

# Review of the Sacramento County Child Protective Services Division



## Presentation to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors

### PRESENTED BY:

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# Scope and Methodology

- Review of CPS operations.
  - Purpose: To evaluate whether CPS was adequately and sufficiently providing services to families and children to allow it to meet its mission.
- Reviewed targeted areas involved in cases or referrals pertaining to child fatalities.
  - Intake, Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Informal Supervision, and Family Reunification.
- Reviewed CPS work activities: Data analyses, employee survey, focus group discussions, individual interviews, review of policies and procedures, and detailed case review of child fatalities.

# Summary of Findings

## State Outcome Measures

- Sacramento CPS performance has decreased in recent years.
- Decreased performance resulted in higher fiscal and personnel costs for Sacramento County.
- Decreased performance also results in negative outcomes for some families and children.

# Summary of Findings

## Internal Performance Metrics

- CPS staff are not always using the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool when required or are completing the assessments late.
- CPS often did not assign higher-risk referrals to social workers for investigation until after critical deadlines had elapsed.

# Summary of Findings

## Child Fatality Case Review

- Number of critical incidents is increasing in Sacramento County.
  - County had 13 critical incidents in the ten-year period of 1997 to mid-2007.
  - County had ten critical incidents in the 15-month period of late 2007 to the end of calendar year 2008.
- In reviewing seven critical incidents for children known to CPS, social workers failed to comply with one or more division requirements in every case.

# Summary of Findings

## Workload Analysis

- The number of higher-risk referrals (those designated for immediate response) has increased in recent years.
- CPS social workers are filing petitions for a larger percentage of families.
- Average caseloads are increasing.
- CPS has high vacancy, absentee, and turnover rates.

# Summary of Findings

## Caseload Analysis

- Some social workers are carrying caseloads that are more than double the state's recommended and funded levels of children.
- The trend from December 2007 to December 2008 has been for case-carrying social workers to have a larger number of cases.

# Summary of Findings

## Operational Guidelines

- Many guidelines are not reliable, effective, objective, and/or understandable.
- CPS guidelines include a mix of outdated and conflicting guidance.
- CPS lacks a process to periodically review and update its guideline documents.

# Summary of Findings

## Procedures

- CPS procedures have a high number of handoffs and a large dependence on paper documentation.
- In the absence of clear guidelines, staff and supervisors decide which of the required activities they will perform.
- CPS places more emphasis and focus on documentation and desk work than it does on meeting with children and families and performing out-of-office fieldwork.

# Summary of Findings

## Implementation of Prior Recommendations

- Since 1996, the CPS Oversight Committee has issued eight reports with 281 recommendations.
- CPS has failed to implement effective solutions and many prior-year findings continue to exist.

# Summary of Findings

## Leadership and Communication

- Executive managers do not function as strategic leaders within the organization.
- Communication issues and staff resistance impair service delivery improvements.

# Summary of Findings

## Technology and Resources

- CPS has a continuing problem with obtaining sufficient technology and resources for staff.
- Although CPS needs additional staff, increasing personnel without addressing system issues may not resolve excessive caseload issues.

# Summary of Findings

## Human Resources

- Staff believe that there is a large problem with discipline taken for employees who perform poorly.
- Poor guidelines make it difficult for supervisors to properly discipline “problem” employees.
- Low morale is pervasive throughout the division.

# Overarching Recommendation

- The County must hold CPS responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive change management plan.
  - Because of the CPS' past failure to achieve substantive improvements to service delivery, the County needs to strongly consider bringing in external assistance to lead the change development efforts.
  - Implementing the recommendations can result in fiscal savings to help fund change efforts.

# Recommendations for CPS

- Develop a comprehensive five-year strategic plan with associated performance measures.
- Re-emphasize the importance of and require staff to use SDM assessment tools as designed.
- Review all written guidelines to identify and remove duplicated, redundant, or outdated instructions.

# Recommendations for CPS

- Map and re-engineer core child welfare processes to increase efficiency.
- Re-evaluate workloads and staffing levels to determine the number of additional staff needed, if any.
- Annually evaluate anticipated workloads by staff and unit and reallocate positions as needed.

# Recommendations for CPS

- Work with state and information technology units to identify possible improvements to the County's access to and use of the CWS/CMS.
- Work with state and information technology units to identify ways to improve staff's access to electronic files, case notes, and CWS/CMS while in the field.