

County of Santa Clara

Board of Supervisors

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MANAGEMENT AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (DFCS)

AUDIT SYNOPSIS:

This management audit examined the operations, management practices and finances of the Department of Family and Children's Services to identify opportunities to increase its efficiency, effectiveness and economy. The report includes seven findings and 30 recommendations. Some recommendations present multiple alternatives for the Board's consideration; as a result, the savings and costs may vary according to which recommendation is adopted. If the County were to implement the proposed recommendations, \$954,807 annual benefits would be saved or generated for the County, of which approximately \$566,311 is estimated to be General Fund savings.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Call Center staff hotline answered only about 59 percent of all calls made to the Center in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-13. Failure to answer more than 7,000 calls annually results in abused and neglected children remaining in dangerous homes, even as concerned individuals are calling to report these situations. To improve call center operations, the audit recommends filling and assigning eight vacant positions to CAN.
- Emergency Response (ER) Division caseload standards have been reduced from 21 to 14 cases per worker, per the most recent labor agreement. This standard is low by comparison to similar jurisdictions surveyed this audit. Because of the reduced ER caseload standard, the annual overtime use increased by 59 percent, at an additional cost of \$248,000. To address the use of overtime and to optimize staff scheduling, the audit recommends DFCS meet and confer with labor to increase the caseload standard and adjust work schedules to reduce overtime use.
- The Dependency Investigations (DI) Division has 39 budgeted positions. However, due to staff leaves of absence, transfers, and resignations, only an average of 23 Division staff were assigned cases in 2012. Absences have been backfilled with overtime hours at a cost of \$595,000, and social workers from other units. To reduce the use of overtime, the Department should reassign five DI social workers currently assigned to lower priority voluntary cases, and transfer their caseload to bureaus with additional capacity. The audit also recommends the Department work with the Employee Services Agency to evaluate staff turnover in this unit.
- Children's Counselors provide child care to incoming youth and are present at all times even when the Receiving, Assessment and Intake Center is vacant. To better utilize these staff, the audit recommends the deletion of 15 Counselor and two Senior Children's Counselor positions, and the addition of 11 Social Worker I positions as part of the FY 2014-15 budget process. Alternatively, the Department could issue a Request for Proposals to contract out certain aspects of the Receiving Center function. In addition, the audit makes recommendations to improve compliance with the legal requirement that youth be housed at the center no more than 24 hours, which in some cases has been violated.
- Within DFCS, managerial spans of control are uneven and closely-related functions are spread across different bureaus. To provide more effective management oversight, streamline communications, and improve the responsiveness to the County's abused and neglected children, the audit proposes several alternative staffing configurations.
- No guidelines or policy manuals exist for DFCS contract program monitors, and the intensity of monitoring varies significantly. The lack of coordinated oversight impedes the Department's ability to meet contract renewal deadlines, and inadequate monitoring also increases the risk that contractors may fail to comply with contract requirements. To improve contract management and monitoring, the audit recommends the addition of a Project Manager position dedicated to contract coordination.
- Since 2009, California State law has required all foster youth between ages 16.5 to 17.5 be screened for Supplemental Security Income eligibility. As of May 2013, at least 152 foster youth between ages 16.5 to 17.5 had not yet been screened, and most other youth whose screening is not mandated also had not been screened. As a result, the County is out of compliance with State law, and may be unnecessarily paying for the care of other eligible foster youth. Implementation of audit recommendations would generate net revenue estimated at \$171,000 per year, and enable the Department to comply with State law.

A copy of the full report is available at:

<http://www.sccgov.org/managementauditor>

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