



# DCFS AT WORK

Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

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Sousan Tayrani

After nearly 25 years with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Sousan Tayrani is keenly aware that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to child and family well-being.

“The system may not be perfect, but I wholeheartedly believe in what DCFS stands for and that social workers truly make a difference in the lives of others,” said Sousan, who through various assignments has engaged with families both at the front and back end of their involvement with the department.

Sousan now works as a children services administrator with the Family Preservation (FP) Program within the department’s Community Based Support Division. While she sometimes misses working directly with children and parents, she also knows that many families would be at greater risk for continued system involvement without the support provided by the

FP Program.

FP is a strength-based program established in the early 1990s that brings together a network of community-based services that supports families and protects children and youth both in the home and during the process of reunification. Family Maintenance cases – those in which the child remains in the home of the parent(s) – represent the largest proportion of families receiving FP services.

DCFS data indicates that recipients of FP services have an average recurrence rate of approximately four percent, compared to nearly nine percent for non-recipients. In other words, successful completion of an FP case decreases the risk of re-entry. The program serves families involved with both DCFS and the Los Angeles County Department of Probation.

The 12-person FP team works closely with contracted service providers, primary social workers and partner agencies such as Probation and the Los Angeles County Departments of Public Social Services and Mental Health, serving as liaisons among the parties to allocate resources and ensure that families receive the multi-disciplinary services necessary to accomplish their goals.



Family Preservation Program team led by Program Manager Blanca Vega. From left to right: Mayerling Torres, Linda Labon-Banks, Eleanor Reid, Ruth Kame, Sousan Tayrani, Nancy Argueta, Blanca Vega, Alexis Glenn, Ronda Jacobs (not pictured: Christine Balderas Vasquez, Vernita Cox, Keesee Gregory)

“Each geographic area is unique and community-based agencies are best positioned to provide support because they know what families in that area need,” Sousan said. “Being able to access local resources can make a tremendous difference for a family in need.”

Currently, there are 27 community-based organizations contracted to provide an array of FP services



across the county, including case management, In-Home Outreach Counseling, parenting instruction, transportation, child-focused activities, mentoring, housing services, and mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence counseling, as well as linking families to services outside their own offerings. FP agencies also provide assessment services to the DCFS regional offices and the Emergency Response Command Post.

The overarching goal of the FP Program is to help parents strengthen their existing capacities. The program's in-home services seek to minimize future DCFS involvement by teaching parents how to better resolve problems and

advocate for their children, while also helping them connect to community resources and support networks.

In the 11 years that she has worked with the program, Sousan has watched it adapt and change. "Each year helps us learn and grow, and we channel our observations and experiences into program improvements wherever possible," she said. "The FP team works really hard to make this program successful because we know these efforts ultimately benefit families, which is what we care most about."

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