

California - Child and Family Services Review

System Improvement Plan

2021-2025



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Introduction

Lake County is a geographically large rural Northern California county, with a population of 64,886 (2019) ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2020](#)). Lake County is located in the north central portion of the state of California. The county takes its name from Clear Lake, the dominant geographic feature in the county the county seat is Lakeport and there are a total of 14 cities in the county. It is directly north of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Lake County Child Welfare Service (CWS) and Lake County Juvenile Probation Department have made this System Improvement Plan (SIP) in accordance with the provisions of the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (Assembly Bill 636). The California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), an outcome-based cyclical, 5-year, plan. This process begins with the identification and analysis of the current system through the Child Welfare and Probation County Self-Assessment and Peer Review, and leads to development and implementation of solutions. These solutions are detailed in the System Improvement Plan, and are tested through ongoing evaluations and revisions for continuous improvement. To meet the changing needs of the system over time, activities are monitored and may be updated through the Annual System Improvement Plan Progress Report. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SIP report was delayed and CDSS gave an extension due to the issues that arose during the pandemic. This report combines the SIP and the First Annual Progress Report in order to be in compliance with the assigned schedule for Lake County.

As the C-CFSR is a continuous quality improvement model, Lake County CWS and Juvenile Probation have worked toward continuous development, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to improve safety, permanency, and well-being of children. The SIP outlines strategies that Lake County CWS and the JPD plan to implement over the next five years to improve outcomes for children and families. This SIP incorporates planning and strategies related to the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) programs: Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community-Based Prevention (CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) programs. This SIP incorporates the findings of the County Self-Assessment and Peer Review where CWS and Probation actively worked with focus groups of parents, foster parents, and youth in foster care, probation officers, social workers, and social worker supervisors to obtain feedback about the quality of the Child Welfare and Probation Department services.

SIP Narrative

C-CFSR TEAM AND CORE REPRESENTATIVES

A CSA stakeholder's virtual meeting was held on June 6, 2022, attended by approximately 36 participants, including staff from CDSS, CWS, Probation, and community partners. We convened virtually via Zoom to discuss the SIP. A list of Core Representatives' names with affiliations is as follows:

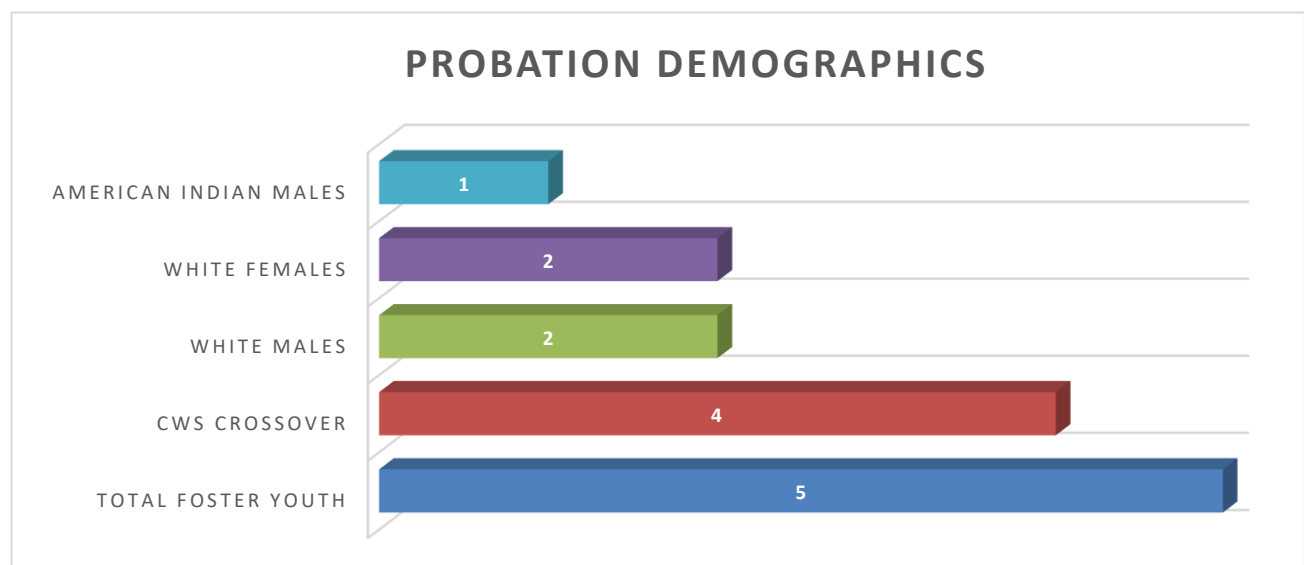
| Participant Name | Agency/Organization | Position/Title |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Laura Sullivan | Redwood Community Services | ICWA Liaison |
| Charlene Ellis | Lake County Public Health | Health Program Support Specialist |
| Rachel Paarsch | Lakeport Elementary school | Director of Alternative Education and Pupil Services |
| Crystle Williams | Lake County Public Health | Health Program Support Specialist |
| Brock Falkenburg | Lake County Office of Education | Superintendent of Schools |
| Ana Santana | Children's Council | |
| Leila Romero | Lake County Public Health Services | Health Program Support Specialist |
| April Giambra | Lake County Behavioral Health Services | Substance Abuse Program Manager |
| Kyrsten Martinez | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Social Worker |
| Nicole Wells | | |
| Megan Grant | Lucerne Elementary School | Dental Disease Prevention |
| Victoria Kelly | Redwood Community Services | Director Accountability & Education |
| Kimbarlee Guerra | Redwood Community Services | |
| Crystal Markytan | LCDSS | Director |
| Michael Green | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Staff Analyst- Court |
| Dave McQueen | Kelseyville School District | Director |
| Angie Wynacht | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Social Worker |
| Denise Ochoa | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Social Worker |
| Mary Brown | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Social Worker |
| Carrie Bridges | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- ER |
| Sherri DeLaTorre | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- Special Programs |
| Heather Kriken | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- FR/FM |
| Angela Curry | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- FR/FM |
| Ann Larrea | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- PP |
| Yolanda Sandoval-Cummins | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervisor- Adoptions |
| Amber Davis | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Deputy Director |
| Gracia Albin | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Supervising Analyst |
| Tyler Warren | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Staff Services Analyst |
| Les Deter | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Staff Services Analyst - CQI |
| Mary Pagan | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Program Manager |
| Kim Costa | LCDSS Child Welfare Services | Program Manager |
| Kevin Luis | Probation Department | Deputy Probation Officer |
| Wendy Mondfrans | Probation Department | Chief Deputy Probation Officer |

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Lake County's children population in July 2020, are White (58.4%), Latino (30.2%), Multi-Race (4.9%), Native American (3.1%), Black (1.8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.5%). There are significantly more white children and a smaller proportion of Native American, Black, Asian and Latino children in Lake County, compared to the state of California. Below is a graph showing the ethnicities of children in Lake County and the percentage of children in foster care for CWS in each ethnic group.

| Ethnic Group | Total Child Population | In Care (July 2020) | Percentage of children in care in each ethnic group |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---|
| White | 7,838 | 66 | 59% |
| Latino | 4,065 | 22 | 20% |
| Multi-Race | 652 | 0 | 0% |
| Native American | 415 | 16 | 14% |
| Black | 247 | 7 | 6% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 207 | 1 | 1% |
| Total | 13,424 | 112 | 100% |

During the time identified in this report, Lake County Probation supervised five foster youth. Four youth are CWS crossovers. The following chart breaks down more specific demographics.



Median household income is significantly lower than median income for California as a whole by almost half as much, but has increased slightly over time. Both the poverty rate and unemployment are slightly higher than state rates but are trending down. There was a notable increase in the count of homeless individuals in the last two homeless censuses.

PRIORITIZATION OF OUTCOME DATA MEASURES/SYSTEMIC FACTORS AND STRATEGY RATIONALE

Child Welfare Services

Lake County CWS reviewed their outcome measures for the CSA baseline performance. CWS was below the National Standards in two measures: S3-P1 Permanency in 12 months and 2F Social Worker Monthly Visits to children out of home. S3-P1 was the outcome measure reviewed in the CSA and the outcome measure selected for the SIP. Next CWS reviewed their Federal Case Review data to see if there were any identifiable trends in the cases reviewed that could assist CWS in identifying the best way to improve this outcome measure. Once all were reviewed, the CWS leadership team identified that Court continuances were impacting cases reaching permanency before and during COVID-19 pandemic.

The University of California, Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project compiles extracts data from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and produces quarterly outcomes reports, which are made available to the public. As described in greater detail in the County Self-Assessment Lake County Child Welfare and Probation consistently have small numbers of children in the time periods that are assessed. Small populations in Lake County may suggest that quarterly data can be drastically altered easily by a single child or single set of siblings, so examination of isolated quarterly data can be misleading.

Lake County Child Welfare Services has selected the following outcome as their priority for the 2021-2025 SIP:

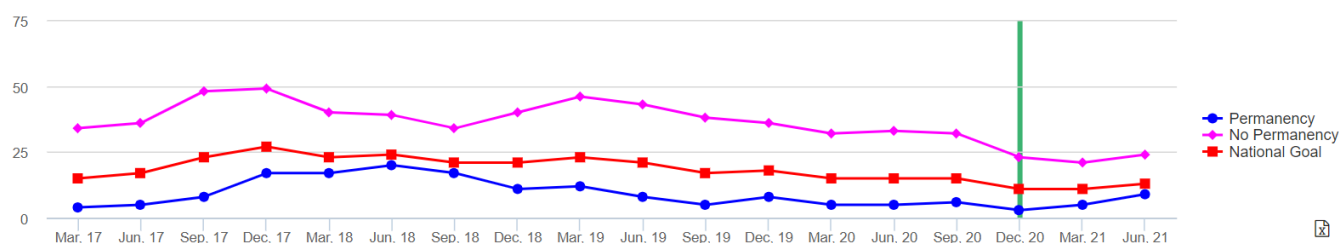
- P1 Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care: The goal of Child Welfare Services is to safely reunify parents with their children safely as soon as possible. When reunification is not attainable, other types of permanency is selected. Lake County has failed to meet the national standard for permanency in 12 months for several years and it is why the outcome was chosen for the County Self-Assessment. Stakeholders agreed that this outcome needed to be prioritized to meet the County's goal of increasing the safety, permanency, and well-being for all children in our community.
 - Child Welfare Services will also review outcome measure 2F social worker monthly visits to children out of the home as CWS as it is believed that there is a potential connection between permanency in 12 months and timely social worker monthly visits.

S3-P1: Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care:

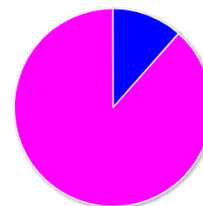
Of all children who entered foster care in a 12-month period, what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care? Permanency includes exit status of 'reunified', 'adopted', or 'guardianship'. National Standard: > 40.5%.

Baseline data: Of all the children who entered care in the Q2 of 2020, 11.5% (3 of 26) had found permanency within 12 months

Timeframe: 01/01/2020 to 12/31/2020



| Permanency Within 12 Months | | Count | % |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|
| Permanency | <div><div></div></div> | 3 | 11.5% |
| No Permanency | <div><div></div></div> | 23 | 88.5% |
| National Goal | <div><div></div></div> | 11 | 40.5% |
| Total | | 26 | 100% |



The baseline performance of Lake County CWS for S3-P1: Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care did not meet the National Standard of 40.5%; but if 8 more children had met permanency in the baseline period Lake County CWS would have met the National Standard. CWS has continued to struggle to meet the standard for this measure and has fluctuated quite a bit from year to year.

Lake County CWS's goal will be to continue to increase the percentage of youth receiving permanency in 12 months by 20% within the five year SIP period. The strategy to achieve this goal is as follows:

Strategy: Minimize court continuances to increase timeliness to permanency.

To help reduce the amount of time it takes to establish permanency, Lake County CWS will attempt to minimize Court continuances to improve timelessness to permanency. CWS will implement several action steps under this strategy to help CWS file hearings timely without the need for continuances. The first action step will be to assign a Family Reunification (FR) Social Worker to ER cases within 60 days of the detention hearing. CWS believes that this action step will allow more time for FR social workers to focus

on case management and reduce the number of continuances. The other action step to assist CWS in being timely with Court filings will be to hire an additional Social Service Aide to assist with visitation for ER clients which will allow Social Workers to have more time for data entry and court filing. The third action step specifically for CWS, will be to have all social workers trained in the ability to complete paternity tests so that these are completed early in the case and will not be a reason for Court continuance in the future of a case.

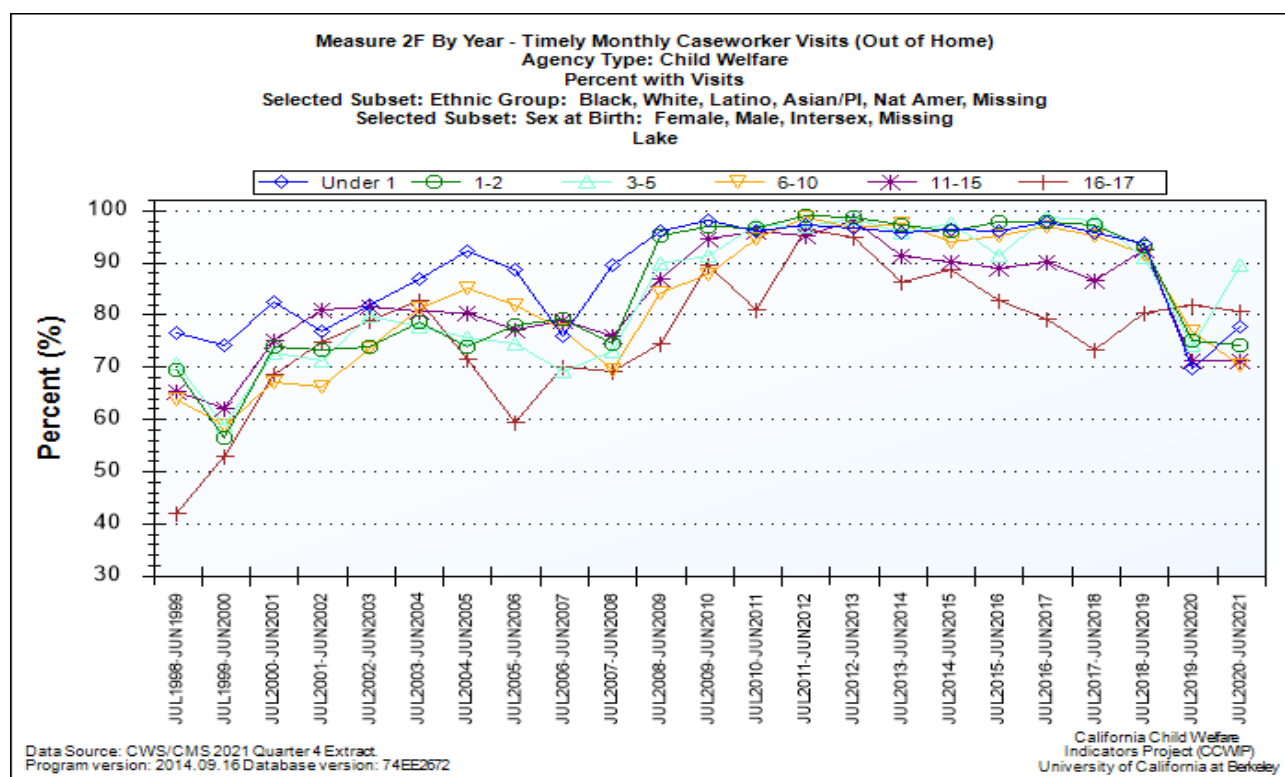
In an attempt to monitor continuances and better understand why they are occurring, CWS will create a tool that will track when a hearing is continued and the reason for the continuance. This data will be collected and monitored over 24 months in order to show trends in the data as to why continuances are taking place. CWS will also review data from item 5 and 6 in the federal case reviews (evaluates county compliance in permanency) as another source of data regarding length of time to permanency. Once the data is collected and analyzed, administration will encourage a meeting with CWS judicial partners to share the data collected and ask for their help on decreasing the number of continuances in our cases. CWS will share ongoing data on Court continuances and the outcome measure on a bi-annual basis with their judicial partners to determine if our action steps are working or if other actions are needed.

2F Social Worker Monthly Visits to children out of home: *Social Worker Monthly Visits to children out of home, National Standard: $\geq 95\%$.*

Baseline Data: Of all Monthly Visit data input into CWS/CMS 85.3% (969 of 1136) were entered timely.

This report considers each month separately but summarizes this data for a 12-month period. For each month in the 12-month period, three numbers are determined for children in care:

1. The number of children in care who were required to have an in-person contact, i.e., who were in an open placement episode for the full calendar month;
2. The number and percent of children in Group 1 who had at least one in-person contact during the month; and
3. The number and percent of children in Group 2 where at least one of that month's in-person contacts was in the placement facility.



We believe in large part that the COVID-19 pandemic affected CWS's ability to perform data entries in a timely and accurate manner over a significant period of time. This resulted in Monthly Visits (Out of Home) data showing only a 76% completion rate. In the months since the beginning Covid-19 pandemic we have managed to improve our overall numbers in from 76.2% to 87.9% an 11.7% increase since 2020.

Lake County CWS's goal will be to continue to increase the accuracy and timeliness of our data entry to attempt to comply with the mandated 95% requirement.

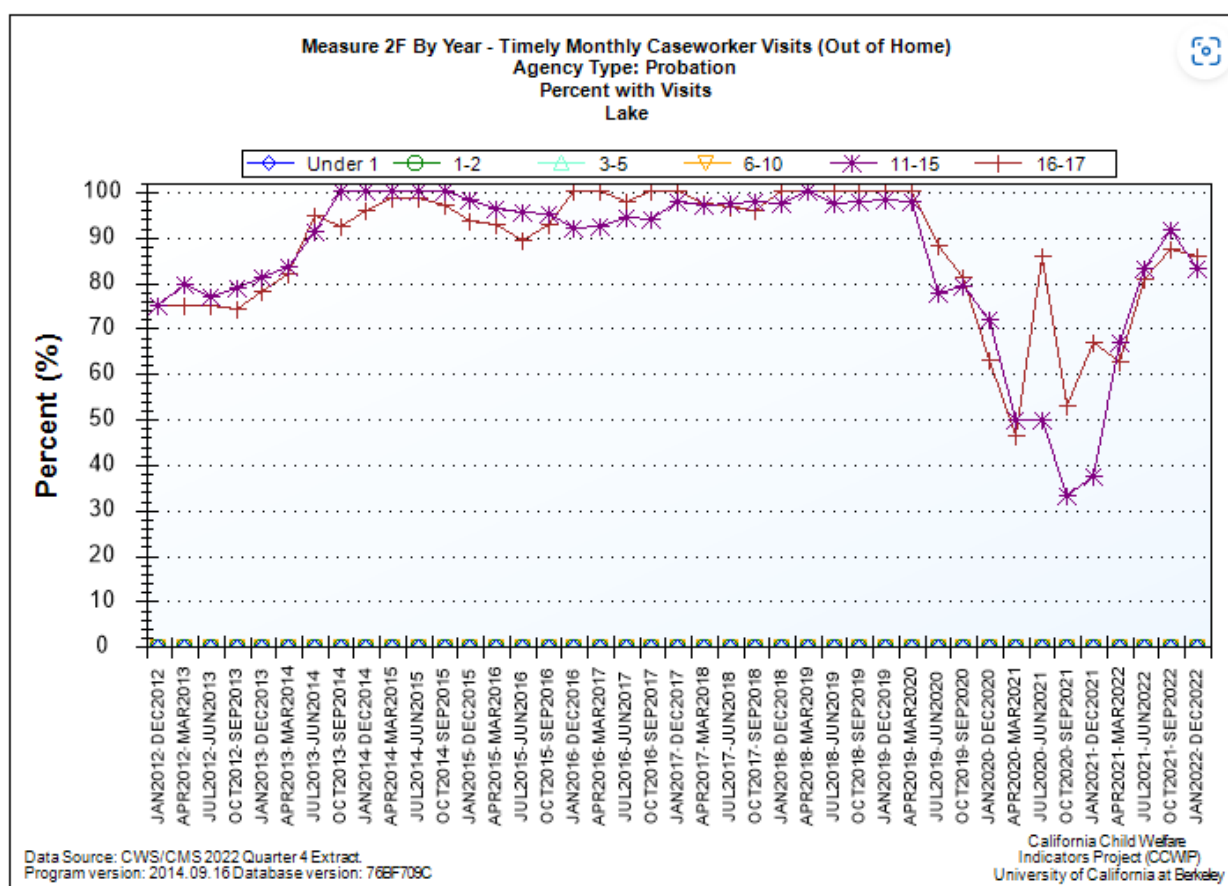
Juvenile Probation

Lake County Probation reviewed their outcome measures for the CSA baseline performance. Probation was below the National Standards in the following measure: 2F Timely Monthly Caseworker Visits to children out of home. Next Probation reviewed their Federal Case Review data to see if there were any trends in those cases that had been reviewed and had not met federal standards in the outcome measure. Once all were reviewed, the Probation leadership team was able to identify key areas that were making it difficult for Probation to meet the national standards. It was decided that if these areas were improved then services and outcomes would be more successful.

Quarterly data was collected from the University of California, Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project which compiles extracted administrative data from the Child Welfare Services/Case

Management System (CWS/CMS) and produces quarterly outcomes reports, which are made available to the public. As described in greater detail in the County Self-Assessment Lake County Child Welfare and Probation consistently have small numbers of children. Small populations in Lake County may suggest that quarterly data can be drastically altered easily by a single child or single set of siblings, so examination of isolated quarterly data can be misleading. Lake County Probation has selected this outcome as a priority for the 2021-2025 SIP:

- 2F Case Worker Monthly Visits to children out of home: Lake County understands that Probation Monthly Visits are crucial to providing good services for our youth and families. We are aware however that there has been some discrepancy between the services we have been providing and what has been being successfully documented into CWS CMS. To better meet the needs of our youths and families, we recognize the need to emphasize and ensure this measure is improved upon.
- Management Information Systems: Barriers in Maintaining Systems and Underutilization



Baseline Data: Of all Monthly Visit data input into CWS/CMS, probation fell short of the national goal by 45.5%.

We believe in large part that the COVID-19 pandemic affected Probation's ability to perform data entries in a timely and accurate manner over a significant period of time. This has resulted in our Monthly Visits (Out of Home) data showing probation fell short of the national goal by 45.5%. In the months since the beginning Covid-19 pandemic we have managed to improve our overall numbers from 45.5% to 84.2%, a 38.7% increase.

Lake County Probation's goal will be to continue to increase the accuracy and timeliness of our data entry to attempt to comply with the mandated 95% requirement. It should be noted however that due to the relatively low number of children in our care that even if only a few cases have data entry errors it may skew our results downwards. The strategies to achieve this goal will include:

- Strategy 1: Enhance data fidelity by increasing quality and timeliness of data entry

Strategy 1: To help ensure timely and quality entry of case contacts into CWS/CMS, Lake County Probation will train staff on the importance of entering contacts. Our action steps have established a plan to help Probation staff complete timely entries of contacts into CWS/CMS. These action steps include revising the contact narrative form, training Probation staff on the impacts of late contacts in Federal Case Reviews, training Probation staff on the entry of Case Contacts into CWS/CMS and Enterprise Supervision. The Senior Deputy Probation Officer of the Juvenile Division will meet with Probation staff monthly to coach staff through building new habits and ensuring quality control of data entry. Furthermore, Probation staff will utilize technology resources such as laptops and smart phones to improve the timeliness and quality of data entry. With strategy one, Probation will focus on increasing documented visits to the National Standard and will enhance data fidelity by enhancing quality and timeliness of data entry through increased use of CWS/CMS and technology. Probation will continue to maintain the quality of our visits by making sure the visits are being done to fidelity. A check list/report created by data entered in Enterprise Supervision will be utilized to evaluate and further monitor the fidelity. The reports will be reviewed monthly by the Senior Deputy Probation Officer with the Deputy Probation Officer entering the data in Enterprise Supervision and CWS/CMS.

Child Welfare/Probation Placement Initiatives

Lake County participates in the following State and Federally mandated Child Welfare and Probation initiatives.

SAFETY ORGANIZED PRACTICE (SOP):

Lake County has used SOP tools to help implement, explain, and allow clients and youth to better explain themselves. Lake County also uses SOP to help implement its new programs such as CANS. Specific elements of SOP include family engagement and assessment, behaviorally based case planning, transition planning, ongoing monitoring, and case plan adaptation as appropriate. Some of the specific services offered as part of SOP include Safety Mapping/Networks, effective safety planning at foster care entry and exit, capturing the Children's Voice, solution-focused interviewing, motivational interviewing, and case teaming.

FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT (FFPSA):

The Federal Government passed FFPSA February 2018 and California codified the requirements of FFPSA in Assembly Bill 153. The focus of FFPSA is to help children remain at home with prevention services, increase oversight over congregate care placements and, provide Aftercare for youth leaving congregate care. Implementation of FFPSA Part I and Part IV began in 2021. Lake County CWS has opted in to the AB 153/FFPSA Part I prevention services plan and is collaborating with Probation in the Community group created from the Lake County Children's Council called Resilient Lake County. This community group is creating the county prevention plan.

FFPSA Part IV established new requirements for youth placed in Short Term Residential Treatment Program including a Qualified Individual Assessment at Placement and at least Six Months of Aftercare upon discharge. As instructed by AB 153 Lake County CWS began utilizing QI assessments on October 1, 2021. Aftercare in Lake County will be Wraparound Services as specified in AB 153.

WRAPAROUND:

Wraparound is a team driven process that follows a strengths-based needs-driven approach. The Wraparound provider collaborates with CWS and Juvenile Probation and works directly with the family. The Service plan for each family is individualized, enhances strengths, uses community based services, honors family voice and choice, and focuses on achieving positive goals. Specific elements of the Wraparound model include case teaming, family and youth engagement,

individualized strength-based case planning, and transition planning. Child Welfare Services contracts with a Redwood Community Services, Inc. to provide AB 163 Wraparound Services. Beginning in 2022, this partner will also provide the Wraparound Services specified as aftercare in AB 153.

FAMILY WRAPAROUND:

In addition to the project wide interventions above, the Probation Department has added a second intervention called Family Wraparound. This program will be used to prevent out of home placement to families who are reunifying, with the goal of shortening time to reunification and to prevent reentry. This program will differ from the existing Wraparound program by having more flexibility to focus on the needs of the “family” to prevent entry or reentry to foster care rather than focus on the “identified child”.

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE / AB12:

Lake County began providing Extended Foster Care services in January of 2012. The goal of extended foster care is to assist foster youth in maintaining a safety net of support while experiencing independence in a secure and supervised living environment. The extended time as a non-minor dependent (NMD) can assist the youth in becoming better prepared for successful transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency through education and employment training.

INTEGRATED CORE PRACTICE MODEL:

CWS and Juvenile Probation are committed to the values and the ten guiding practice principles of the Integrated Core Practice model. On December 16th 2020 UC Davis conducted a training to ensure all staff were trained and aware of the integrated Core Practice model. CWS and Juvenile Probation continue to work with UC Davis to ensure all incoming staff are trained in the Integrated Core Practice Model.

As specified in ICPM all case plans are family driven and youth guided. Child Family Team meeting occur frequently with an interdisciplinary team. This practice promotes family voice and choice and to develop natural supports for the benefit of the youth and family. Working with community supports and other county agencies CWS ensures a team based strength based practice for youth and families.

RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL PROGRAM:

As part of the state mandated Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), each California County had to establish a Resource Family Approval (RFA) program by January 1, 2017. The primary goal of CCR

is to ensure adequate services and supports are provided to children in foster care across all placement settings and to limit the length of time children are placed in group homes. Lake County CWS is has a strong and viable RFA program.

Lake County CWS have two RFA Social Workers who perform all RFA tasks. The unit assists resource families with the application process, provides support to resource families, monitoring placements, and managing training logistics. CWS has also contracted with an electronic program called Binti that allows applicants to complete everything on-line. This unit also participates in many local events in an attempt to recruit more families.

SPECIALTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

CWS and Juvenile Probation partners with Lake County Behavioral Health Services on a variety of different services for youth and families. These services can include substance use disorder services, in-county counselling, partnering with presumptive transfer for youth placed in other counties, and QI assessments for youth needing congregate care placements in compliance with AB 153. CWS Social Workers collaborate with LCBHS staff closely for all dependent youth including a weekly standing call between the two agencies to address the individual needs of each youth who have been referred to LCBHS.

LEVEL OF CARE PROTOCOL PART 3:

In accordance with ACL 21-17, the final phase of the Level of Care Protocol has been enacted. Training and monitoring of level of care rate of determination and provision have been adjusted to accommodate this change.

FURS:

Lake County CWS in collaboration with Juvenile Probation and Behavioral Health Services (LCBHS) created and implemented the FURS Mobile Response System Plan Framework in May of 2021. Staff received 4-day in-person de-escalation training in August and September of 2021. The FURS team will adjust the policy to meet the needs of our community. Lake County staff services analyst participates in the FURS Quarterly Meetings with the State.

AB 2083 CHILD AND YOUTH SYSTEM OF CARE:

AB 2083 required that an Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be finalized by mid-2021. CWS helmed this endeavor and met with all required community partners to develop the MOU. This MOU promotes collaboration across the system to provide trauma informed care for youth and families, including timely access to all necessary services. The MOU was

completed on 7/15/2021 signed by leaders from the following departments CWS, Juvenile Probation, LCBHS, Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC), and the Lake County Office of Education (LCOE) as well as Redwood Community Services (RCS). This MOU addressed systemic barriers to entry to services, and demonstrates our long history of interdepartmental collaboration.

OCAP

PRIORITIZATION OF DIRECT SERVICE NEEDS:

This section discusses the processes for determining the use of Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds.

The process for determining the use of PSSF funds are used for Differential Response (DR) with two contractors; Lake Family Resource Center (LFRC) and Lake County Office of Education (LCOE), through June 2023. CAPIT funds have been contracted with LFRC to offer the evidence-based Nurturing Parenting Program in the community.

CBCAP funding is provided to the local Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) called the Lake County Children's Council. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code section 18966.1, counties with less than \$20,000 per year in the County Children's Trust Fund (CCTF) must use CBCAP funds to ensure the CCTF balance is at least \$20,000. This applies to Lake County, where the birth certificate and Kids' Plates fees amount to approximately \$5,000 per year. Therefore, it was decided that all CBCAP funds are deposited to the CCTF, which is the sole source of funding for the Children's Council. Thus, it is the Children's Council which determines how to use CBCAP funds. The Children's Council is the leader in child abuse prevention activities during the month of April.

Members participated in the CSA, where county needs were identified, including wide-spread poverty and substance abuse, which are often generational in families, as well as lack of access to mental health and other services. Research shows these issues are often the result of, or at the very least impacted by, trauma. The Children's Council's goal to prevent abuse and neglect, created a new subcommittee called, "resilient lake county".

PSSF funding is divided among four components with a requirement that at least 20% of funding be spent in each. The two components Family Preservation and Community Based Family Support Services align perfectly with the Differential Response (DR) program, a pre-placement, preventive services program. The populations served by DR are families at risk of child abuse and/or neglect, and are referred by CWS to the community partners contracted to provide DR services. DR services include case management, home visiting, concrete supports, parenting education, transportation, domestic violence services, and referrals to mental health, substance abuse programs, legal services, etc.

The third component of PSSF is Time Limited Family Reunification component which applies to families with a CWS or Juvenile Probation case. The funds will be used for in-house parent engagement and empowerment groups for parent clients. These groups are an integral part of family reunification services for parents by providing social worker facilitated peer support groups for parents working their case plans to reunify with their children.

The fourth component of PSSF Adoption Promotion and Support Services funding will be used to remove financial barriers to adoptions by paying for Live Scans, travel expenses, training costs, and respite care for adoptive families, including relative and NREFM adoptions. In order to effect systemic change and better services for CWS clients, the department will continue to recruit to fill empty social worker positions. By filling these positions we will improve our services for clients and bolster family finding and concurrent planning practices.