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June 14, 2007

Mary L. Ault, Deputy Director
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Dear Ms. Ault:

Please find enclosed the Los Angeles County's Triennial Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR), submitted in partnership with the Probation Department.

The PQCR is the Los Angeles County's first step in the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). We look forward to utilizing the results of the PQCR as a first step at improving the provision of child welfare services.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this important statewide effort to improve outcomes and accountability in child welfare. We look forward to the continued use of this PQCR for program improvement. If you have any further questions, please contact Alan Weisbart, Children's Services Administrator II, at (213) 351-5737.

Sincerely,


PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW
Director

PSP:SK
MHM:aw

Enclosure

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW



**Patricia S. Ploehn, Director
Department of Children and Family Services**

**Robert B. Taylor, Chief Probation Officer
Department of Probation**

2007

Los Angeles County, Peer Quality Case Review

Cover Sheet

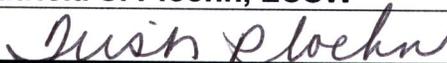
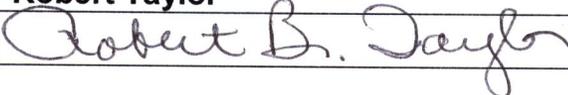
California's Child and Family Services Review Peer Quality Case Review	
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BACKGROUND

In January 2004, the State began the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). The purpose of the C-CFSR is to significantly strengthen the accountability system used in California to monitor and assess the quality of services provided on behalf of children and families. As such, the C-CFSR operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement and public reporting of program outcomes. Principal components of the C-CFSR include:

- 1) Outcome and Accountability County Data Reports;
- 2) County Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR);
- 3) County Self-Assessments (CSA);
- 4) County System Improvement Plans (SIP); and,
- 5) State Technical Assistance and Monitoring.

This is the second cycle of the C-CFSR for Los Angeles County. As such, the first step was to conduct a Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR). The PQCR is an intensive examination of a selected social work/probation officer practice area aimed at improving the provision of child welfare services. The PQCR supplements the County Self Assessment by including peer county expertise in examining the host county's child welfare services delivery system and social work and probation practices. Los Angeles County completed its PQCR on March 12, 2007.

The second step in the C-CFSR process will be to conduct a County Self Assessment (CSA) of Los Angeles County child welfare system strengths and areas of need. The CSA will provide Los Angeles County an opportunity to review how our local program operations and other systemic factors affect their measured outcomes. The CSA for Los Angeles County is due to be completed mid November 2007.

The third step in the C-CFSR process will be for Los Angeles County to develop a System Improvement Plan (SIP). Los Angeles County SIP will be developed by Los Angeles child welfare and probation agencies in collaboration with its local partners. The SIP establishes program priorities, defines specific actions steps to achieve improvement and establishes specific percentage increase in performance the county will achieve within the term of its plan. The SIP is based on observations made through the PQCR and the CSA. The new SIP is due to be completed at the end of March 2008.

The first section of this report describes the PQCR methodology used in Los Angeles County. The second section provides a summary of the data collected from the PQCR. The third section provides a summary of practices and barriers reported to contribute to the County's effort to provide effective child welfare services. The last section of this report provides final observations and recommendations from the PQCR process.

I. PQCR METHODOLOGY

The Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) for Los Angeles County was a joint effort of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation). DCFS is the primary agency responsible for providing services to families involved with cases of child abuse and neglect. Probation is the agency responsible for providing services to families involved with the County's juvenile delinquency system.

Since DCFS and Probation play an important role in providing Child Welfare Services to children and families, both agencies worked together in the planning and facilitating of the Los Angeles County PQCR.

Area of Focus

The PQCR was designed to review a specific area of focus for DCFS and Probation. The goal was to identify strengths, areas of need and make recommendations for improvement. DCFS and Probation conducted the PQCR as a concurrent process with the same area of focus, Timeliness to Reunification, but with different emphasis on practice issues.

DCFS: The area of focus for DCFS was Timeliness to Reunification, looking at whether placement in community of origin, parent child/visitation and placement in the home of a relative had an effect on timely reunification.

Probation: The area of focus for Probation was Timeliness to Reunification. It was recognized that there are components, such as parent-engagement, identification of potential relative placements and visits between children and their parents that contribute to timely family reunification.

Sample Selection

The purpose of the PQCR was to obtain qualitative information about the area of focus. The sample selection for the County's PQCR was limited to the cases that fell within the area of focus resulting in a different sample selection for DCFS and Probation.

DCFS: The DCFS sample selection was designed to maximize representation of all Service Planning Areas (SPA's), with some case overflow. Extra cases were selected to avoid unforeseen disruption to the PQCR. Cases were selected by looking at all Family Reunification cases that had an initial detention in September 2005. Sample cases were further filtered through the elimination of sibling sets. Sixteen-sample cases were selected with 8 additional cases as alternates.

Probation: The Probation sample size was 14 cases belonging to 13 Probation Officers. One Probation Officer had two selected cases. The method of selection was to obtain a list of all cases that had been in

the system for one year as of September 2006, which meant that they entered the system in September 2005. Once we obtained those cases, we further narrowed the sample size by choosing cases in which the Probation Officer of record was still working in the Placement Department. The final sample size was 14 cases.

Review Process

The PQCR involved conducting individual interviews and focus groups to gather information on the area of focus. After the completion of the interviews and the focus groups, the information was gathered, analyzed and summarized for the writing of this report. While DCFS and Probation's interviews and most of the focus groups occurred during the review week, one focus group occurred the week prior and one the week after the review week.

Logistics

DCFS and Probation were dedicated to making the PQCR a positive experience for the Social Workers, Probation Officers, parents, caregivers, providers, and youth who participated. To ensure that the PQCR was constructive, several steps were taken to train participants. The steps were as follows:

- A PQCR Orientation was provided to all the Social Workers and Probation Officers who were to be interviewed;
- With the exception of both of the youth and Group Home Provider focus groups, the entire PQCR was held in one location; and,
- A half-day orientation was provided to the interview teams regarding the PQCR process.

PQCR Team

The PQCR Team conducted the interviews and focus groups. The members of the PQCR Team are listed in the acknowledgment section of the report. The PQCR Team was composed of both DCFS and Probation staff from the following counties and participating agencies: San Diego, Orange, Riverside, Shasta, San Bernardino, Placer, Los Angeles, CRC Training and Consulting, and California Department of Social Services. The PQCR Team was divided into three interview teams composed of Peer County Social Workers and Probation Officers.

Interviews and Focus Groups

A total of 16 Social Workers and 13 Probation Officers were interviewed. There were eight total focus groups, 3 focus groups were run jointly, 5 separately. The joint focus groups were supervisor, parent, and caregiver. DCFS interviewed the following focus groups separately: Social Workers and DCFS Youth. The focus groups conducted separately by Probation included Probation Officers, Probation Youth, and Group Home Provider. The Social Worker and Probation Officer interviews were held from February 27, 2007 through March 1, 2007. While 5 of the focus groups were held during the review week, one focus group was held February 22, 2007 and one, March 12, 2007.

Interview Tools

DCFS and Probation used the same seven PQCR tools during the interviews and focus groups. The tools were designed as follows:

1. Onsite Interview Tool: This tool was designed to provide the PQCR interviewers background information about the case. It was completed prior to the interview by the worker, and referred to during the interview. Questions from the following areas were included in the tool to capture information needed:
 - Case Information;
 - Assessment of Needs and Services;
 - Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning;
 - Placement Stability;
 - Family Relationships and Connections;
 - Visitation between Parents and Siblings; and,
 - Permanency Goals for Child.

2. Probation Officer/Social Worker Interview Tool: This tool was designed to capture information about the workers' practices that contribute to family reunification. It was used for all the workers' interviews and completed by the PQCR Team during the interviews. Questions from the following areas were included in the tool to capture information needed:
 - Probation Officer/Social Worker Background;
 - Case History/Information;
 - Safety and Risk Assessment;
 - Case Planning;
 - Assessment of Goals and Services;
 - Case Plan Goals;
 - Permanency Planning;
 - Systemic Issues/Strengths/Barriers; and,
 - Recommendations.

3. Focus Group Tools: There were six focus group tools used to conduct the eight focus groups. The eight focus groups were as follows: Social Worker; Probation Worker; Supervising Social Worker/Supervising Probation Worker; Parent; DCFS Youth; Probation Youth; Caregiver, and Probation Group Home Provider. Questions from the following areas were included in the tools to capture information pertaining to timely reunification:
 - Promising Practices;
 - Barriers and Challenges;
 - Training & Resource needs;
 - Policy Changes; and,
 - Recommendations.

4. Daily Debrief Guide: This tool was designed to capture trends in the information gathered each day from the workers interviews. The tool was designed to focus

on timely family reunification. This tool was completed at the end of each day of interviews.

II. SUMMARY OF DATA

After the interviews were completed, the data was compiled from the interview and focus group tools. DCFS and Probation compiled, analyzed, and summarized their PQCR data separately. DCFS summarized the review data from CWS/CMS and case information was extracted using our Datamart. Probation summarized the reviews from both the probation case files and the Juvenile Case Management System (JCMS), and identifying information was extracted. All data was then prioritized into categories.

DCFS

A total of 16 DCFS cases were selected for the current review. Of the 16 selected, 8 were reunified within 12-month time interval. Of the 8 remaining cases, 2 were reunified within the 13th and 14th month respectively.

Trends

Children's Social Worker Interviews

Child Abuse Allegation

- The majority of the allegations were limited to Physical Abuse, General Neglect and Emotional Abuse.
- Other forms of abuse allegations were observed, though at a lesser frequency.

Cases without Timely Family Reunification

- It is likely that the child was a victim of General Neglect or Caretaker Absence or Incapacity.

Child's Placement in his/her own Community

- Cases with timely Family Reunification indicate that a child was likely to have been placed in his/her own community.
- As a result of the Department's trend toward placement of children within their own community, selected cases with no timely reunification also showed likelihood that the child was placed in his/her own community.

Ethnicity

- The samples selected were mostly composed of Hispanic, African American and Caucasian ethnicity.
- Children of Hispanic ethnicity showed a greater likelihood of no timely reunification, followed by African American children and Caucasian children.
- Children of African American and Caucasian ethnicity were likely to be victims of general neglect while children of Hispanic ethnicity were likely to be victims of physical abuse.

Availability of Services in One's Own Placement Area

- All timely and not timely reunification cases indicated the availability of services near the child's placement.

Frequency of Visitation Between Child and Parent and/or Siblings

- All of the timely Family Reunification cases indicated frequent visits between minor and parents and/or siblings.
- In the majority of not timely Family Reunification cases, either the child's mother or the parents visited the child at lesser frequency than in timely Family Reunification cases.

Assessment of Needs and Services

Children

- All referrals and cases were assessed through the use of SDM.
- Placement decisions were made through the use of Team Decision Making meetings.
- Services were available and accessible in the local area.

Parents

- Parents' needs were assessed.
- Services were available and accessible within the parent's own community.

Case Plan

- Most of the selected sample cases indicated that there has been a case plan in effect and that the case plan was updated every six months.
- In the majority of the samples selected, parents and older children actively participated in the family's case plan. However, in timely reunification cases, parents and/or children participated 75% of the time while in cases without timely Family Reunification, participation rate was about 50%.
- In the majority of samples selected, the social worker factored the family's strength and needs as part of the case plan.

Location of Out-of-Home Placement

- Children were likely to be placed together with siblings.
- In both timely and not timely reunification cases, DCFS was likely to have placed the child in their own community showing that DCFS makes placement of the child in their community a priority.

Sibling Placements

- The feasibility of placing siblings together is likely to be explored.
- Whenever possible, adult siblings were utilized as placement resources for their younger siblings.

Visitation

- The pattern of visits progressed from supervised to unsupervised to weekend and overnight visits.

- Timely reunification cases for children in non-kin placement indicated that foster parents were very active in facilitating visits between children and parents.
- Major barriers to progression of visits included:
 - Parents' lack of willingness to participate in case plan; and,
 - Parents' inability to make progress in attending rehabilitative programs.

PROBATION

A total of 14 Probation cases were selected for the current review. Of those, 4 showed reunification by the 12-month permanency hearing date. The 10 remaining cases were not successfully reunified with their parents.

Trends

Deputy Probation Officer Interviews

Criminal History

- Crimes committed by youth that were reunified with their families were battery, theft, vandalism, burglary and possession of controlled substance or being under the influence of a substance.
- Crimes committed by youth that were not reunified with their families in a timely manner were domestic battery, various sex offenses, battery, robbery and possession of controlled substance or being under the influence of a substance, battery and robbery.
- Of the 10 cases that did not reunify in a timely manner, 5 youth had committed crimes of a sexual nature.

Cases without Timely Family Reunification

- It is likely that lack of parent participation prevented reunification.
- It is likely that the behavior of the youth played a key role in preventing reunification.
- It is likely that the long-term treatment of sex offenses prevented timely reunification. The majority of these cases reunify with parents or relatives within 18 months.

Child's Placement in his/her own Community

- Based on service needs, gang involvement and provider availability, a youth is often times not placed in their own community. This lends to decreased parental participation.

Age

- Of the 14 cases, three youth were 18 years old, three were 17 years old, five were 16 years old, two were 15 years old and one was 14 years old.

Ethnicity

- The samples selected were predominantly composed of Hispanic ethnicity (7) followed by African American (5) and Caucasian (2).

- The sample selection revealed that youth of Hispanic ethnicity were more likely to reunify in a timely manner.

Availability of Services in One's Own Placement Area

- All timely and not timely reunification cases indicated the availability of services near the child's placement.

Frequency of Visitation Between Child and Parent

- Timely reunification cases indicated frequent visits between minor and parents.
- In the majority of not timely reunification cases, the child's mother and/or father did not visit the child more than once a month.

Assessment of Needs and Services

Youth

- All referrals and cases were assessed through the use of the Los Angeles Risk and Resiliency Checklist (LARRC) Assessment Tool.
- Placement Assessment Centers (PAC) were useful in placing youth according to their needs.

Parents

- Parents' needs were assessed.
- Services were available and accessible within the parent's own community.

Case Plan

- Most of the cases selected indicated that there had been a case plan in effect and that the case plan was updated every six months.
- In the cases selected where timely reunification occurred, the youth and their parents actively participated in their own case plan.
- In the majority of samples selected, the probation officer factored the family's strength and needs as part of the case plan.

Location of Out-of-Home Placement

- In timely reunification cases, youth were likely to be placed in or near to their own community.
- Based on service needs, gang involvement and provider availability, a youth was often times not placed in their own community.

Visitation

- Lack of transportation, childcare and motivation decreased parental visits.
- It was likely that parents were visiting or making contact on a regular basis in those cases where reunification occurred in a timely manner.

Children's Social Worker (CSW) Focus Group

One focus group interview comprised of CSW's was conducted during the week of the PQCR and a number of recurring themes were identified.

Trends

Promising Practices

- The use of TDM/FGDM, System of Care and Wraparound.
- Relationship building with families and respect for the family through the validation of their concern.

Processes

- Implementation of TDM and SDM at the onset of a child being brought into the system.
- Identify service needs and provide referrals for service providers in the family's own community.
- Maintain an open and mutually respectful relationship with the parents and/or caregivers.

Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) Focus Group

Recurring themes were present when the DPOs were asked about what they observed when working with family reunification cases. The themes were as follows:

Trends

Promising Practices

- The use of Family Preservation and Wraparound services.
- The use of Placement Assistance Coordinator's (PAC) resulted in much lower number of youth that AWOL.
- Family therapy prior to the reunification of the youth with their parents helps the family successfully transition.
- Good communication between the DPO and the youth and their family as well as the placement resource is ideal.

Children's Supervising Social Worker (SCSW) and Supervising Deputy Probation Officer (SDPO) Focus Group

Recurring themes were present when the supervisors were asked about their observation when working with family reunification cases:

Trends

Promising Practices

- DCFS Emancipation conferences.
- Probation ILP program.
- Wraparound, FGDM/TDM and Family Preservation benefit both DCFS and Probation youth.

Processes

- MCPC meetings were very important for the placement officer to attend as it sets the stage for the treatment of the family.
- Involving families in case related activities brings about a positive outcome.
- As part of case management activities, it was good to have mental health workers involved with the family.
- Onsite DPOs at group home were beneficial to youths along with the 30-day assessment targeting youth's needs.

DCFS Youth Focus Group

Recurring themes were present when the DCFS youth were interviewed for the PQCR. The themes were as follows:

Promising Practices

- CSW encouraged the youth to advocate for themselves.
- CSW instilled a sense of confidence in youth.
- Youth was involved in case planing.
- Youth worked with other youth sharing resources.

Processes

- The youth was encouraged to become self-sufficient and to network with other youth in order to obtain and share resources.

Probation Youth Focus Group

Promising Practices

- Staff Team Approach – All staff reports made on minors were heard in court.
- Court orders provided sufficient information for the probation officers and the minors.
- Youth in placement generally saw their probation officers at least once a month.
- Probation officers were clear about what needs to be done for the kids that were housed in placement.

Processes

- Probation youth were allowed to write grievances in placement to their ombudsman.
- Probation youth were allowed to participate in football, basketball, Ping-Pong, and other recreational activities.
- Placement of Probation youth in a group home setting as opposed to being detained in juvenile hall was seen as helpful for timely family reunification. The youth was provided an opportunity to receive weekly visits from parents and relatives and provided with behavior modification programs that rewarded the youth with a home pass.

Caregiver Focus Group (DCFS and Probation)

Trends

Promising Practices

- Probation ILP staff provided training for older, emancipating youth and their caregivers at the community colleges.
- Probation Kinship Education, Preparation and Support (KEPS).
- Utilization of Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings.

Processes

- Monthly contact with parents by the DPO or CSW and holding parents accountable.
- Provided services focused on reunification as opposed to termination of cases.
- Utilization of TDM to bring everyone to the table to identify services needed and determine current barriers.
- Family Group Decision Making conference is an effective tool to isolate needs.
- Extended family involvement when especially everyone's objective is the same.
- Youth participating in emancipation conferences would learn of resources available for independent living.
- Moved children out of their community especially if leaving them in the same setting exposes them to the same risky environment.
- Treated the caregiver as a person through mutual respect and keeping the caregiver in the loop.
- Obtained family history and identification of family's needs.

Parent Focus Group (CSW and Probation)

Trends

Promising Practices

- CSWs helped with securing services.
- Parent advocate program was established and implemented.

Processes

- CSW was sensitive to the needs of the family and gave them a sense of hope.
- Treated every case and every parent individually.
- Caregivers and youth were made to feel comfortable by the CSW through positive, respectful, non-threatening ability to de-escalate a situation.
- Assisted in securing services such as Section 8 Housing and transportation.
- Child's out-of-home placement with a relative was most suitable for speedy reunification.
- Extensive utilization of PACs as part of youth's placement.
- Through utilization of family therapy, good communication channels were created.

III. Summary of Practice

Once the PQCR interviews and focus groups were completed, the recorded information was collected, analyzed and summarized. We identified Practice Strengths, Practices Needing Improvement and Training Needs. This information, along with the Summary of Data (see Section II), resulted in recommendations for improvement in the focus area (see Section IV).

DCFS Children's Social Worker Interviews

Practice Strengths

Assessment

- Team Decision Making (TDM), involves conferences that occur at the time of detention, replacement or reunification, helps families understand the CWS process, bridge language barriers and empowers parents and extended family members by making it clear that families are experts in their own affairs. It may involve CBO's and health service providers.

Service Providers

- The use of Wraparound services, an integrated, multi-agency, community-based process that support families to safely and competently care for their children resulting in a child thriving in a permanent home and maintained by normal community services and support. State and federal eligibility criteria for Wraparound require that the child be placed in, or at risk of placement in, a Rate Classification Level (RCL) 12-14 group home and includes:
 - Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) provided by Group Homes;
 - Giving the child positive feedback;
 - Inclusion of in-house psychologist who will go to the home and evaluate the family;
 - Regional Center referral for some children has had positive impact as it provides early assessment and therapeutic regimen for children; and,
 - Emancipation conferences and E-Step (Early Step to Emancipation Preparation) services help youth by informing them of resources available to them.

Family Engagement

- Treating families with respect, being objective, honest and focused on reunification.
- Good communication with parents and persistence in making parents part of the case plan, the provision of bilingual workers and cultural sensitivity are good practices.
- The provision of substance abuse classes and drug testing parents.
- Going on home calls more than one time a month, engaging school service providers (through academic assessments) and extended family members. Being

positive, encouraging and non-judgmental while focusing on both the immediate and long-term future of the family incorporate positive practices.

- The availability of good foster parents, supportive family members, good service providers and having families remain together (especially parents) and visiting the child on a regular basis.

Practices Needing Improvement

High Workload

- The lack of respect for CSWs by some court players along with some attorneys and therapists, through the introduction/imposition of their own agenda can undermine reunification.
- High caseload, large volume of paperwork, lack of staffing, unavailability and lack of support from supervisors, unnecessary court petitions having to be filed, transfer of messy cases and logistics of visits limit contact with families.
- The lack of respectful treatment of parents by the CSWs and the lack of sensitivity to the needs of the family.

Lack of Support from External Stakeholders

- The lack of proactive school involvement.
- The lack of parental (maybe due to additional family problems) and foster mother involvement in the child's life.

Resources and Services

- General lack of resources or knowledge about available resources, high cost of living, parental focus on employment and housing (as there are too many requirements for gaining employment and housing) and the cost of some therapeutic services, were sighted as a challenge to family reunification.
- Lack of transportation services available for family visits and significant distance between the child's placement and parent's residence compromises visits.
- Some children's unwillingness to receive services such as Independent Living Program (ILP).

Parental Involvement

- Some parents are not ready to change their lifestyle especially if they are substance abusers. Generally, rehabilitative programs have no visible impact on families if they are not ready make positive impact on themselves and their family. In such cases, the availability of services does not necessarily impact reunification.
- Teaching families to do things for themselves instead of the CSW doing everything trains families to be self-sufficient.

External Factors

- Some factors that are not within the immediate control of CSWs pose challenges/barriers to family reunification. Such factors include gang influence in the community, large number of siblings affecting parent's ability to care, drug related problems in the community, history of AWOL, mother's whereabouts

unknown and youth having to deal with pregnancy while in their teens (affects both male and female).

Identified Training Needs

- Training provided for CSWs and SCSWs should include actual work performed, cultural sensitivity and available emancipation and resources (housing, knowledge of services available in school districts and placement supervision).
- Home evaluators should have additional ASFA training and foster homes should undergo improved training.
- Additional training resources should be accessible in the Antelope Valley area.
- Bring clients who have dealt with issues such as gang violence and self-mutilation issues to the training area.

Systemic/Policy Issues

- If child doesn't want to be adopted, the CSW shouldn't be forced to find a home.
- Public health nurses (PHN's) should obtain the child's medical/dental information and school liaisons should obtain the child's school records.
- Currently Dependency Investigators (DI) recommendations are determined by policy not by worker's discretion. CSWs suggested that DIs be able to exercise their professional discretion as well.
- CSWs should do home evaluations to expedite caregiver payments.
- Caseloads should be reduced to manageable levels so that CSWs have time to work with their client families. Some programs can't run properly/smoothly because DCFS doesn't have sufficient manpower at this time.

Deputy Probation Officer Interviews

Practice Strengths

Family Engagement

- The DPO's basic belief in and commitment to family reunification assists in the engagement and case planning process and motivates the parents.
- Bilingual ability assists in bridging the gap with non-English speaking families.

Services Provided

- The PAC process provides a "one-stop shop" approach for providing services and resources to youth and their family and an appropriate setting for the youth to ensure maximum benefit.
- Group Home Providers offer individual, group and family therapy, Independent Living Services and Transitional Housing and educational services.
- Consulting with community service providers assists in facilitating parent participation.

Building Relationships

- The DPOs believe that when they have adequate time they are able to build relationships with the family and facilitate the reunification process with respect, honesty, availability, responsiveness, patience and involve the family fully into the case planning process.

Assessment

- Regular use of the Los Angeles Risk and Resiliency Checklist (LARRC) assists in assessing the youth's risks, needs, and likelihood of re-offending, in addition to the family's strengths. This tool contributes significantly to the DPOs ability to effectively work with the youth and family.

Practices Needing Improvement

- Caseloads are not geographically assigned and the DPOs spend an excessive amount of time driving. This reduces their time to spend with families.
- Increasing vacancies, no overtime, no recognition or support from administration and lack of resources (bilingual staff, automated reports, etc) cause low morale and creates a desire among remaining DPOs to leave the placement unit as soon as possible.
- No incentives to stay in the placement unit as there are other field positions/assignments to go with same pay and less stress/work.
- Feeling "micro-managed" and disrespected causes less motivation for productivity.

Training/Resource Needs

- Access to bilingual services/staff.
- Reserve Deputies/VISTO Volunteers.
- Laptops, air cards and VPN access for Placement Officers will assist in providing more time to spend with families because it will require less time spent in the office.
- Transportation for parents/caregivers.
- PDQ or other clerical support to assist with duties that will free the DPO to perform more intensive case planning activities.

DCFS Children's Social Worker (CSW) Focus Group

Practice Strengths

Family Engagement

- Team Decision Making (TDM), involves conferences that occurs at detention, replacement or reunification, helps families understand the CWS process, bridges language barriers and empowers parents and extended family members by making it clear that families are experts in their own affairs. It may involve CBO's and health service providers.

- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), which is larger scale than TDM, encompasses broader issues and involves all pertinent parties in the family's affair.
- Concurrent Planning provides parents with an up front explanation of the requirements for reunification with their children.
- Repeatedly emphasizing to parents the requirements for reunification and giving them the necessary respect, validating their concerns and establishing a working relationship with the family.
- Acknowledging any prior mistakes done by CSW's, reading court reports and speaking to families to get their perspective upon receiving case assignment, all contribute to good relationship building.

Service Providers

- Family Preservation services provide free in-home services customized to the identified needs of the family, assists in addressing issues that brought about a referral against the family and helps those families in their transitional phase to reunification.
- Systems of Care provides services to the child through a team of professionals in an out-of-home placement. This includes therapeutic and mentoring services by a licensed professional.
- Wraparound provides in-home services and may provide up to six months of aftercare services for newly reunified families.

Practices Needing Improvement

Agency Workload

- Team Decision Making (TDM) lacks flexibility in scheduling, trained and/or bilingual facilitators, and overtime for CSW's to participate in TDM meetings.
- Assigning CSWs to Emergency Response services before they gain adequate field experience.
- The number of forms to fill out and weak or inadequate supervision of the CSW.
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) – There is a lack of trained facilitators and limits with scheduling. FGDMs are voluntary and meetings are not held if family members are not present.

Identified Training Needs

- Training on strength based services and empathy toward the family.
- Training on mental health issues.

Systemic and Policy Issues

- CSW's should be able to make more decisions regarding family.

Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) Focus Group

Practice Strengths

Family Engagement

- The family therapy provided in the group homes along with follow-up face-to-face visits with the DPO assists in engaging the family in the youth's case plan activities and ensures a more positive outcome.

Services Provided

- The use of Placement Assessment Centers and the LARRC facilitates a more successful placement for both the youth and their families so that reunification begins more quickly.
- Family Preservation and Wraparound services are programs that assist in transitioning the youth back into the home environment. They are most effective when DPOs use the services on a regular basis and are implemented prior to the youth's returning home.

Building Relationships

- Clear and consistent communication is the key to successful family engagement. When the DPOs are able to participate in this type of communication with the youth, their family and the provider, the family is engaged at a level that promotes timely reunification.

Assessment

- Regular use of the LARRC assists in assessing the youth's risks, needs, and likelihood of re-offending, along with the strengths of the family. This tool greatly assists the DPO in working with the family to promote timely reunification.

Practices Needing Improvement

- Lack of resources (specialized group homes, clerical support, etc) and increased turnover of placement unit staff create high caseloads and an unmanageable workload. This creates a vicious cycle because the turnover rate continues to be high and placement unit increasingly becomes an undesirable place to work which prevents filling vacancies.
- Parent visitation is impacted negatively due to lack of funding and resources for transportation and childcare.
- Parents lack motivation and sometimes exhibit resistance to participate in their youth's case plan activities. This factor is partly influenced by the fact that many parents work and are not available.
- Home assessments are not completed in a timely manner, which in turn causes youth to stay in placement longer.
- Communication with management needs to improve. Feedback is not provided after mandatory forums and meetings especially when DPOs are asked to

participate in providing information and recommendations to improve the process/system.

- There is a lack of recognition or appreciation for high performance. Instead, more work is given to high performing DPOs.
- The employee performance evaluation process is unfair and meaningless in that a high performing DPO is given the same rating as an average performing DPO. This unfair process causes low morale, which increases the turnover rate in the placement unit.
- Lack of access to CWS/CMS delays timely reunification.

Identified Training/Resource Needs

- Immediate training for new hires and periodic training for all placement officers.
- Specialized and periodic training for Supervising DPOs.
- Development and access to an automated database and enhanced computer program to assist in locating detained youth, tracking information that will streamline the current laborious process of completing the monthly statistical reports.
- Specialized training on the LARRC, Division 31, Case plans and Concurrent Planning to assist DPOs in completing assessments and developing quality case plans and court reports.

DCFS Supervisor Focus Group

Practice Strengths

Resources and Services

- Wraparound Program provides a valuable in-home service to children and families. This program provides aftercare services and resources for reunification cases for 6 months.
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) conferences.
- Continuous case conferences between CSWs and SCSWs.

Practices Needing Improvement

- High caseloads prevent CSW's from providing sufficient case management services to children and families.
- Unrealistic court orders for visitation creates time management hardships for CSWs.

Identified Training Needs

- Training provided is not relevant to the duties of a CSW.

Supervising DPO Focus Group

Practice Strengths

Family Engagement

- New DPOs are trained with a reduced or no caseload responsibility until they have the opportunity to learn the placement function.
- Family therapy promotes family engagement and assists in transitioning youth from placement to home. Mandatory family therapy sessions prior to home pass or return home are very helpful in facilitating family engagement and successful outcomes.

Services Provided

- Permanency Unit's work and relationship with DCFS assists DPOs in finding relatives/non-relatives for placement and helps to promote "lifelong connections".
- Wraparound services and Family Preservation are beneficial for promoting a healthy family structure and reducing recidivism.
- ILP Program keeps kids from ending up "on the street" and provides good aftercare direction.
- On-site DPOs at group homes works well.
- PAC provides a 30-day assess period, which allows for match with placement that will target minor's needs.

Building Relationships

- New DPOs are regularly teamed with experienced DPOs, which is very helpful to the supervisor. The experienced DPOs are able to provide a good example of proper case management and case planning.

Practices Needing Improvement

- High turnover in placement unit causes caseload reassignment, which creates even higher caseloads, increased workload and unattainable expectations. This condition promotes negative statistics, leaves the impression of dictatorship and compromises policy.
- DPOs are not using Wraparound or Family Preservation services consistently.
- There is no consistent policy for case assignment and case transfers.
- No CAP on caseload carried by DPOs.
- No coverage for staff on indefinite medical leave. This requires that cases be reassigned to another DPO creating extra work.
- Lack of transportation for parents to visit youth in group homes.

Identified Training/Resource Needs

- Training is needed that is relevant to Placement Unit's job requirements and specifications, and this training needs to be provided as soon as the new DPO is assigned.

DCFS Youth Focus Group

Practice Strengths

- Youths were involved in the DCFS processes, such as case planning, being self-advocates, and working with other youths in sharing resources.

Practices Needing Improvement

- Placement was too far from family and community.
- Youths not involved in the case planning process.
- Visitation plan not requested by the CSW, but left up to the placement caregiver.

Probation Youth Focus Group

Practice Strengths

Family Engagement

- The youth in placement believe that their DPO assists in timely reunification when they have the quality time to spend with youth and their families.
- The Visitation and Home Pass processes are seen as very positive tools to assist with successful reunification. The youth in placement receive visits on a weekly basis (every Sunday) and can receive home passes by achieving the required status.

Services Provided

- Placement is seen as a privilege because it offers opportunities that are not available in the juvenile halls or camp setting.
- Recreational programs offer football, basketball, Ping-Pong, pool, weight room, track, volleyball and voluntary extra-curricular sport programs and are seen as a positive part of the program.
- Youth in placement feel that the educational system is a good resource.
- The youth in placement believe that the Equal Opportunity Program provides youth who are graduating seniors a better chance to get into a 4-year college.
- Independent Living Program (ILP) is a good resource for youth in placement.
- Youth involved in ILP receive transitional assistance on campus and eventually receive transitional housing off-campus (apartments). Those involved in this program pay rent and live in the apartments for a couple months. All rent is returned to them when they leave.

Building Relationships

- Placement youth generally see their probation officers at least once a month, which makes them feel that they are an important part of their case plan and reunification process.

- Probation officers make it a part of the youth's responsibility to tell their parents about any poor behavior or negative incidents. They feel that they are treated with respect as the DPO works to help them get ready for adulthood by making them take responsibility for their actions.

Practices Needing Improvement

- The youth are unable to visit their families due to the fact that home assessments are not completed in a timely manner. Home assessments take 2 ½ to 6 months to complete, and this impedes the reunification process.
- Some youth felt that their probation officers have poor communication with their families. Many times it is difficult for the youth and their parents to reach the probation officers by telephone due to non-working phones, busy signal or DPO not answering.
- Parents are limited in talking to their child due to phone schedule or youth's negative behavior.
- The probation officers are way too busy and their caseloads are too high.
- Some youth expressed that they do not have a relationship with their probation officer and are not seen on a regular basis. When they are seen, the appointment is rushed and cut short. Therefore, they do not feel that they received quality attention or the necessary general or specific information on their case or family situation.

Identified Training/Resource Needs

- Some youth feel that it is unfair that only those receiving special education services can get a job off-campus. They feel that it is a good resource for those youth because it helps them, but it should be available to all.

Caregiver Focus Group

Practice Strengths

- Training of caregivers and social workers.
- Caregivers are informed of resources and services for youth offered by both DCFS and Probation.
- Probation Officers and Social Workers have been able to get age waivers to keep youth in placement passed age 18, which assists in family stability and educational goals.

Practices Needing Improvement

- Disparity of resources in certain areas depending on the area of the county the caregiver resides. There are resources in some areas and none in other areas.

Identified Training Needs

- Mandate relative caregiver training for relatives similar to that for a foster caregiver.

DCFS/Probation Parent Focus Group

Practice Strengths

- The worker was sensitive to the needs of the parents and treated each case and parent individually.

Practices Needing Improvement

- The worker did not explain to the parents their rights and responsibilities.
- All parents need to be involved in case planning goals and the goals should be coordinated to allow parents to participate in services.
- Parents are not involvement in the educational plans of their children.

Identified Training Needs

- The worker should receive drug addiction training to better understand the process of addiction and understand what the parents are going through.

Joint DCFS/Probation Common Issues

Practice Strengths

- Willing and able to place with family members as an alternative to foster care.
- Treating families with respect, listening to them and returning phone calls.
- Quality face-to-face visits with clients.

Practices Needing Improvement

- The need to assign cases geographically size and by placement location.
- High caseloads inhibit the workers ability to provide quality services to youth and their families.

Identified Training/Resource Needs

- More clerical support.
- Training for Judges, Supervisors and Caregivers.
- Training on cultural issues for workers.

IV. Final Observations and Recommendations

Direct services staff and focus group participants who deal with children and families made the recommendations detailed below which were selected based on how they pertain to timeliness to reunification.

The recommendations made by the social workers, probation officers and focus group participants were categorized based on the group classification of the participants and most mentioned practice issues that impact timely family reunification as identified in the Summary of Practice (see Section III). Summarized in this section are suggestions for systemic and policy changes as well as final recommendations obtained from the PQCR participants.

Children's Social Worker (CSW) Interview

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Hiring/assigning more home assessment CSWs, hiring more bilingual CSWs, providing better training for CSWs and SCSWs and lowering caseloads so that CSWs can spend more time with the families they serve.
 - ❖ Emergency Response CSW positions should be reserved for staff who are experienced and know available resources in the communities they serve.
 - ❖ Additional clerical support in the form of data entry, filing, filling out forms as well as dictation service.

2. Resource Issues Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Services (visitation, drug rehabilitation, mental health, medical, housing, childcare and shorter FP waiting list) for parents in their own community. DCFS should pay for the services while holding parents accountable for proper utilization of the services.
 - ❖ DCFS should request receipts when the family is given money for Metrolink. Currently some families get the money and turn around and say they lost their Metrolink coupon.
 - ❖ Nearby courtrooms should be made available or CSWs should be given options for conference calls/video conferences as some CSWs currently have to travel up to two hours to be present in court.
 - ❖ Additional resources for children and youth including:
 - TILP, Emancipation Conference Workers;
 - Housing for teenage and pregnant children in the Southern California area;
 - Case aides to monitor visits (currently there is 1 case aide for every 100 – 200 CSWs);
 - Mentoring/coaching services for children to help them value education (as parents aren't always good influences) which will also give parents some relief;
 - Have more group homes for youth with substance abuse issues and provide more services for high-risk children;

- More appropriate placements for children ages 15 to 18 and in-office mentoring services for youth transitioning towards emancipation; and,
 - Foster Family Agencies and Group Homes should not reject kids based on needs as some kids in the system have issues. Also, it is recommended that the qualification for foster homes be improved.
3. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ Judges be retrained regarding social work practices, to give them an idea of what a typical day looks like for a CSW.
 - ❖ In cases where parental rights are terminated and child is adopted, the SCSW should be able to transfer the case to the Adoption Unit.
 - ❖ Caseloads assigned to each worker should be reduced, regionalized and overtime for CSW's be authorized.
 - ❖ More cooperation between counties in handling cases.
 - ❖ CSWs be kept up-to-date on Departmental policies and about issues taking place in the community they serve.
4. Practice Observations
- ❖ Continue with "mobile workers", workers that can work from home and log on to CWS/CMS and e-mail. They are able to spend more time with their clients as they come to the office only on their duty days.
 - ❖ CSWs be given more discretion in case decisions.

Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) Interview

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
- ❖ Transfer veteran DPOs to the placement unit or provide incentives to keep them from transferring out after two years. It would be a great asset if experienced placement staff were promoted to ensure that the wealth of knowledge would not be lost. Focus on how to increase employee retention.
 - ❖ Reinstate original Zero Incarceration Program (ZIP) and AWOL Recovery Unit.
 - ❖ Provide New Staff Orientation prior to deployment and case assignment and provide ongoing training specific to placement unit duties.
 - ❖ Lower caseloads and provide a yardstick so that assignment of cases stops after caseload reaches a certain number.
 - ❖ Reduce amount of reports and paper work and provide overtime for DPOs who are assigned additional cases.
 - ❖ Provide court report writing training to ensure that thorough and effective reports are submitted to the court.
 - ❖ Increase bilingual services and hire more bilingual staff.
2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ Start/Stop paperwork should be completed by a specialized unit instead of the DPO. This will assist in stopping overpayment issues.

- ❖ Cases need to be assigned according to geographical/regional areas to promote visitation and minimize time DPO spends driving.

DCFS CSW Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Caseload assignments should be weighed based on needs rather than numbers.
 - ❖ CSW's should have to fill out fewer forms and have more time to spend with families to develop and foster relationships.
 - ❖ CSW's need more time and flexibility to do social work on Family Reunification cases.
2. Resource Issue Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Assign case aides in each unit to monitor visits, transport parents/children and complete due diligence forms.
 - ❖ Provide trained clerical support for the clerical duties CSWs are currently performing.
3. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Reduce unrealistic expectations from families and make case recommendations based on family's needs.
 - ❖ Have trained TDM facilitators for each unit.
4. Practice Observations
 - ❖ Need faster relative approval process.
 - ❖ CSWs need more training on how not to use their own biases when working with families.
 - ❖ Set up focus groups in each office to identify promising practices, challenges/barriers and develop solutions.
 - ❖ Hands on support from SCSWs who are sensitive and understanding of CSWs. SCSWs should also observe CSWs in field.

DPO Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Give DPOs the ability and authority to detain and replace youth if placement is disrupted for any reason. This will ensure that both the youth and their family's needs are met and that they are receiving the appropriate and necessary services.

- ❖ Control case assignment by region and place an experienced DPO in that function. Regionalizing cases minimizes DPOs driving time.
- ❖ Eliminate caseload responsibilities and requirements for bench warrant status cases.
- ❖ Decrease amount of statistical reports required, streamline process for data collection and develop electronic/automated system for statistics.
- ❖ Reinststitute the “Rover” DPO Unit because this was a very helpful practice. These officers were available to fill in wherever there was a need or vacancy.

2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations

- ❖ Create a system that ensures continued proper diagnosis of youth as they pass through the system so that their needs are constantly evaluated.
- ❖ Continue and increase Placement Assessment Centers practice and availability. More centers are needed to meet the high demand.
- ❖ Policy needs to be put in place for an immediate referral to Permanency Planning Unit so that the family finding process can begin at the onset of case assignment.
- ❖ Use information gathered at forums to make systemic changes so that the information is not lost and forum proved useless. This will ensure that workers ideas and thoughts were heard and addressed.
- ❖ Lower caseloads so that requirements can be met and children can receive a higher quality of services.
- ❖ Create “yard stick” for caseload size—25 maximum.
- ❖ Home assessment review team needed (at least 2 people to go out at a time on a case).
- ❖ Allow DPOs the ability to transfer cases within same office or same area without having to be sent back to Placement Headquarters. This causes delays in servicing the family.

DCFS Supervisor Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations

- ❖ The use of specialized CSWs who would handle AWOL and non-dependent legal guardian cases.
- ❖ Assign a CSW at each law enforcement agency to promote communication, CSW safety and less emergency response time.
- ❖ Train clerical staff to multi-task and cross train clerical staff on all clerical functions.

2. Resource Issue Related Recommendations

- ❖ Provide transportation assistance for relatives requiring Live Scan fingerprint submission.
- ❖ To drug test clients, using hair follicle analysis for a more accurate and more economical testing compared to urinalysis.

- ❖ Use professional monitors for required visitations between parents/relatives/siblings and the child to provide for the interaction to be observed by a neutral professional.
 - ❖ More funding sources for families.
 - ❖ Re-establish in-house parenting classes.
 - ❖ More resources for Spanish speaking families and bilingual foster homes.
3. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ Transportation assistance for relatives is needed to obtain Livescan fingerprints.
 - ❖ Improve staff retention and give line staff more control over their decision making processes.
 - ❖ Remove the ASFA unit or streamline the process and let the unit do both parts of the required assessments.

DPO Supervisor Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
- ❖ Give DPOs the ability to detain minor if placement is disrupted for any reason.
 - ❖ Place an experienced DPO in the function of case assignment.
 - ❖ Eliminate caseload responsibility and requirements for bench warrant status cases.
 - ❖ Decrease amount of statistical reports required, streamline process for data collection and develop an electronic/automated system.
2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ Prioritize workload responsibilities and establish a limit on caseload size so that the DPO has more time to spend with youth and their families.
 - ❖ Case assignment process needs to be re-evaluated. It would be beneficial to all and would increase visitation if cases were assigned regionally.
 - ❖ Policy for case transfers from one office or from one unit to another must be consistent.

DCFS Youth Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
- ❖ Hiring of case aides to assist CSWs in their day-to-day work so that CSWs would have more time to help youth and families.
2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ More monitoring of group homes.

- ❖ The use of DCFS youth to determine how to best define and communicate programs available to DCFS youth.
- ❖ Restricting access to youth's social security number.

Probation Youth Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Hire more probation officers so that youth and families can have quality one-on-one time. This will allow for increased visits with probation officer (more often than every 2 to 3 weeks).
 - ❖ More positive recognition for youth. The probation officers should report the youth's positive behavior to the parents and the courts and not just report the negative behavior.
 - ❖ Increase youth's phone time with family and home passes with their family especially during 3-day weekends and holidays.
2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Phone cards are needed to make calls to parents. They are too expensive and the policy in placement is inconsistent. The phone card policy needs to be changed to be consistent with all staff in every cottage.

Caregiver Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Conduct joint, collaborative training with both departments. Social Workers should be well informed regarding the youth's probation issues and Probation Officers should be well informed regarding the child's DCFS issues.
2. Resource Issue Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Provide childcare options. The lack of available childcare limits the ability of caregivers to attend trainings.
 - ❖ Provide more bilingual workers. Language is a barrier for some non-English speaking caregivers.
 - ❖ Address disparity in the availability of resources and services such as the lack of resources in the South Los Angeles area.
 - ❖ Foster parents/non-relative caregivers be provided with the same information as relatives about the child, despite concerns by the CSW that the caregiver will not accept the child.
 - ❖ Provide assistance with finding resources. Caregivers are forced to search for resources for children on their own because the CSWs/DPOs are too busy with high workloads.

- ❖ Provide information regarding what DCFS and Probation offers as far as services, resources, information, etc. Better overall communication in general and consistency in sharing updates and changes in policy, staff and administration.
3. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
- ❖ Mandate training. Caregivers are not required to have mandated training, which leaves caregivers ill-equipped to handle youth's acting out behavior.
 - ❖ CSWs need to speak with both caregivers and the child. Many times CSW's talk to the child alone and leave the caregiver out of the loop.
 - ❖ Provide childcare or employment loss compensation so that caregivers can attend mandated trainings.
 - ❖ CSWs should explain to caregivers the purpose of visits and have them participate in putting together a case plan for the child.
 - ❖ It is recommended that CSWs/DPOs learn about the rights and responsibilities of caregivers.
 - ❖ Caregivers recommend that CSWs not pressure them into adopting children and that caregivers be clearly informed that if children are adopted or obtain legal guardianship under Kin-Gap, that they may lose a number of benefits including college related benefits.
 - ❖ Caregivers recommend that children's vital records including birth certificate and social security card be made available instead of the caregiver being asked to obtain the records.
 - ❖ Caregivers intentions in caring for the child be acknowledged and respected, as they will continue caring for the child long after the CSW is out of the child's life.
 - ❖ Provide caregivers some type of legal documentation (i.e. special certification card) to assist them in having more authority to facilitate minor's legal, educational and medical needs.
 - ❖ Equal treatment of relative caregivers with that of non-relative foster parents.

DCFS/Probation Parent Focus Group

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Reduce the CSW/DPO workload. The worker has too much paperwork to complete, which takes time away from providing social work to the children and families.
2. Resource Issue Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Create resources in all SPAs. There is a disparity of resources in certain areas as not all SPAs have the same resources and services.
 - ❖ Workers should provide more up-to-date community-based resource and service information to the parents.

Joint DCFS/Probation Common Issues

Final Recommendation

1. Agency Workload Related Recommendations
 - ❖ More collaboration between DCFS and Probation in servicing youth.
 - ❖ Promote staff retention through staff appreciation and staff involvement.

2. Systemic/Policy Related Recommendations
 - ❖ Lower caseloads so that requirements can be met and children will be served.
 - ❖ Allow line CSWs/DPOs to be able to make decisions regarding family without extensive bureaucratic “red tape”.
 - ❖ Cases need to be assigned according to geographical areas to promote visitation.

Appendix A Tools

**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE
OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
ONSITE CASE REVIEW TOOL**

FACE SHEET		
<input type="checkbox"/> Department of Children and Family Services <input type="checkbox"/> Probation Department	B. Case Name:	C. Case Number:
D. Date Case Record Reviewed: (for PQCR Team Only)		
E. Interviewers' Names, Agency & County: (for PQCR Team only)		F. Type of Case Reviewed: <input type="checkbox"/> Kin <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Kin
CASE INFORMATION		
G. Date of Most Recent Case Opening:	H. Date of Most Recent Removal from Home: (if applicable)	
I. Date Case Closed: (if applicable)	J. Date Child Returned Home: (if applicable)	
K. Focus <u>(Case)</u> Child's Name: First MI Last	L. Focus Child's Ethnicity:	M. Date of Birth of Focus Child:
N. Siblings' Names: (if applicable) First MI Last 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	O. Sibling(s)' Ethnicity:	P. Date of Birth of Sibling(s):

A. Assessment of Needs and Services	
1	Describe steps taken to assess and identify the child's needs while developing the case plan. Any visitation patterns subscribed?
2	Please identify the needs and describe the process the agency used to assess the needs of the parents identified while developing case plan.
3	Did the services provided match the needs of the child?
4	Describe the services provided and how they matched the needs of the child's parents/caretakers?
5	Were services accessible and available for the child's needs (e.g., location, schedule, costs)?
6	Were services accessible and available for the parents'/caretakers needs (e.g., location, schedule, and costs)?
B. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning	
7	Is there a current case plan on file and has it been updated every six months as required?
8	When applicable, describe the child's involvement in developing case planning activities.
9	Describe the parents' involvement in developing case planning activities.

SECTION II: OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT		
ONLY complete Section II if this is an Out-of-Home placement.		
<i>Placement Stability</i>		
10	If the child has changed placement settings while in an out-of-home care, please detail when that took place and the factors contributing in the placement changes. Factors: _____	Number of Placements _____
11	Describe reasons for any of the placement changes that occurred for reasons not directly related to helping the child achieve the goals in his/her case plan?	
<i>Family Relationships and Connections</i>		
12	Does child remain placed in his/her area of origin (SPA)? Placement to Mother: <input type="checkbox"/> SPA <input type="checkbox"/> Same county <input type="checkbox"/> Out of county <input type="checkbox"/> Out of state <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ Placement to Father: <input type="checkbox"/> SPA <input type="checkbox"/> Same county <input type="checkbox"/> Out of county <input type="checkbox"/> Out of state <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
13	For children not placed in the same community as either of their parents' residence, what is the reason for the location of the placement? How does it promote the child's achievement of his/her case plan goals?	
14	Describe how the placement location maintains important family connections.	
15	How does the placement location maintain important community connections (e.g. school, friends)?	
16	Did the agency make efforts to place sibling(s) together? If not, what were the reason(s) sibling(s) were not placed together?	

H. Visitation between Parents and Siblings

17. What is the most typical pattern of visitation between the child and his/her family?

- Mother: Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly Less than monthly No visits Other
- Father: Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly Less than monthly No visits Other
- Siblings: Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly Less than monthly No visits Other

I. Permanency Goal for Child (Complete only if Out of Home Placement)

18	What is the child's current case plan goal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Reunification <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship
19	Describe the concurrent plan in place and which of the permanency goals has been considered (adoption or reunification)? If none exist, then what prevented the establishment of a timely concurrent plan goal? Was there mentorship involved?	
20	What factors did the agency consider when making decisions about the child's permanency goals? <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Medical condition <input type="checkbox"/> Placement with siblings <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
21	Was there a compelling reason documented as to why Adoption was not considered or why Termination of Parental Rights was not ordered? What was the compelling reason(s)?	

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
PROBATION OFFICER/ SOCIAL WORKER INTERVIEW TOOL**

PROBATION OFFICER/ SOCIAL WORKER INTERVIEW INFORMATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> Department Of Children and Family Services <input type="checkbox"/> Probation Department	Case Name:
Date of Interview:	
Interviewers Names, Agency & County:	
INTRODUCTIONS & BACKGROUND	
Probation Officer/ Social Worker Background	
Introductions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ The interviewers share their background and work experience prior to starting the interview process.❖ Which office are you from and what is your current assignment? ❖ Ask CWS/DPO for a summary of their work experience (Length of time with county/Length of time in current program)	

Case Background

1. Please tell us how and when this case came to you and the story of the family? Original allegations?
 - 1.1. Describe your initial contact with this family.

 - 1.2. What are some of the approaches you used to try to establish positive relationship with this family?

2. Describe the attributes of this family. Strengths/needs?

SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Safety and Risk Assessment

3. Tell us about how and when you assessed this family?
 - ❖ Safety and Wellbeing?

 - ❖ What risk assessment tools were used?

 - ❖ Is this an initial or updated safety and well-being assessment?"

CASE PLANNING AND REASSESSMENT

Case Planning

4. Discuss the process by which the case goals were set and describe the goals.

- ❖ Allegations/charges

- ❖ Engagement and participation with the family

- ❖ Approach you used to develop a relationship with the family

- ❖ Culturally relevance

- ❖ Family connections

- ❖ School and other service provider participation

Permanency Placement

5. Was there successful movement towards permanency (Adoption or Legal Guardianship) for the children in this family?
If not, what efforts were made to place child in his/her own community?

If yes, please answer the following:

- ❖ Was concurrent planning completed at the time the family came into the system?

- ❖ Were siblings placed together? If not, why?

- ❖ What efforts were made to place children together and stabilize placement?

- ❖ What was the nature of visits with parents and siblings?

- ❖ Was the child placed with a relative/non-relative? If not, what efforts were made?

- ❖ Was child placed in his/her own community? If not, why and what efforts were made?

PROBATION OFFICER/ SOCIAL WORKER REFLECTIONS

6. What has worked and what hasn't worked as you have proceeded with this case?
- ❖ What current practice(s) has influenced/may influence the outcomes for:
- The child/children and family

 - Children/families with similar circumstances (are there noticeable trends)
- ❖ What are the challenges you faced/may face as a Probation Officer/Social Worker trying to successfully serve this family?
7. What improvements/changes would be useful to help you do your job more effectively? Training, systemic changes (policy and procedures), resources?

8. Was there anything about this case you found especially difficult or challenging? Identify existing barriers that affect your ability to accomplish what is needed in cases like this.

9. What kinds of things have you accomplished, strengths you exhibit or special skills you've acquired as a Probation Officer/Social Worker that others could learn from? What are the reasons for your achievements?

Are there questions you would like to ask or anything you would like to add?

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
CSW/DPO FOCUS GROUP TOOL**

CSW/DPO FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> Department Of Children and Family Services <input type="checkbox"/> Probation Department	Date of Focus Group: Facilitators:
<i>CSW/DPO Focus Group Questions</i>	
1. Please tell us about the program areas that are working well in your current caseload assignment. Examples of such programs include Group Home Onsite, Independent Living, Wraparound, Structural Decision Making, and Family Preservation.	
2. In your performance and duties, what are the most significant recurring challenges, barriers and themes you experience?	
3. What three most influential practices or programs have resulted in positive outcomes for families and children, specifically timely reunification or adoption?	

4. What barriers/challenges have you observed toward timely reunification/adoption?

5. Please tell us what office you are from. How has your effective use of concurrent planning and any program your office may have resulted in positive outcomes for children and family?

6. What processes do you use to assess, plan and monitor for Safety/Permanency/Well Being?

7. Please expand on any of the following areas:

- Additional barriers
- Improvements
- Changes
- Training needs to accomplish better outcomes for children and families within outside your agency

8. What kinds of things have you accomplished as a CSW/**DPO** that others could learn from? What are the reasons for your achievements?

9. Is there anything you would like to add?

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
SUPERVISOR FOCUS GROUP TOOL**

SUPERVISOR FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION	
Date of Focus Group:	Number of DCFS Participants:
Facilitators:	Number of Probation Participants:
<i>Supervisor Focus Group Questions</i>	
1. Please tell us about the program areas that are working well in your office. Example of programs may include Wraparound, Team Decision Making, Group Home Onsite, Structured Decision Making, and Family Preservation.	
2. Could you describe to us what are the most significant recurring challenges, barriers or themes you experience in the work you are doing? Would you consider these to be the same barriers Probation Officers/Social Workers face in their performance and duties?	
3. What are the three most influential practices or programs that lead to positive outcomes for families and children?	

4. Describe the barriers/challenges toward timely reunification/adoption.

5. Are your workers effectively incorporating concurrent planning into the case planning process? Describe the impact of concurrent planning on accomplishing timely permanency (family reunification, adoption or legal guardianship)?

6. What processes do you use with workers to help them assess, plan for and monitor Safety/Permanency/Well Being?

7. Please expand on any of the following:

- additional barriers
- improvements
- changes
- training needs to accomplish better outcomes for children and families within or outside your agency

8. What kinds of things have you accomplished, strengths you exhibit or special skills you've acquired as a Supervisor that others could learn from? What are the reasons for your achievements?

9. Is there anything you would like to add?

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
YOUTH FOCUS GROUP TOOL**

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> Department Of Children and Family Services <input type="checkbox"/> Probation Department	Date of Focus Group: Facilitators:

<i>Youth Focus Group Questions</i>
1. Explain how your probation officer/social worker clearly informed you of the purpose of visits, your rights, and your responsibilities. How were you included in the case planning process?
2. How do you feel your probation officer/social worker has treated you? How have your concerns been addressed?
3. Have you received proper information about available services and resources? Have you and your probation officer/social worker been able to access these services and resources? If so, how? If not, what were the barriers to accessing the services?

4. How have available services and resources helped you attain your goals? Were there any difficulties you experienced in obtaining services and resources, and if so, what were they?

5. Overall, has DCFS/Probation helped you and your family? How can DCFS/Probation improve the services it offers to youths?

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
PARENT FOCUS GROUP TOOL**

PARENTFOCUS GROUP INFORMATION	
Date of Focus Group:	Number of DCFS Participants:
Facilitators:	Number of Probation Participants:

<i>Parent Focus Group Questions</i>
1. Explain how the probation officer/social worker clearly informed you of the purpose of visits, your rights, and your responsibilities. How were you included in the case planning process?
2. How do you feel you have been treated by your probation worker/social worker? How have your concerns been addressed?
3. Have you received proper information about available services and resources? Have you been able to access these services and resources? If so, how? If not, what were the barriers to accessing the services?
4. How have available services and resources helped you attain your goals? Did you experience any difficulties in obtaining these services and resources, and if so, what were they?

5. How helpful was the placement resource in the pursuit of your goal?

6. What was your experience in visiting your children?

7. Overall, has DCFS/Probation helped your family? How can DCFS/ Probation improve the services it offers to parents?

**PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW
CAREGIVER FOCUS GROUP TOOL**

CAREGIVER FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION	
Date of Focus Group:	Number of DCFS Participants:
Facilitators:	Number of Probation Participants:

<i>Caregiver Focus Group Questions</i>
1. Do you feel the probation officer/social worker has clearly informed you of the purpose of visits for the child/youth placed in your home as well as your rights and your responsibilities as a caregiver? Please explain.
2. How do you feel the probation officer/social worker has treated you? How have your concerns been addressed?
3. Have you received proper information about available services and resources for the child/youth placed in your home? Have these services and resources been accessed for the child/youth? Please explain

4. How have available services and resources helped the child/youth attain their goals? Were there any difficulties you experienced in obtaining services and resources, and if so, what were they?

5. Overall, how has DCFS/Probation helped you and the child/youth placed in your home? And the parents? How can DCFS/Probation improve the services it offers to you, the child/youth, and their parents?

Appendix B
DCFS Data Sheet

Los Angeles Peer Quality Case Review

DCFS	Date case opened and closed	Closed within 12 months?	Kin or Non-kin	Parents actively involved?	Visits with Parents and/or sibs?	Services in local community?	Child placed in own community?	Child + Parent Case Plan Participated?	Ethnicity	Allegation
1	Minor A 9/15/05-12/19/05	Yes	Non-kin	FA: Declined Services; MO: Not Active	MO: Visits; No siblings	Yes	Yes	FA: No; Mo & Child: Yes	Caucasian	Physical Abuse
2	Minor B 9/16/05-3/1/06	Yes	Non-kin	FA: Yes; MO: Yes; Foster mother: Worked diligently	Yes	Yes	No	Yes; parents; Child too young	Hispanic	General Neglect
3	Minor C 9/29/05-8/1/06	Yes	Kin	FA: NO; MO: Yes	MO: Yes; FA: No	Yes	Yes	No: parents; Child too young.	Hispanic	Physical Abuse
4	Minor D VFR: 8/22/05-4/7/06	Yes	Kin	FA: Yes; MO: Yes	Parents & Siblings: Yes	Yes	Yes	Parents: Yes; Child: Too young	Caucasian	General Neglect
5	Minor E 9/22/05-10/20/06	No	Non-kin	FA and MO: Very Active; Foster mother very engaged	FA, MO, Sibs very active	Yes	Yes	MO: Yes; Child too young.	Hispanic	Physical Abuse
6	Minor F 9/19/05-JTO'ed on 2/21/07	No	Non-kin	FA and MO: Not active	FA & MO: No; Siblings: Yes	Yes	No	Parents & Child: No	Hispanic	Caretaker Absence/Incapacity
7	Minor G 9/19/05-Present	No	Kin	FA and MO: Active	MO & FA: Yes	Yes	Yes; Child w/MGMO	NO: Parents Dev. Delayed; Child too young	Hispanic	Emotional Abuse
8	Minor H 9/8/05-Present	No	Non-kin	FA and MO: Not Active	FA & MO: Yes; Siblings: No	Yes	Yes	Parents: Yes; Child too young.	Caucasian	General Neglect
9	Minor I 9/26/05-11/26/06 reopened 2/12/07	No	Kin	FA and MO: Not Active	FA: No; MO & Siblings: Yes	Yes	No	No	African American	General Neglect
10	Minor J 9/11/2005-3/1/06	Yes	Non-kin	FA and MO: Active	FA: No; MO & Siblings: Yes	Yes	No. Child in GH	Parents: Yes; Child: Yes	African American	Physical Abuse
11	Minor K 9/2/05-4/4/06	Yes	Non-kin	FA and MO: Active	FA & MO: Yes	Yes	Yes	Parents: No; Child too young	African American	Severe Neglect
12	Minor L 9/27/05-Present	No	Kin	FA: Yes; MO: No	FA & Siblings: Yes; MO: No	Yes	Yes	FA: Yes; MO: No; No info. On child.	African American	Caretaker Absence/Incapacity
13	Minor M 9/14/05-1/11/06	Yes	Kin	FA and MO: Active	FA: Yes (Non offending FA)	Yes	Yes	MO & FA: Yes; Child too young	Hispanic	Caretaker Absence/Incapacity
14	Minor N 9/16/05-12/06/05	Yes	Kin	FA and MO: Not Active	Child w/MO; FA + Siblings: Yes	No	Yes	Parents: No; Child: Yes	Hispanic	Physical Abuse
15	Minor O 9/1/05-10/28/06	No	Non-kin	FA and MO: Not Active	MO: refused to visits after 6 months	Yes	Yes	MO: Yes; Child: Yes; TDM held	Caucasian	Emotional Abuse
16	Minor P 7/8/05-Present	No	Kin	FA: Not Active; MO: Minimally Active	MO: Yes; Siblings: Placed together	Yes	Yes	Child: Yes but described as minor participation	African American	General neglect

Appendix C

Probation Data Sheet

PROBATION												
	Date case opened and closed	Closed within 12 months?	Kin or Non-kin	Parents actively involved?	Visits with Parents and/or sibs?	Services in local community?	Child placed in own community?	Child + Parent Case Plan Participated?	Ethnicity	Criminal Background	Age	AWOL History/#of placements
1	Minor A (MG) 9/21/05-9/20/06	Yes	N/A	Fa & Step-Mo: Yes Mother: Not Involved	Fa: occasionally, work schedule conflicts Mo: occas./transport. Fa: Not involved	Yes	No	Fa: Somewhat Youth: Yes Mother: No	Hispanic	Battery/Theft	18 and 3 mos.	Yes (f's death) (2) Placements
2	Minor B (LG) 9/14/05-9/13/06	Yes	Kin	Fa: Not Involved Mother & Aunt active	Mo: occas./transport. Fa: Not involved	Yes	No--minor placed in O. Co.	Mo & Youth: Yes Fa: No	Hispanic	Substance use/possession	15 and 10 mos.	Yes (2) Placements
3	Minor C (GR) 9/14/05-6/14/06	Yes	Kin	Fa: No Mo: No Grandmo involved	Mo: Yes Father: occasionally	Yes	No--mother in S.B. Co	Mo & Youth: Yes Fa: No	Hispanic	Vandalism	16 and 8 mos.	No
4	Minor D (ES) 9/9/05-9/7/06	Yes	N/A	Father: No Mother: Yes	Mother: Yes Siblings: No	Yes	No	Mo & Youth: Yes Fa: No	Hispanic	Burglary	18 and 8 mos.	Yes (3) Placements
5	Minor E (JH) 9/29/05-9/28/06	Yes	Non-Kin	Father & Mother: Unk Fost/Adopt Mo Involved	Fost/Adopt Mo: occas/ transportation issues	Yes	No	Fost/Adopt Mo & Youth: Somewhat	Black	Battery/Dome stc	17 and 6 mos.	No
6	Minor F (DC) 8/25/05-present	No	N/A	Fa: Not active Mother: Yes	Mother: Yes Father: No	Yes	No	Mo & Youth: Yes Fa: No	Black	Sexual Offense	15	No (2) Placements
7	Minor G (MD) 9/28/05-present	No	Kin	Mo: active, but victim in home Grandparents actively involved	Mother: Yes Grandparents: Yes	Yes	No	Father: No Grandparents, Mo & Youth: Yes	White	Sexual Offense	16	No
8	Minor H (FF) 9/22/05-present	No	N/A	Fa: Not involved Mother: Yes	Mo & Siblings: Yes	Yes	No	Mo & Youth: Yes	Hispanic	Substance use/possession	16 and 1 mo.	Yes (3) Placements
9	Minor I (EF) 9/22/05-present	No	Kin	Fa: Not involved Grandfa & Mo: Yes	Mo & Youth's 3 yr. old son: Yes	Yes	No	Mo: Somewhat Youth: No/AWOL	Black	Substance use/possession	17 and 6 mos.	Yes (2) Placements
10	Minor (JH) 9/22/05-10-20-06	No	Non-Kin	Fa & Mo: Unknown CASA Wrkr: Yes	CASA Wrkr & Siblings: Yes	Yes	No	Youth: Somewhat	Black	Battery	16 and 11 mos.	Yes (DKC) (2) Placements
11	Minor K (MR) 9/28/05-present	No	N/A	Father & Mother: Yes	Parents: Yes	Yes	No	Parents & Youth: Yes	Hispanic	Sexual Offense & Substance Abuse	18 and 8 mos.	No
12	Minor L (PV) 9/23/05-1/26/07	No	N/A	Father & Mother: Yes	Parents: Yes	Yes	No	Parents & Youth: Yes	Hispanic	Sexual Offense	16 and 5 mos.	No (HOP)
13	Minor M (DW) 9/8/05-1/5/07	No	N/A	Father: Not involved Mother: Active	Mother & Sibling: Yes	Yes	No	Father: No; Mo, sis & Youth: Yes	White	Sexual Offense	17 and 10 mos.	No (HOP)
14	Minor N (DJW) 9/13/05-8/1/06	No	N/A	Father: Not involved Mother: Active	Mother: Yes Siblings: No	Yes	No	Fa: No; Mo: Yes Youth: No/Arrest	Black	Robbery	14 and 5 mos.	No (CCP) (2) Placements