



ROOTS & WINGS

Give a child roots to grow
and wings to fly

May, 2010

Santa Cruz County, California

Background

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- Santa Cruz County California
 - County of a quarter million people on coast of California
 - Liberal Community
 - Overall Population
 - 57% White; 35% Hispanic; 5% Asian; 1% African American; 1.9% multi race
 - Child Population
 - 36% White; 56% Hispanic



Goals

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- Recruit concurrent and adoptive resource families who are reflective of children in foster care.
- Ensure resource families are satisfied with services and support.
- Ensure children are transitioned to permanent homes in a timely manner.



Project Structure

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Core Project Team

- ▣ Manager
- ▣ Coordinator
- ▣ Analysts
- ▣ Contracted Partners
 - Resource Family Specialist (Recruiter)
 - 2 Resource Family Liaisons
 - Permanency Partner

Committees

- ▣ Operations
- ▣ Advisory

Where are we starting?

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Recruit concurrent and adoptive resource families who are reflective of children in foster care.

Children in foster care (not kin)

- The characteristics of children specifically in foster homes 2007-2009 were examined.
 - 36% were ages 0-5
 - 21% were ages 6-10
 - 20% were ages 11-14
 - 23% were ages 15-18

 - 52% were Hispanic
 - 39% were White
 - 5% were African American

Families

- 40 Active Foster Families
 - 51% were Latino and 39% white
 - All 40 were available for young children ages 0-5 (only need 19)
 - 23 were available for children age 6-10 (only need 11)
 - 6 were available for children over 11 (need 22)
 - 11 were interested in being a concurrent permanent option for a child
 - Fairly proportional over geographic area

What have we begun?

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- Recruit concurrent and adoptive resource families who are reflective of children in foster care.
 - Media
 - Television
 - Print
 - Social Networking
 - Collaborated with new partners
 - Contracted with a individual to be Resource Family Specialist dedicated to recruitment
 - Orientations in the Community
 - Usage of Empty Buildings
 - Incentive Award System
 - Recruitment Card



Where are we starting?

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Ensure resource families are satisfied with services/support

Social Workers

- About 92% of respondents stated the child's social worker treated them with respect, and a similar percentage stated this about the licensing worker
- About 70% of respondents agreed that the child's social worker returned calls within two days, while over 25% disagreed. About 80% of respondents agreed that the licensing worker returned calls this quickly, and 19% disagreed

Case Involvement

- Caregivers were asked whether they felt adequately involved in case planning. Only 60% indicated that they felt adequately involved in the case planning process for the child, and almost 40% did not feel adequately involved

What have we begun?

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- Ensure resource families are satisfied with services and support.
 - Contracted with Family Resource Centers
 - Volunteers (Wings)
 - Coffee Connections
 - Relative/NFERM Training



Where are we starting?

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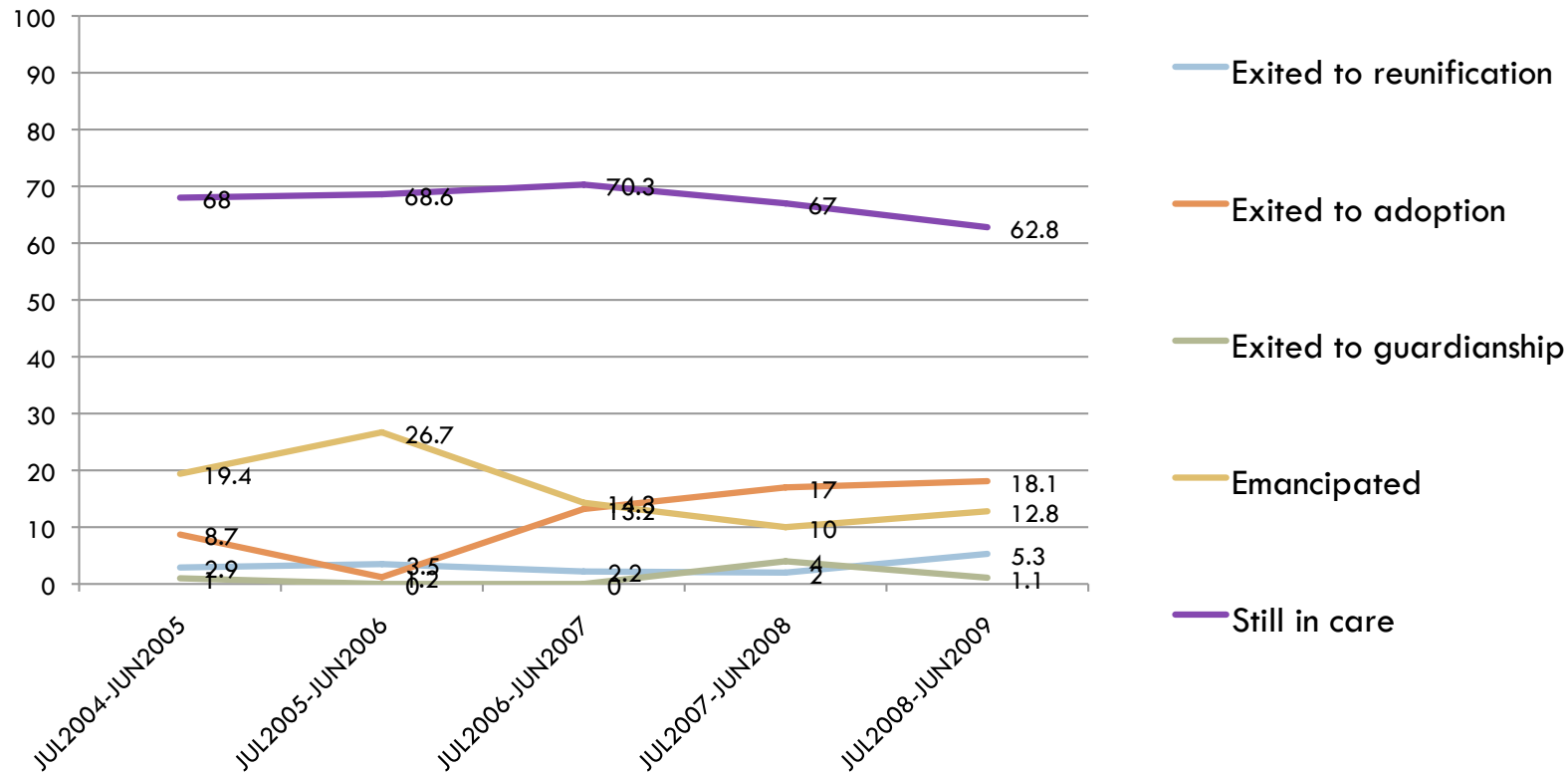
- Ensure children are transitioned to permanent homes in a timely manner.
 - Assessed practices
 - “This was the least resistant system that I have engaged with to date.”
 - “Strong belief in the importance of reunification by all staff. There is an overall belief that positive outcomes for children and youth are often achieved when they able to reunify with their biological families.”
 - Bob Herne, MSW Permanency Practice Consultant



Permanency

OF ALL CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE FOR 24 MONTHS OR LONGER, WHAT PERCENT WERE DISCHARGED TO A PERMANENT HOME BY THE END OF THE YEAR AND PRIOR TO TURNING 18?

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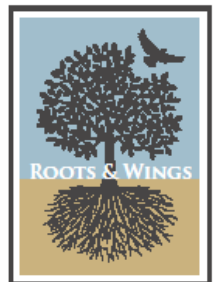


For children in care two years or more, there has been improvement in the percent of adoptions and a decrease in the percent of children emancipating from care. The percentage of children remaining in care, by the end of the year, has decreased slightly.

What have we started?

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- Permanency Values Discussions/Trainings
- Created New Permanency practices
 - Permanency Systems Workgroup
 - Permanency Practice Consultation Group
- Contracted with Permanency Partner
- Social Worker Field Guide
- Child Centered Recruitment



Lessons Learned

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- Staffing
- Social Workers View of Success
- Communication
- Lack of Integration of the Adoptions Unit



Next Steps

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- ❑ Complete outreach and marketing materials and train partners assisting the initiative with outreach
- ❑ Host support/recruitment events at Family Resource Centers
- ❑ Monitor staff conducting revised concurrent planning procedures and revise concurrent planning policy to reflect lessons learned
- ❑ Discussions will occur among adoptions workers and family reunification workers

