

California's Child Welfare System – Moving Towards Redesign
EARLY INTERVENTION & DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE
Decision Points Where Fairness & Equity can be Addressed & Evaluated

<p><u>Point in Case Flow:</u></p> <p>Hotline: Early Intervention</p> <p>Differential Response</p>	<p><u>Decision Options:</u></p> <p>Offer services/Not offer services</p> <p>Refer to Emergency Response</p> <p>Refer to Community-Based Agency</p>	<p><u>Decision Makers:</u></p> <p>Hotline worker</p> <p>Mandated Reporters</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Community Partners: Schools, Health Community, Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment Community, Faith Community, Domestic Violence Counselors, Other CBOs.</p>
<p align="center">F&E Practice Issues:</p>		<p align="center">Strategies:</p>
<p>Fewer calls from wealthy areas (including fewer hospitals drug screening tests done on newborns) in wealthy areas, greater awareness of prevention services in wealthy areas, more community services available there.</p> <p>Bias against single parents, teenaged parents.</p> <p>Judgments are made by social workers and the legal dependency system about fitness of kin, neighborhood location of kin, and/or the community.</p> <p>Core Issue: There isn't equal opportunity for accessing culturally competent services. Children of color are disadvantaged by the lack of language proficient service providers for non-English fluent families, practices that ignore or misinterpret families' culturally-specific strengths, and mismatches between the cultural background or expertise of foster parents and the children placed in their care.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Child abuse prevention, child safety programs outreach campaign ❑ Develop new collaborations for prevention: minority-defined and minority-based models of family preservation and early intervention. ❑ Expand kinship policy to extended family and non-blood relations. ❑ Develop poverty-targeted intervention and support strategies CWS/TANF Partnership with community-based agencies; CWS must learn how to work with other systems. ❑ Decision makers learn how to engage, assess, and motivate (assess motivation of) parents from the beginning. ❑ New options for services are offered: Teaching homemaker, Family resource worker, Home visitor. ❑ Intercultural communication training. ❑ Multidisciplinary team training, ongoing. ❑ CWS located in neighborhood schools, community centers. ❑ Safety planning.

California’s Child Welfare System – Moving Towards Redesign
PERMANENCY & CHILD WELL BEING
Decision Points Where Fairness & Equity can be Addressed & Evaluated

<u>Point in Case Flow:</u>	<u>Decision Options:</u>	<u>Decision Maker:</u>
Case Plan Actions/Goal: Optimal Initial Placement (After face-to-face) a.k.a. “Foster Care Entrance”	Remain Home Placement with: Shelter Kin Care Foster Care Group Home Shared Family Care 23 hr place of safety Institutional Care	Social Worker +/-or Team Members May include police May include supervisor
F&E Practice Issues:		Strategies:

Core Issue: Children of color (especially African-American) enter foster care at higher rates, even when they and their families have the same characteristics as comparable white children and families.

Individual Child Welfare Worker/Team Bias:

- Judgment of kin/neighborhood location of kin/community (Bias against kin “apple does not fall far from the tree”; expectation/obligation to care for family w/out govt. help; judgment of neighborhood as “unsafe”
- Neighborhood context (afraid to go into neighborhood)
- Stereotyping on the basis of ethnicity, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, religion, substance abuse status, other
- Inability to speak the family’s language and/ or unavailability of bilingual staff or translators
- Gang membership bias (“break up the gang” rationale might be used to cover bias)
- To “improve” child’s “quality of life” through placement in “safer” neighborhood +/- or with more “financially secure” caretakers, 2-parent families (see also system bias below)
- Transference/countertransference
- Single decision-maker may enhance bias:
 - No checks and balances
 - Desire to avoid exposure

Safety planning, removal may not always be needed.

System Bias:

- To “improve” child’s “quality of life” through placement in “safer” neighborhood +/- or with more “financially secure” caretakers, 2-parent families (see also individual bias above)
- Constrained timeframes
- Most readily available placement versus the best placement (include ICPC)
- Protect the system as opposed to best interest of the child/best practice
- Judicial culture/bias
- Equally skilled baseline of child welfare team members not in place
- Shared costs—funds travel with the child

To Address Individual Child Welfare Worker/Team Bias:

- ❑ Collaborative supervision to identify and address biases
- ❑ Expand kinship to extended family & non-blood relations
- ❑ Team approach required; min. of 2 agency staff for all emergency responses
- ❑ Standardize safety decision making tool and provide training on how to use
- ❑ Expectations/requirement for family inclusion
- ❑ Engage community as part of the “solution”
- ❑ Utilizing community leaders as resources and/or to engage community members
- ❑ Require Cross-Systems Training specific to fairness and equity; include:
 - ❑ Interactive Intercultural Communication training, including dynamics of communities
 - ❑ Access to experts, including birth parent advocates
 - ❑ Training of community members, paraprofessionals (including birth parent advocates)
 - ❑ Training in navigating dangerous environments
- ❑ Recruit and retain staff from the community, and that reflect community
- ❑ Identify Indian heritage if not identified earlier and comply with ICWA
- ❑ Clarify shared responsibilities

System Bias:

- ❑ Organizational culture that promotes “healthy skepticism”, (meaning staff have the agency’s “permission” to question assumptions) and models, principles, practices of fairness & equity
- ❑ Expectation of the worker modeled at all levels of organization (parallel process)
- ❑ Community capacity building
- ❑ Neighborhood-based services, family resource centers in self-identified communities
- ❑ Co-locate staff in community to engage and welcome; architecture matters, needs to be approachable and accessible layout; welcoming (Drug Endangered Children team process is a valuable collaborative model)
- ❑ Need written policies and strategies to address political pressures
- ❑ Use data to identify specific concerns at individual and system level

Point in Case Flow:

Case Planning:
Plan Development/Evaluation
Reunification Services

Decision Options:

Placement:

- Family restoration
- Continue initial placement
- Change placement

Focus of Services:

- Family restoration
- Early reunification
- Alternate perm planning
- Fast track
- Successful youth transition

Decision Maker:

Team and family
Attorney for family & minor(s)
CASA
AOD Counselors
The Court

F&E Practice Issues:		Strategies:	
<p>Core Issue: Length of Stay. <u>Children of color remain in foster care for longer periods of time than white children.</u></p> <p><i>Fairness in Differential Response Track Assignment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who gets the case plan created outside the court process & who has to go to court? Are these biases toward certain groups regarding likelihood of cooperation vs. resistance? (by-pass biases) ▪ Who is involved in team decision-making? <p>Core Issue: Limited Services. <u>Families of color, when compared with white families, receive fewer services and have less contact with child welfare staff members. Consequently reunification services are less available to families of color.</u></p> <p><i>Fairness in Resource Distribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal access to services by group ▪ Availability of services by neighborhood ▪ Unequal enforcement of children’s legal rights to services 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Designate a team member to reviews plan & process for F & E ❑ Raise question of F & E verbally to team for feedback ❑ Set of written F & E issues to be addressed/issues to be examined ❑ Written policies promoting F & E and guiding action/practice ❑ Needs-driven case plan vs. service availability-driven case plan (law protects children who because of disability are entitled to certain services) ❑ Develop service availability/resources ❑ Decision makers learn how to engage, assess, and motivate (assess motivation of) parents from the beginning. 	
<p><u>Point in Case Flow:</u></p> <p>Permanency Planning Outcomes: Permanency Outcomes</p>	<p><u>Decision Options:</u></p> <p><u>Permanency Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family Restoration -Adoption-Kin -Adoption-Non-Kin -Guardianship- Kin -Guardianship-Non-Kin -Other new permanency possibilities 	<p><u>Alternative Permanency:</u></p> <p>Successful transition to adulthood</p>	<p><u>Decision Maker:</u></p> <p>Team, including the Family, The Court</p>
F&E Practice Issues:		Strategies:	

<p>Core Issue: Family Reunification. Children of color experience reunification at lower rates than white children.</p> <p>Core Issue: Adoption Processes. Children of color who are legally available for adoption wait longer for an adoptive placement when compared with white children, and they are less likely to be placed at all.</p> <p><u>Fairness in Pursuit of Permanency Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are older kids of certain groups less likely to have a permanence outcome than kids of other groups? (Adoption of African American males over 2 years of age is less likely.) ▪ Children of color and older kids considered less likely for adoption (anti-adoption bias) ▪ Angry kids w/ behavioral problems or placed in group homes are less likely to be seen as adoptable <p><u>Fairness in Preparation for Successful Transition:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Probation kids excluded from STEP & THPP ▪ Resources allocated to “most adoptable” ▪ Probation kids excluded from STEP, THPP and THPP Plus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of concurrent planning • Reassess the level of risk reduction for reunification of youth aged 12 and over (e.g., is it safe for youth to reunify now?) • Continue to assess relationships of youth aged 12 and over and continue to work towards permanency on their behalf • Make non-relative guardianship a more available option by considering emotional permanency for youth and the commitment of the prospective guardian. • Remove financial disincentives for caregivers and youth to exit. • Fund specialized recruitment of resource families at the state and local levels • Educate the community-at-large to the adoptability of all children • Expand training and support for resource families • Reexamine individual agency policies that reflect bias • Provide training to workers to address biases re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoptability of all children ▪ Out of state/out of county adoptions ▪ Placements with single/working/gay/lesbian parents <p>Offer Independent Living Programs to all eligible foster youth.</p>	
<p><u>Point in Case Flow:</u></p> <p>Transition out of the system Post-Permanency Supports</p>	<p><u>Decision Options:</u></p> <p>Services for education past age 18</p>	<p><u>Decision Makers:</u></p> <p>Family Community Partners</p>

F&E Practice Issues:**Core Issue: Lack of Culturally Competent Services.**

Children of color are disadvantaged by the lack of language proficient service providers for non-English fluent families, practices that ignore or misinterpret families' culturally-specific strengths, and mismatches between the cultural background or expertise of foster parents and the children placed in their care.

Youth of color (dependents) are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system.

Strategies:

- ❑ **Develop minority-defined and minority-based models of family preservation and aftercare; including post-adoption wraparound services.**
- ❑ **Develop poverty-targeted intervention and support strategies CWS/TANF Partnership.**
- ❑ **CWS University/College Partnerships must be developed.**

- ❑ **Collaborate with juvenile justice probation officers and others (e.g., substance abuse treatment personnel).**
- ❑ **Training for social workers and foster parents to help youth avoid “blowing” placements.**