



county of Santa Cruz 203

HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY

CECILIA ESPINOLA, ADMINISTRATOR

1000 EMELINE ST., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060

(408) 454-4130 OR 454-4045

FAX: (408) 454-4642

June 15, 1998

Agenda; June 23, 1998

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz

701 Ocean Street

Santa Cruz, California

1998 CSAC CHALLENGE AWARDS

Dear Members of the Board:

Each year the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) sponsors special Challenge Awards to recognize California county governments for innovative and creative programs and services to their citizens. A total of ten awards will be presented at the Association's Annual meeting in November. In collaboration with the Juvenile Probation Department and Children's Mental Health, the Human Resources Agency has prepared the attached application for an award. Our entry describes the "Interagency Out-of-Home Placement Alternatives" strategies implemented by our three departments beginning in December, 1996. Your Board has received several reports on these efforts which have resulted in reduced foster home and group home costs for child welfare services court dependents and juvenile court wards. In order to apply for a Challenge Award, CSAC requires authorization from the County Board of Supervisors.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the County to enter the CSAC Challenge Awards Program for 1998.

Very truly yours,

CECILIA ESPINOLA

Administrator

CE/MS(n:\hra\board\csacaward.wpd)

RECOMMENDED:

Susan A. Mauriello

County Administrative Officer

Attachments

cc: Probation Department
Children's Mental Health

1998 CSAC Challenge Awards**Entry Form**

County Name: County of Santa Cruz

Contact/Title: Mark Lane, Division Director

Mailing Address: Human Resources Agency
Adult, Family & Children's Services
1400 Emeline Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Phone: (408) 454-4361

FAX: (408) 330-454-4268

E-Mail: scruez.hra011@hw1.cahwnet.gov

Title of Entry: Interagency Out-of Home Placement Alternatives

Project Name: Same

Problem/Challenge. Over the past several years, Santa Cruz County has grappled with the difficult challenge of rapidly rising out-of-home placement costs. Like most California counties, we have struggled with the dilemma of keeping children and communities safe in a social environment marked by increasingly serious abuse and neglect situations and rising juvenile crime. Despite our “best practice” efforts to prevent out-of-home placement and/or reunify children with their parents as quickly as possible, our county’s reliance on the foster care system grew dramatically, straining our financial resources and prolonging the disruption in children’s lives. Over a five year period, from 1992 to 1997, Santa Cruz County’s AFDC-FC (foster care) costs increased more than 70% for child welfare and juvenile probation cases.

Solution. In the Fall of 1996, the County’s Child Welfare Services, Juvenile Probation and Children’s Mental Health departments convened as an interagency work group with the goal of developing effective solutions to the problem. The group developed an analysis of the factors contributing to escalating placement costs, and explored creative strategies for intervention. Desirable outcomes were determined: 1) more children will be in a permanent, safe and stable family setting; 2) fewer children will be in high-end group care/institutions; 3) length of stay in foster home and group home care will be reduced; and 4) families will believe individualized service plan meets their needs and take ownership in plan/process. The interagency group designed several collaborative strategies based on a system of care approach. Financing for strategies are a mix of federal EPSDT, Title IV-E, TANF and County general funds.

1. Supportive Intervention Services (SIS). Child Welfare Services has partnered with Children’s Mental Health and a local non-profit service provider (Parents Center). The model includes ten SIS counselor/clinicians who are co-located on the same campus as CWS. Wraparound services are designed to support the CWS case plan, with the goals of preventing out-of-home placement, reducing the length of stay, or step-down to a lower level of placement. Caseloads are small (10 - 15 children), services are flexible and largely home-based, and close coordination between social worker, SIS staff and the family is emphasized. Family Group Conferencing and a pre-placement review committee

process have been incorporated into the SIS design.

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2. Graduated Return to Opportunities Within Family & Community (GROW). Juvenile Probation has also teamed with Children's Mental Health and a local non-profit (Youth Services) to divert court wards from high cost group home placements. The GROW team includes three dedicated probation officers and six counselor/clinicians. The model relies on intensive supervision, treatment/rehabilitative services, healthy alternatives and accountability to maintain court wards with their families and communities. A pre-placement screening committee ensures that community-based alternatives are thoroughly explored and utilized whenever appropriate.

3. KIDS (Kids Interagency Data System). The collaborative developed the first multi-agency data base of its kind in the State. KIDS is an Access interactive system which tracks activities related to all children in placement as well as high-risk children in other prevention programs. The system allows the departments to coordinate and analyze information on caseload and placement trends, fiscal analysis, and program effectiveness.

97/98 Budget. 986,465 federal&ate EPSDT--Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis & Treatment
95,376 Title IVE/TANF replacement funds
331,823 County General Funds
1,413,664 Total

Results. Foster care costs were rising at a rate of 14% per year for child welfare cases. At the end of the first year of SIS, this trend had clearly leveled off. In FY 97/98, AFDC-FC costs for CWS placements increased by less than 1%. Within the first year, successful outcomes (prevent placement, early return or step-down) were demonstrated for 55 of 99 cases enrolled.

For probation cases, FY 97/98 placement costs declined by nearly 50% over the previous year. The GROW program, which has been operational for more than a year, can be largely credited with achieving these cost avoidance outcomes. In the first year, 55 participants were served: 30 of these cases were diverted from placement and 22 achieved a shorter than average length of stay. Although serious recidivism of participants has been minimal (90% have committed no new felonies); long term recidivism success has not yet been demonstrated.

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Estimated 97/98 County cost avoidance for SIS & GROW programs: \$615,000.

BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION NO.

On the motion of Supervisor
duly seconded by Supervisor
the following resolution is adopted

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY TO ENTER
THE CSAC CHALLENGE AWARDS PROGRAM FOR 1998

WHEREAS, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) is sponsoring the CSAC Challenge Awards; and

WHEREAS, the County of Santa Cruz desires to participate in the 1998 Challenge Awards; and

WHEREAS, the County is submitting one application for consideration by CSAC and this is titled "Interagency Out-of-Home Placement Alternatives;" and

WHEREAS, the County agrees to the program's requirements and responsibilities as set forth by CSAC for entering the awards program;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz is authorized, on its behalf, to submit the attached application to CSAC for the Challenge Awards program.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this day of , 1998, by the following vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS
NOES: SUPERVISORS
ABSENT: SUPERVISORS

Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors

ATTEST: _____
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

James M. Scott

Asst. County Counsel