

**COUNTY OF MONTEREY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

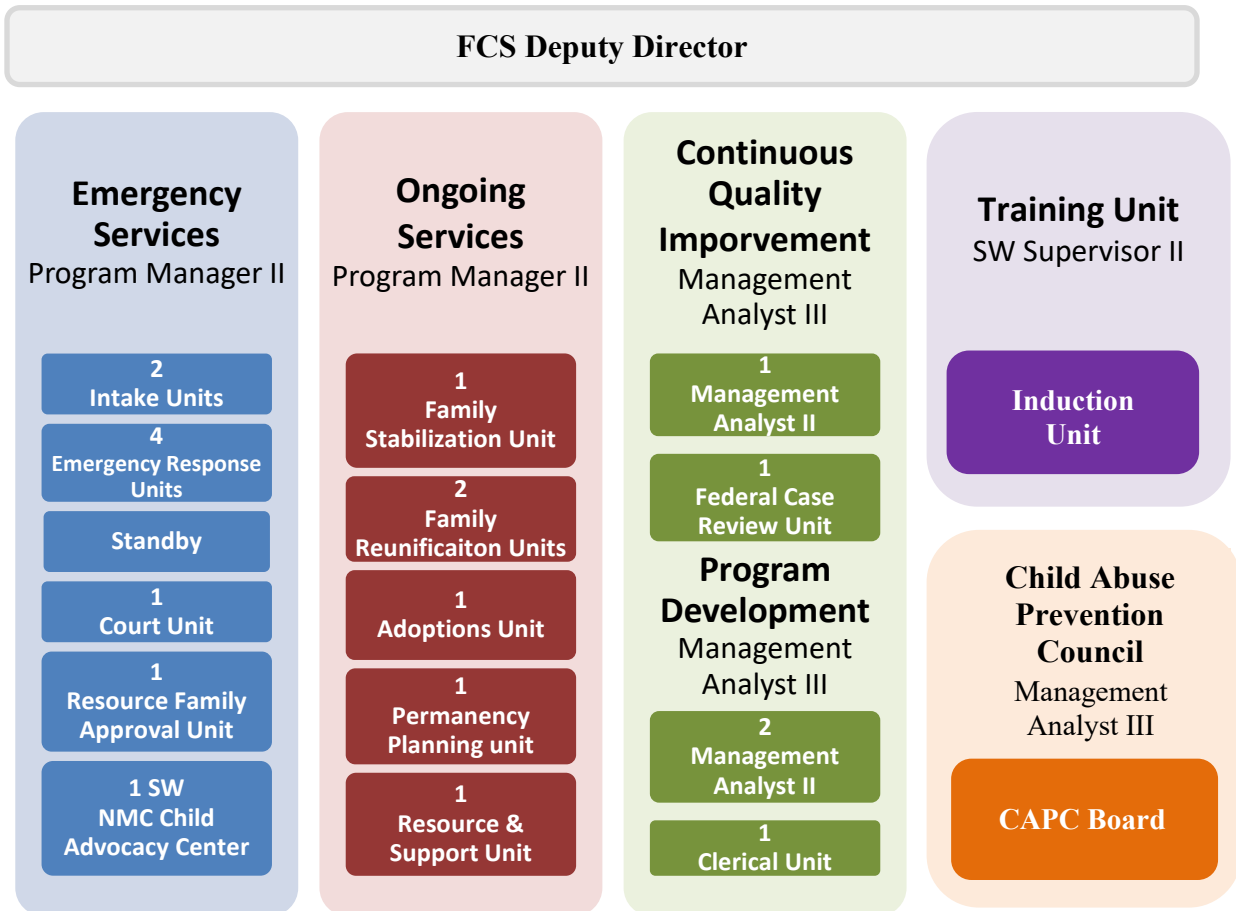
Monterey County Department of Social Services
Family and Children's Services

Family and Children's Services Overview and Staffing Update Report

Introduction

Monterey County Department of Social Services (DSS), Family and Children's Services (FCS) branch offers child protective services, foster care services, and adoption services to children and youth in Monterey County. The mission of FCS is to prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect. Service goals strive to keep children and youth safe and within the protection of a permanent family.

The FCS Deputy Director oversees child welfare emergency services, ongoing services, Case Quality Improvement, program development, training, and the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC). The agency is comprised of the following units:



Emergency Services

There is one program manager who oversees all emergency services for FCS. The units under emergency services contribute to the FCS mission by responding to reports of child abuse or neglect 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and meet with children and families in person to assess the safety of children in Monterey County. The goal of emergency services is to ensure that children can be safely cared for in their homes with the assistance of preventative community services whenever necessary. If preventative services are not an option or they fail, children are placed in foster care for their protection. Emergency services are comprised of the following units:

- I. Intake Units (6 social workers)
Social workers in the Intake Units are responsible for answering calls from community members who suspect a child is being abused or neglected. Utilizing information from the caller, the intake social workers determine if the report requires an in-person investigation.
- II. Emergency Response Units (17 social workers – 1 SW LOA)
Social workers in the Emergency Response Units conduct investigation for the referrals that require in-person immediate or 10-day response. Emergency response social workers are required to complete their investigation within 30 days of FCS receiving the report.
- III. Standby (2-3 social workers assigned per shift and 1 supervisor)
FCS is required by law to receive and respond to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect 24 hours a day. FCS social workers volunteer to provide the after-hours coverage to answer calls and conduct investigation during non-business hours.
- IV. Court Unit (3 social workers)
The court officer in the Court Unit files petitions with Juvenile Dependency Court when children cannot remain safely in their homes after reasonable services have been provided. Social Workers in the Court Unit are responsible for investigating the allegations in the petition and making a recommendation to the court regarding further placement of the child and court intervention.
- V. Resource Family Approval Unit (4 social workers)
Social workers in the Resource Family Approval Units assess and approve relatives and community members to care for foster children as resource parents.
- VI. Social Worker at Sally P. Archer Child Advocacy Center and Bates-Eldredge Child Abuse Clinic at Natividad Medical Center (vacant – covered by ER SW)
The FCS social worker assigned to the Child Advocacy Center is responsible for conducting forensic interviews of children who have been physically and sexually abused. These forensic interviews provide documented evidence to assist in the prosecution of criminal cases.

Contracted Prevention Services

FCS contracts with various service providers to offer prevention services to families in Monterey County. These services include the following:

- I. Pathways to Safety, Action Council of Monterey County
The Action Council partners with Community Human Services to receive referrals from FCS and provide early intervention services to families.
- II. Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting Facilitation, Seneca Family of Agencies
Seneca facilitates pre-custodial CFT meetings to ensure families are informed of any child abuse/neglect concerns and participate in the decision-making process to mitigate those concerns.
- III. Wraparound, Seneca Family of Agencies
When families are connected to Children's Behavioral Health, they can receive intensive care management and clinical services through Wraparound to address the needs of youth with complex needs in order for them to remain in their homes.
- IV. Parent Education, Community Human Services
Connect is a 10-week program for families with youth ages 8 to 18 years old that promotes social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment and attachment security.
- V. Parents as Teachers, Door to Hope
Family education and therapy program for parents and their young children.
- VI. Cherish Center, Aspiranet
Emergency shelter for children who need to be removed from their homes or temporarily sheltered due to safety threats.
- VII. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Services
The YWCA, Community Human Services, and Monterey County Rape Crisis Center contract with FCS to provide training in the community and services to youth who are identified as victims of exploitation or human trafficking.
- VIII. Family Ties, Seneca Family of Agencies
Case management, referral to services, education, and legal guardianship assistance for relative caregivers in Monterey County.

Ongoing Services:

There is one program manager who oversees all ongoing services for FCS. The units under ongoing services contribute to the FCS mission by providing services to families voluntarily or through court orders to minimize the risk of future abuse or neglect. When children enter foster care, FCS makes every effort to keep children placed with their siblings and with their families or near-kin. The goal of ongoing services is to reunify children with their parent(s); however, when reunification is not possible, the goal is to ensure children are in a permanent home through adoption or legal guardianship.

- I. Family Stabilization Unit (4 social workers – 2 on LOA)
Social workers in the Family Stabilization Unit provide voluntary family maintenance services to families in crisis to prevent or remedy abuse or neglect, allowing social workers to work with the family while keeping the child in the home.
- II. Family Reunification Units (5 social workers)
Social Workers in the Family Reunification (FR) Unit team with the parents and their network of support to ensure that the safety concerns identified are addressed

with the goal of reunifying foster children with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Once reunification is achieved, social workers provide 6 to 12 months of family maintenance services to continue monitoring the safety of the child in the home.

- III. Adoptions Unit (4 social workers)
Social workers in the Adoption Unit are responsible for terminating the birth parents' rights and transferring those rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. Social workers in the Adoptions Unit also provide post-adoption services and provide case management for non-related legal guardianships.
- IV. Permanency Planning Unit (4 social workers)
Social workers in the Permanency Planning Unit are responsible for working with foster youth to develop a plan for identifying a permanent home because they were unable to reunify with their parent or guardian. When youth reach the age of 18 years old, social workers in the Permanency Planning Unit continue to provide case management when youth opt in to extended foster care up to their 21st birthday.
- V. Resource and Support Unit (4 social workers)
Social workers in the Resource and Support Unit identify resource family homes for foster children, mitigate caregiver concerns, help stabilize foster placements, and share supportive resources with caregivers.

Contracted Ongoing Services

FCS contracts with various service providers to support ongoing services in Monterey County. These services include the following:

- I. Childcare, Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
Provides childcare to resource parents and families participating in family maintenance services.
- II. Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting Facilitation, Seneca Family of Agencies
Seneca facilitates all ongoing CFT meetings to ensure families participate in the decision-making process to achieve reunification or permanency for their children.
- III. Wraparound, Seneca Family of Agencies
Resource parents and reunified families can receive intensive care management and clinical services through Wraparound to address the needs of youth with complex needs in order for them to remain in their homes.
- IV. Parent Education, Community Human Services
Connect is a 10-week program for families with youth ages 8 to 18 years old that promotes social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment and attachment security.
- V. Parents as Teachers, Door to Hope
Family education and therapy program for parents or resource parents and their young children.
- VI. Transitional Housing, Unity Care Group
Provides transitional housing and emergency housing services to homeless and former foster and probation youth in Monterey County.
- VII. MCSTART and Mentor Programs, Door to Hope

Cognitive, behavioral, social, emotional, education development assessment and treatment. Door to Hope also provides mentors for parents with substance abuse histories and resource parents.

- VIII. Youth Drop-In Services, The Epicenter
Provide employment to current and former foster youth along with drop-in services for housing, education, employment, and wellness.
- IX. Independent Living Program, Hartnell College
Provide workshops and support for foster and probation youth ages 14.5 to 21 years old.
- X. SSI Advocacy, Maximus Human Services
Assist with applications to Social Security benefits for foster youth who are disabled.
- XI. Drug Testing, Doctors on Duty
Provides drug testing services for families involved with child welfare.
- XII. Intimate Partner Violence, YWCA
Provide support for victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence who are involved with child welfare.
- XIII. Visitation Center, Aspiranet
Provides supervision for family visitation for foster children in the process of reunification.

Other Contracted Services

- I. Title IV-E Training, Hartnell College
Provide training for resource parents and service providers.
- II. Bay Area Academy Training, CA State University Fresno Foundation
Provide training and 1:1 coaching to social work staff.
- III. Resource Family Evaluations, Seneca and Aspiranet
Conduct family evaluations for resource family approval.
- IV. The Marketing Department (TMD)
Provides marketing services for recruitment of resource families.

Case Quality Improvement

Analysts in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Unit are responsible for implementing a CQI model in line with the federal Child and Family Services Review; developing and managing contracts; policy interpretation and implementation; and data tracking and analysis. The management analyst II supervises two social work positions who are responsible for completing mandated federal case reviews.

Program Development

Analysts in the Program Development Unit create and implement programs to support ongoing child welfare services. These analysts are responsible for developing and managing contracts; reporting outcomes to the state; policy interpretation and implementation; and data tracking and analysis.

Training Unit

The social work supervisor of the Training Unit is responsible for providing induction training to all newly hired social workers in FCS. The induction training lasts 6 weeks and includes a combination of in-person/Zoom classes; independent study sessions;

shadowing opportunities with social work staff in the field, simulation lab practice, and a driving tour of the county.

CAPC

A management analyst III is the Director of the Monterey County Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC). CAPC is the local entity to the state of California Office of Child Abuse Prevention. The local CAPC Board is made up of appointed county representatives along with 4-6 appointed citizen-at-large representatives. The role of local CAPCs is to act as a catalyst, convener and coordinator of the child well-being and child abuse prevention efforts in Monterey County.

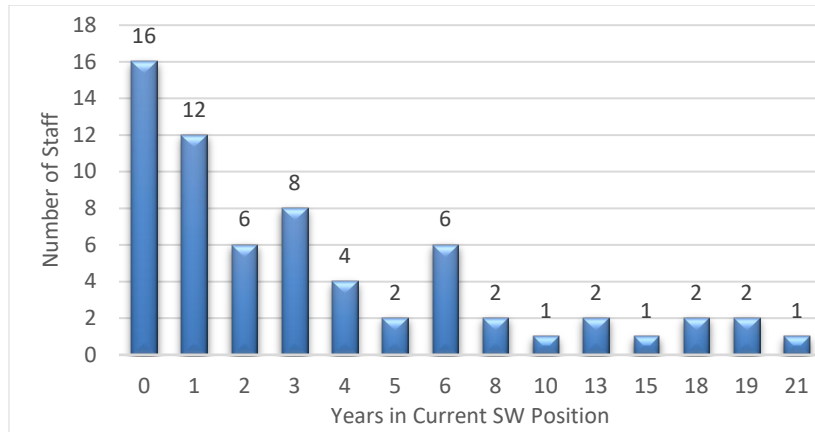
Staffing Data

I. Vacancies

The total number of budgeted social worker and social work supervisor positions in FCS is 91. As of January 24, 2023, there were 22 social worker and social work supervisor positions vacant in FCS.

II. Retention

In FCS, there have been 16 social worker/social work supervisor resignations in the past year. FCS Social workers and social work supervisors have been in their current positions for an average of 4.6 years. The majority of social work staff have less than 3 years in their current position.



III. Recruitment data (January 1, 2022 – December 8, 2022)

A. Interviews

DSS received 44 applications for social worker positions and interviewed 22 candidates.

B. New Hires

Social Worker I	1 (internal promotion)
Social Worker III	5 (2 internal promotions)
Social Worker IV	6
Social Work Supervisor	2 (2 internal promotions)
Social Worker I (working out of class)	7 (5 SSA, 2 OA)

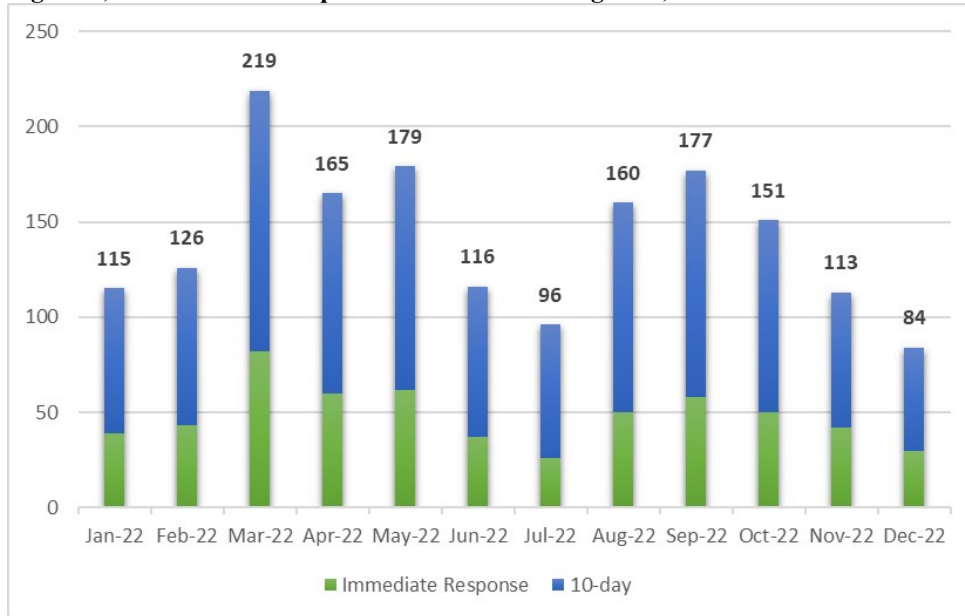
Impact of Staffing Shortage

The area of FCS that has been impacted the most by staffing shortages is Emergency Services.

I. Referral Assignments

In 2022, FCS received an average of 142 referrals per month that required an in-person investigation. Approximately 34% of the referrals received required a response within 24 hours (immediate). Figure 1 shows the total number of referrals requiring an immediate or 10-day response in 2022.

Figure 1, Referrals that Required In-Person Investigation, Jan.-Dec. 2022



During 2022, FCS had an average of 13 social workers assigned to investigate child abuse referrals. This means that each social worker was assigned an average of 11 referrals each month. This does not account for individual work restrictions; assignment rotation; paid time off; leave of absences; time assigned to the Emergency Response Unit; time spent training new staff; and social workers inheriting referrals when staff resign, promote, or transfer to other units. FCS has not had adequate staff to investigate the number of referrals that require in-person investigations.

II. Documentation

Due to the number of referral assignments, staff are prioritizing seeing families to ensure the safety of children over documentation. In December 2022, there were 84 referrals that required an in-person investigation and 15 referrals that did not have a response determination, for a total of 99 referrals. Figure 2 shows that out of 99 referrals, 43 referrals are missing a contact entry/documentation.

Figure 2, Referral Documentation, Dec. 2022

Elapsed Time Between Contact...	Count	%
Less Than 1 Day	16	16.2%
Within 1-5 Days	26	26.3%
Within 6-10 Days	0	0.0%
Within 11-15 Days	4	4.0%
More Than 15 Days	10	10.1%
Entry Precedes Contact	0	0.0%
No Contact Reported	43	43.4%
Total	99	100%

Source: Safe Measures version 5.2.1

III. Backlog of Referrals

The staffing shortage has caused a backlog of referrals that need to be closed. Referrals of child abuse and neglect must be investigated and closed, or promoted to a case, within 30 days of FCS receiving the report. Referrals that are unfounded or inconclusive end up open past 30 days because staff do not have time to close them due to ongoing referral assignments. As shown in Figure 3, FCS has 1,342 referrals that have been open longer than 30 days as of December 9, 2022.

Figure 3, Open Referrals, Dec. 2022

Days Open	Count	%
0 to 7 Days	38	2.6%
8 to 14 Days	12	0.8%
15 to 30 Days	64	4.4%
31 to 60 Days	111	7.6%
More than 60 Days	1,231	84.5%
Total	1,456	100%

IV. Corrective Action Plan

In December of 2022, as a result of a state onsite visit, Family & Children’s Services entered into a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with the California Department of Social Services. During the state visit in March of 2022, concerns were noted in and around practices within the Intake and Emergency Response Program (specifically with regards to the processing of Suspected Child Abuse Reports from mandated reporters). The corrective action plan was finalized with the California Department of Social Services – Children’s Services Operations Bureau and is comprised of 7 sections:

- A. Record Remediation
- B. Record Maintenance and Retention

- C. Intake and Screening
- D. Emergency Response and Investigations
- E. Practice and Intervention
- F. ICWA
- G. Training

Within the seven sections, there are a total of 27 corrective actions identified. At least 4 corrective actions have already been completed. The remaining 23 corrective actions are slated to be completed within the next 18 months, with deadlines varying from 1 month from approval (in December 2022) to 18 months from approval of the CAP.

Short-term Strategies

- I. Recruitment
 - A. DSS Human Resources (HR) is responsible for communicating to CalHR the need to post and open a recruitment and managing the Final Selection process. Upon receipt of Branches' approved Request to Fill, DSS HR is committed to continue to timely request CalHR to post recruitments and supply CalHR all the necessary information to open the recruitment. Upon receipt of the eligible list, DSS HR is committed to continue to timely communicate with all candidates the status of their application, promptly schedule and proctor interviews, conduct references, and issue offer letters to selected candidates.
 - B. Continuous recruitment for Social Worker IV positions.
 - C. FCS Deputy Director recruitment has been posted with first review of resumes on January 16, 2023.
 - D. DSS is actively hiring for all vacant classifications in FCS.
 - E. The Human Resources Department is in discussions with DSS to explore other methods or options available for recruitment and examination services, including what processes needs to be in place to obtain CalHR's approval to use the County's personnel system to administer the employment of merit employees. If approved, DSS HR could potentially have complete control of the entire recruitment process and eliminate the current recruitment obstacles DSS faces.
 - F. SW IV/V classification designated as difficult to fill as of December 20, 2022 and eligible for \$5,000 hiring bonus, as well as referral bonus of up to \$2,000.
 - G. To attract qualified candidates, DSS HR will continue to post at key posting sites and work with local universities through the Title IV-E internship program to attract MSW students. Also, FCS and HR will be attending a Title IV-E job fairs with local universities to recruit more Title IV-E interns.
 - H. DSS is in conversation with San Jose State University and California State University, Monterey Bay to provide internships for MSW students in the hopes they will choose to work with Monterey County when they graduate.

- I. Base wage study and adjustment for social workers and social work supervisors to be more competitive with neighboring counties.
 - J. Current SW IV/V staff are serving as field mentors to CSUMB MSW Title IV-E interns. FCS currently has three interns, and each mentor is eligible to receive a monthly stipend of \$150 for their mentorship.
- II. Retention
- A. The Department is holding monthly Joint Quality Service Forum (JQSFC) meetings with SEIU to discuss and strategize on possible solutions to address staff's concerns while also ensuring staff provide timely and quality services to the community.
 - B. Provide induction training to all new social work staff. FCS held the first induction training on January 4, 2021, and there have been 10 subsequent induction training cohorts since then. The training supervisor has trained a total of 28 new works, and FCS has retained 23 of them (82%). Feedback from staff who participated in Induction: "I think induction is a great idea." "All new workers should be able to have this time to prepare for what's to come." "Not all new workers will have a child welfare background or have had the case management experience at the level of the current social workers. I am very grateful to have had this time to learn about the department and have the opportunity to shadow and practice before we go out to our units."
 - C. The Training Unit provides support to social work supervisors and staff as needed. This is in the form of one-on-one coaching, a refresher training session with a unit, or individual staff re-training. The Training Unit also works with the management team and Regional Training Academy to ensure FCS training needs are addressed.
 - D. Base wage study and adjustment for social workers and social work supervisors to be more competitive with neighboring counties.
 - E. Social workers in other FCS units were asked to volunteer to assist with FCS emergency response assignments and were compensated accordingly.
 - F. Social Work were voluntarily and involuntarily reassigned to FCS units with the greatest number of vacancies to address workload concerns.
 - G. Designate "Working Out of Class" reassignments as Social Worker I to address staffing concerns and also provide internal growth opportunities to gain experience and knowledge to pass Merit's minimum qualification criteria.

Long-term Strategies

- I. Recruitment
 - A. Merit System Services
 - 1. Pursuant to California Government Code sections 19800 –19811, counties receiving federal funds for Social Services and Child Support programs are required to use a merit personnel system for program employees that meets the following six merit principles:
 - a. Recruitment, selection and advancement of employees is on the basis of their relative ability, knowledge, and skills,

including open consideration of qualified applicants for initial appointment.

- b. Employees are provided equitable and adequate compensation.
 - c. Employees are trained, as needed, to assure high quality performance.
 - d. Employees are retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance is addressed, and employees whose inadequate performance cannot be corrected are separated.
 - e. Applicants and employees are assured fair treatment in all aspects of personnel administration without regard to political affiliation, race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, age, or disability and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights as citizens. This "fair treatment" principle includes compliance with the federal equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws.
 - f. Employees are protected against coercion for partisan political purposes and are prohibited from using their official authority for purposes of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for office.
2. County of Monterey Departments that fall under Merit System Services:
 - a. Social Services
 - b. Military and Veterans Affairs, a Division of Social Services
 - c. Child Support Services
 3. CalHR is responsible for the recruitment process which entails:
 - a. Creation of the Job Flyer
 - b. Advertising/Outreach
 - c. Acceptance applications
 - d. Screening of applicants
 - e. Oral and/or written examinations
 - f. Communication with applicants throughout the recruitment and examination process
 - g. Establishes the Eligible List
 - h. Handles all recruitment and examination appeals
 4. Departments are responsible for managing the final selection process
 5. The Human Resources Department is in discussions with the Department of Social Services to explore other methods or options available for recruitment and examination services.

II. Retention

- A. DSS is also exploring what the Department and the County can do to grow our own Social Workers, including looking at options the County may contribute to or assist in staff's continued higher education.
- B. California Child and Family Service Review (CCFSR)
 1. County Self-Assessment (CSA)

As a component of the CCFSR, FCS completed a CSA that included data analysis, peer review, and stakeholder focus groups. The CSA identified staff retention as a system improvement strategy.

2. System Improvement Plan (SIP)

Strategy 4: Create a department-wide plan to retain qualified staff and reduce staffing turnover, which includes: Onboarding, Opportunities for Mentorship, and Addressing Secondary Trauma amongst staff.

- a. On a quarterly basis, discuss staffing needs, vacancies/LOAs, retention challenges, and reasons for staff resigning or leaving a position (i.e., retirement, promotion, resignation, acceptance of job offers in other agencies/departments) at Management meetings.
- b. Develop strategies to provide professional growth opportunities for staff who aspire to promote, as well as an information mechanism for delivering this information to staff. Professional growth may include opportunities to work on internal projects, training/conference attendance, mentoring, etc. The training supervisor is available to mentor social workers interested in professional growth opportunities. FCS continues to invite social workers and staff to participate in work groups to develop new policies and procedures. Social workers also assist with process-mapping different areas of practice like intake, emergency response, and others.
- c. Work with Human Resources to create and implement an agency specific exit interview process for staff leaving in order to glean information as to reasons for staff exits.
- d. Begin assessment of current onboarding process and brainstorm a new standardized process of onboarding staff to include: learning tools; caseload management tools; utilization of training (both in person and online learning) and 1:1 coaching; and mentorship.
- e. Develop new staff onboarding handbook for newly hired social workers and SW supervisors in order to standardize learning processes and expectations for new staff. Handbook should include guidance tools for specific tasks in each service component area, expectations for new staff and information on what new staff can expect from leadership, a training matrix and expected time frames for completion on new SW trainings, and caseload management tools.
- f. Develop self-care practices and secondary trauma trainings/support for all staff.
- g. Implementation of Exit Interview Process.
- h. Implementation of new staff onboarding process.
- i. Implement Secondary Trauma trainings for Staff.

- j. Develop and implement annual staff satisfaction surveys for Social Work, Supervisory, and Support Staff which include feedback on Staff Mentorship Program, Exits reasons, Onboarding process, and Secondary Trauma.
 - k. Incorporated feedback from Annual Staff Satisfaction Surveys into Department CQI process CPM Values.
 - l. Develop and Implement an ongoing fidelity assessment for the new staff onboarding process to ensure it is updated and refreshed as needed.
- C. FCS is exploring the option of offering clinical supervision for staff who have their MSW and want to obtain their LCSW. Currently, five staff are paying out of pocket for supervision and others who are interested. Social workers have left the agency so that they can obtain clinical supervision. Offering clinical supervision could also help recruit new social workers who are looking to obtain their LCSW.