



**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT NO. 1906
"Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect"**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE

FINDINGS – *California Penal Code Section 933.05(a) requires a response to the designated findings of the Grand Jury.*

F1. Children and Family Services (CFS) has 23 vacant social worker positions.

Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. While there were 23 vacancies on March 4, 2019, at the time of the Grand Jury finding, there are currently 18 vacant social worker II/III vacant permanent positions.

F2. CFS has an annual staff attrition rate of 28 percent.

Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. While the attrition rate was 28 percent for social worker II/III's at the time of the Grand Jury inquiry, this rate greatly fluctuates over time. Most recently, from February 1, 2019 through April 30, 2019, there was a social worker II/III turnover rate of 2.9%.

F3. CFS hiring practices take up to six months, during which time some job applicants find employment elsewhere.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F4. Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) has formed a task force to look for ways of speeding up the hiring process.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F5. Compensation for CFS social workers is less than that for social workers in other Bay Area counties.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

F6. CFS staff cite high workloads, poor leadership, and a stressful work environment as reasons for leaving, in addition to compensation.

Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. These reasons for leaving are

supported by the 2017 exit interviews. However, the Department believes citing these reasons for leaving will trend downwards, as caseloads have decreased significantly for staff in 2018 and in the first quarter of 2019. The previously higher vacancy rate has been the main contributor to increased caseloads and, therefore, increased stress in the workforce. Since the vacancy rate has been decreasing, so have caseload levels.

F7. CFS does not have consistent practices for performance reviews to foster staff and management accountability.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding, as CFS is in alignment with EHSD process and practice of employee evaluations in addition to regularly scheduled supervision meetings with employees. Inconsistencies can occur during periods of high vacancy and turnover rates, however CFS managers do provide back-up to supervisors to ensure that performance is being appropriately evaluated and monitored.

F8. EHSD has proposed incentives to encourage new hires to accept offers of employment. These include a five percent premium over base pay, signing bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and assistance with repayment of student loans.

Response: The respondent agrees with the finding. These incentives have been proposed, but are still in the exploration phase.

F9. EHSD has a Leadership Academy for all of its bureaus, but managers in CFS do not always participate or follow up with their staffs.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding, as all 7 CFS Division Managers have completed the Leadership Academy training. CFS supervisors have not been mandated to attend the Leadership Academy, but do attend other child welfare trainings that include leadership practices.

F10. CFS does not have a clearly defined set of procedures for handling and resolving complaints it receives from parents and other stakeholders.

Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding, as complainants report to the level above employee involved and/or the Ombudsman. The recently negotiated Ombudsman contract contains procedures for resolving and reporting complaints at various levels.

F11. CFS has no formal process for handling recommendations from its ombudsman or staff members for improvements in its policies and practices.

Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. The formal process includes Ombudsman reports and monthly Program Committee meetings open to all CFS staff. Documentation and reports of complaints and resulting actions will be improved, since the new Ombudsman contract establishes processes.

F12. The proposed contract for the new CFS ombudsman limits the amount of time the ombudsman can spend resolving complaints.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding. There is no limit to the amount of time needed to resolve complaints.

F13. The independence of the CFS ombudsman is impacted because the position reports to the director of CFS.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding. All Ombudsman complaints are always provided to the EHSD and CFS Director. The CFS Director meets with the Ombudsman to determine if there are practice issues that require additional follow up and to gather clarity on issues the Ombudsman discovers. The protocol allows the Ombudsman to meet with the EHSD Director at any time they feel that the case merits a higher review.

RECOMMENDATIONS - California Penal Code Section 933.05(b) requires a response to the designated recommendations of the Grand Jury.

R 1. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to review social worker compensation to ensure that it is competitive with that of neighboring counties in the 2020-2021 budget cycle.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented. EHSD will coordinate with the Human Resources department to plan and schedule a survey in Fiscal Year 2019/20.

R2. The Board of Supervisors should consider implementing EHSD's proposal for incentives to aid in recruiting new social workers for CFS in the 2020-2021 budget cycle.

Response: The recommendation requires further analysis to determine if the results will be effective and fiscally sustainable. The analysis should be completed by November 10, 2019.

R3. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to continue its ongoing efforts to streamline the hiring process and reduce the amount of time it takes to make hiring decisions by December 31, 2019.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented. The recommendation requires the collaboration of the Human Resources Department to complete the implementation of an on-line exam that will decrease the amount of time it takes to hire new social workers. EHSD's goal is to have the on-line exam available on or before December 31, 2019.

R4. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to hold CFS managers accountable for participating in its Leadership Development program by December 31, 2019.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented, because all 7 of the current CFS Division Managers have completed the Leadership Academy training. This is a mandated training for all managers and newly hired managers are always scheduled for the current Leadership classes that are being offered.

R5. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to develop and implement a formal process for handling and resolving CFS client complaints by June 30, 2020.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented. On-line information on how to access CFS staff or Ombudsman will be provided for all interested parties, in addition to instruction on how to make a complaint. This will be implemented by June 30, 2020.

R6. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to develop and implement procedures for evaluating recommendations by the CFS staff or ombudsman for improving policies and practices by June 30, 2020.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. There are long-standing monthly Program Committee meetings attended by CFS line staff, supervisors, policy analysts and a manager. The Ombudsman may participate in these on-going meetings. Review and evaluation of recommendations that occur in this committee are provided to the CFS Director and Management team for review and guidance on implementation.

R7. The Board of Supervisors should consider directing EHSD to require the ombudsman to report to the director of EHSD, rather than the director of CFS, by December 31, 2019.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because all ombudsman complaints are provided to the EHSD and CFS Directors. The CFS Director meets with the Ombudsman to determine if there are practice issues that require additional follow up and to gather clarity on issues ombudsman discovers. The protocol allows the Ombudsman to meet with the EHSD Director at any time they feel that the case merits a higher review, and the EHSD Director may meet with the Ombudsman at any time to receive an overall assessment of CFS practices and policies.