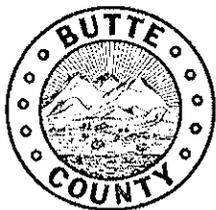


COUNTY OF BUTTE

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES



CATHI GRAMS

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July 25, 2011

Honorable Steven J. Howell, Presiding Judge
Butte County Superior Court
One Court Street
Oroville, CA 95965



Re: Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) Director Response to the 2010-2011 Grand Jury Final Report

Honorable Judge Howell:

Penal Code Section 933 and 933.05 provides that the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body. The Board of Supervisors, as the governing body of the County of Butte, will provide its response to the 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report by the statutory deadline.

BUTTE COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRAM

Grand Jury Findings

F1: Close contact with supervisors is an essential feature of social work during the initial phase of decision-making. Although social workers will always hear back from a supervisor, sometimes the response takes time, which leads to frustration and distraction for the social worker.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F2: In an urgent situation, a delay in response time for a social worker potentially places a child at further risk.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F3: The Structured Decision-Making tool is a useful guide to screeners in their information gathering and decision-making as they process an incoming report. Investigators are less clear about how SDM benefits their work.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F4: Decisions made by social workers are driven by the information they have access to about a particular case. In the rare case of a child with no background or history

available through routinely consulted resources, social workers must base their decisions on their own experienced judgment, the SDM framework and other evidence-based tools, and consultations with peers and Supervisors.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F5: Social workers responding to urgent situations in rural and/or rough-terrain areas of the County need reliable means of contacting their supervisors and the Children's Services offices.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F6: Social workers responding to urgent situations in rural and/or rough-terrain areas of the County need reliable means of transportation for themselves and any children they may need to transport.

The respondent agrees with the finding.

Grand Jury Recommendations

R1: Assess the timeliness of supervisor contact with social workers, to ensure that delays in supervisor response do not compromise the social workers' ability to perform their work with appropriate urgency. If it is determined that there are unacceptable and avoidable delays in supervisor responses, develop a plan to resolve the problem.

The recommendation has not been fully implemented, but will be implemented in the future as follows:

- In April 2011, Children's Services completed an organizational restructure of how staff and job functions were assigned to work "units" to enhance the availability of supervisors to social work staff. This restructure has shifted unit assignments from "blended units" to more structured units in which one supervisor has social workers assigned to the unit that all perform the same or similar duties.
- The department has filled temporarily vacant Supervisory positions on a timelier basis by utilizing out of class staffing.
- An analysis will be conducted in January 2012 utilizing staff feedback, to determine if these changes to business practice have assisted in remediating the identified problem.

R2: Evaluate how SDM is used by all social workers within Children's Services, and the ways that this protocol benefits their work. Data and conclusions should be shared with all personnel.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future as follows:

- The business practice expectation that SDM is to be utilized in all aspects of case work will be implemented in August 2011.
- SDM training has been scheduled for all social work staff with a completion date of February 2012. The scheduled training for staff and supervisors will be assignment specific so the correlation between the assessment tool and the social worker's role correlate.
- Ongoing use and compliance with SDM will be monitored on a monthly basis with the use of Safe Measures, a data collection tool, by Administrative staff and Supervisors.

R3: Provide social workers with reliable means of contact with supervisors and Children's Services offices, especially in rural or rough-terrain areas of the County.

The recommendation requires further analysis to investigate potential alternatives to communication tools including but not limited to the use of handi-talks similar to those used by local Law Enforcement and Fire Service, satellite telephones, and texting capabilities. This analysis will be completed by November 1, 2011. A subsequent implementation plan for deployment of the selected communication devices will be implemented by February 2012.

R4: Provide access to reliable and sufficient means of transportation that are suitable for children's Services' work in the entire County, including rural or rough-terrain areas.

The recommendation has been implemented. In June 2011, two additional vehicles were purchased for staff to use in rural/rough terrain. One of the vehicles purchased was a four wheel drive SUV and the second vehicle was a large capacity van to better accommodate large sibling groups that require transportation. In fiscal year 2012, an additional four wheel drive SUV will be purchased.

Sincerely,



Cathi Grams, Director
Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services