

**EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN SERVICES
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**

TO: Board of Supervisors
David Twa

DATE: November 8, 2016

FROM: Kathy Gallagher, Director, Employment and Human Services Department
Joan Miller, Director, Children and Family Services Bureau

SUBJECT: Continuum of Care Reform (CCR)

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this report from the Employment and Human Services Department; and continue to support the Children and Family Services (CFS) Bureau and its efforts to improve services to dependent children and youth.

BACKGROUND

The Continuum of Care Reform, AB 403, is a comprehensive reform effort built on many years of policy changes designed to improve outcomes for youth in foster care. The goal is to ensure that youth in foster care have their day-to-day physical, mental, and emotional needs met; that they have the greatest chance to grow up in permanent and supportive homes; and that they have the opportunity to grow into self-sufficient, successful adults.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CCR:

All children deserve to live with a committed, nurturing, and permanent family that prepares the youth for a successful transition into adulthood.

Both the child and family's experience and voice are important in assessment, placement and service planning. Child and Family Team meetings, which include the child, family, and members of their formal and informal support network, will meet as a foundation for ensuring all perspectives are considered throughout the life of the case.

All placement types should be able to provide access to the services and supports, including behavioral and mental health services, that the child in placement needs.

Agencies serving children and youth including; child welfare, probation, mental health, education, and other community service providers, need to collaborate effectively to surround the child and family with needed services, resources and supports rather than requiring the child and caregivers to navigate multiple service providers.

The goal for all children in foster care is safety, permanency and well being while establishing permanent life-long relationships. CCR guides the transition away from the traditional use of long-term group home care by transforming existing group home care into short term, residential treatment programs for youth who are not ready to live with families in home-based care.

PROGRESS TO DATE:

Contra Costa County has been planning for the January 1, 2017 implementation of Resource Family Approval (RFA) for the past 12 months. RFA is an important shift in the way that Children and Family Services approves caregivers as it supports placement with families that can provide a lifelong connection by determining permanency approval upfront. Contra Costa County was one of the first five non-implementation counties to submit their RFA Implementation plan to the state.

EHSD has created a collaborative CCR Executive Team and a Steering Committee with management representatives from Children and Family Services, the CAO's office, Behavioral Health Department, and Probation Department to guide workgroups tasked with different components of CCR, such as Child and Family Team Meetings, Group Homes and Foster Family Agencies, Training, and Data.

Children and Family Services has been collecting data on the (approximately) one hundred dependent children who are currently in group home placements to assess their potential for stepping down to home-based care and to determine their specific services and treatment needs.

Children and Family Services has also been meeting with providers, including Group Homes and Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) in order to communicate the needs of Contra Costa County dependents and assist them with their transition to CCR.

Over the past year, Children and Family Services has also developed new strategies and a renewed focus on recruiting and retaining quality non-relative and relative resource families.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The Continuum of Care Reform draws together a series of existing and new reforms to our child welfare services program designed out of an understanding that children who must live apart from their biological parents do best when they are cared for in committed, nurturing family homes. AB 403 provides the statutory and policy framework to ensure services and supports provided to the child and his or her family are tailored toward the ultimate goal of maintaining a stable, permanent family.

With the Board's support and commitment to the Continuum of Care Reform, EHSD will utilize CCR to better meet the needs of our dependent children and to promote positive outcomes for youth as they transition out of foster care.