatory process to measure outcomes in **safety, permanency, and well-being** for victims of child abuse, some of whom have been removed from their families, and for juvenile offenders who require out-of-home placement. The Human Services and Probation Departments held 4 large community meetings and 16 focus groups during the 2013 CFSR process to dialogue with stakeholders about areas of strength and weakness and to create shared solutions to areas requiring improvement. Over 300 individuals participated in these meetings representing a wide variety of child welfare and probation stakeholders including county staff, current and former foster and probation youth, foster parents, group homes, mental health, public health, Indian Child Welfare experts representing local Native American tribes, education, child care, prevention partners community-based organizations and others.

2014-2019 System Improvement Plan Strategies

Based on information gathered during the 2013 County Self-Assessment and Peer Case Review, the following eight priority areas were identified as needing improvement:

CATEGORY	AREA OF FOCUS	CFSR PERFORMANCE MEASURE
SAFETY	Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect	Recurrence of Maltreatment Substantiations and Entries to Foster Care
	Reunification*	Reunification within 12 months Re-entry following reunification
PERMANENCY	Permanency for older youth	Exits to Permanency (24 months in care)
	Develop/formalize a full continuum of placement options	Number of foster homes Percent of youth in group homes Percent of youth placed with relatives
WELL-BEING	Youth authorized for psychotropic medication	Percent of youth authorized for psychotropic medication
	Define and measure youth well-being	Youth Self-Sufficiency measures
ORGANIZATIONAL	Consistency of practice	Local measures
	Data collection and data entry	Timely Response (10-Day) ICWA Eligible Placement Status Individualized Education Plans

** Reunification is an area of focus for both Human Services and Probation.*

Focus on Prevention
 Permanency for older youth
 Define and measure well-being
 Consistency of practice
 Better data

2014 – 2019 Sonoma County Child Welfare System Improvement Plan Framework

ENGAGEMENT

Child protection is a community responsibility.

SAFETY	PERMANENCY		WELL-BEING	ORGANIZATIONAL			
<p>PREVENTION Children are free from abuse and neglect. Children remain in their own homes whenever possible.</p>	<p>REUNIFICATION Children are reunified with their parents as quickly as possible and where appropriate.</p>	<p>EXITS TO PERMANENCY Older youth are reunified, adopted or in guardianship prior to reaching the age of majority</p>	<p>CONTINUUM OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS Children and youth are placed in settings that are suited to the child's needs and case plan goals. The placement system is structured to facilitate exits to permanency.</p>	<p>PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION Psychotropic medication is prescribed only to youth with clinical need for it.</p>	<p>YOUTH WELL-BEING "Youth well-being" is clearly defined and measured.</p>	<p>CONSISTENCY OF PRACTICE Expectations and practices are consistently understood and implemented.</p>	<p>DATA COLLECTION & ENTRY Client data are collected according to best practices.</p>
<p>Team Decision Making 4 Paths to Prevention Structured Decision Making Prevention Services (diversion) Community education and outreach</p>	<p>Family engagement, community involvement in case planning - TEAM Ice Breakers Safety Organized Practice Parent Mentor Parent Orientation</p>	<p>Implement Adoptions Program with added focus on adoptions of older children Family finding Concurrent planning during permanency planning</p>	<p>Develop/formalize "continuum" of placement options -more foster & adoptive homes -more relative homes -more treatment foster care Strategic use of group homes Targeted use of Wrap Develop infrastructure for successful placements (assessment, placement team, LLC, TDM)</p>	<p>Analyze cause of high numbers Develop and implement checks and balances Monitor, review, correct Incorporate into Quality Assurance system</p>	<p>Identify characteristics of self-sufficiency for older youth Develop system to track self-sufficiency.</p>	<p>Develop practice model Enhance supervisory effectiveness Quality Assurance system</p>	<p>Develop data system for tracking children's mental health assessments Improve data accuracy in ethnicity, contacts, education, ILP</p>
<p><u>Indicators:</u> % Entries to foster care % Recurrence of maltreatment % Clients completed services Community knowledge of child abuse and reporting Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> % Timely reunification % Re-enter foster care % Ice Breakers % clients complete parent orientation % clients engaged in case planning Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> % kids in care >24 months exiting to permanency % adoption of older youth # family members "found" % of PP kids with concurrent plan other than PPLA Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> # youth in group homes Average length of stay in GH # treatment FH # foster homes # relative homes # step downs Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> % youth authorized for psychotropic medication % authorization override Average length of time on meds Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> Accurate self-sufficiency profiles and data reports Youth input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> Stakeholder perception of consistency % supervisors complete training & participate in learning community % QA system developed Stakeholder input</p>	<p><u>Indicators:</u> Accurate youth well-being profiles and data reports Accurate and complete ethnicity data reports</p>

All policies, programs and practices are rooted in FYC organizational values, are based on researched best practices, are locally/culturally appropriate and are implemented effectively.

Sonoma County Probation Department

The Probation Department will focus on reunification within 12 months because the majority of youth placed in foster care through delinquency proceedings return to the home upon program completion. The national standard/goal for reunification within 12 months is 75%. Between 10/01/11 and 09/30/12, only 25% of probation youth reunified within 12 months.

The strategies developed by the Probation Department for the 2014-2019 System Improvement Plan (SIP) directly coincide with the larger evidence-based practice efforts already established by the department and it is hoped that these strategies will further strengthen the youth and families and help the department reach identified system improvement goals.

Strategies to help achieve the probation reunification goal are:

Strategy 1: Increase monthly contact with custodial and non-custodial parent/guardian for reunification cases.

Strategy 2: Create and implement a monthly parent education and support group.

Strategy 3: Conduct Assessment of youth and family to determine level of readiness to transition home.

Strategy 4: Increase concurrent planning activities.

Evaluating Outcomes

Sonoma County is committed to providing the highest quality of services to children, youth and families. The Human Services and Probation Departments will continue to implement a variety of strategies to increase the number of evidence-based services it offers, including bonus points during the competitive procurement process, contractually required logic models and program evaluations. Further, the Sonoma County Upstream Investments Initiative, which is sponsored by the Board of Supervisors and led by the Human Services Department, provides a practical framework and support for local programs to develop an empirical basis for their services, such as literature reviews, logic models, evaluation plans, evaluations, policies and procedures, and more.

Progress toward the goals established in the 2014-2019 System Improvement Plan will be evaluated and reported on annually to both community stakeholders and the California Department of Social Services. The Human Services and Probation Departments are committed to transparency and accountability in the implementation of the SIP.

Conclusions

The 2014-2019 System Improvement Plan provides an exciting opportunity for the Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation systems to make improvements to their policies, processes, practices and services that will result in positive outcomes for children, youth and families in Sonoma County. Buoyed by the high level of engagement of its many partner organizations in the development of the SIP, Sonoma County is looking forward to ongoing family and community involvement as it moves into the implementation phase.