

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA

For the Agenda of:
June 17, 2008

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: Report Back On Savings Result From Placing Foster Children In Permanent Placement Homes

Contact: Lynn Frank, Director, 875-2002

BACKGROUND

Destination Family has been an invaluable part of changing the culture, the philosophy and practice around youth permanence. As a project, it was initially designed to step youth down from group home placement to less restrictive, more permanent placements, ideally with adoption and guardianship as desired outcomes. Due to the challenges associated with recruitment, support and training of therapeutic resource families, this was changed to identifying Planned Permanent Living Arrangement youth, ages 12 to 17+ with no permanent plan and drawing referrals from social workers and caseloads in Permanency Services to identify these youth.

DISCUSSION

On September 30, 2003, Sierra Adoptions was awarded a five-year Adoption Opportunities Federal Grant in the amount of \$1,750,000 for the Destination Family–Youth Permanency Project. The grant partners include California Department of Social Services, Sacramento District Adoption Office and Sierra Adoption Services. Sacramento County is the designated fiscal agent for this contract, in other words, we serve as pass-thru agent only. The grant is due to expire on September 29, 2008.

Destination Family is a process within a multi-faceted approach, including other youth permanency practices such as Heart Gallery, Permanency Partners, Capitol Kids Are Waiting, etc. In the past four and a half years, 122 youth have been referred. Ten have been adopted, with two in adoptive placement. Six have completed the guardianship process. Sacramento County's overall process finalized approximately 43 adoptions for youth, ages 12 to 17+ years in 2007. Seven youth between ages 12 to 17+ years have finalized from January to March, 2008.

Over the four and a half years, Sacramento County committed the time and effort of six different program managers, a program planner, a program specialist, two Human Services Supervisor IIIs, as well as many Permanency Services and Adoption social workers involved in the process of identifying, referring and continuing the work of youth permanency, within and outside of the services of Destination Family. This collaboration has evolved and formalized and a highly functioning operations committee meets regularly to review the progress of youth for whom there is no identified permanent plan. This process will continue. The infrastructure is built. Sacramento County has engaged in honest discourse regarding the need to bring additional partners to the table to increase community partner engagement in youth permanency. This has involved Sierra Adoption, EMQ, Lilliput Children's Services, Aspira, Families First and many others. Each potential partner struggles with the need to bring resources to the table as this effort will continue, with or without funding. Partners have already begun to provide training to make youth permanency "how we do business."

The most recent Destination Family report confirmed Sacramento County's intent to continue youth permanency as both practice and philosophy. Michele McGibbon, LPC Consulting, states in the body of the report that *"Over the past four years, it has become clear that the goal in Sacramento County is to find permanence for all children and youth in the Child Welfare System. However with two projects sunseting and the reconfiguration of a larger group ("Next Steps to Permanency"), Sacramento County is at a crossroads with the opportunity to expand permanency beyond the scope of Destination Family. Sacramento County's role is to bring resources and partners together. Youth permanency is a practice that needs to be embedded and established as a core practice; the question now is simply what that practice will look like. Reduced budgets are a concern, but Destination Family partners do agree that it is better to continue in a different, even more bare-bones form, rather than stopping the momentum altogether and trying to re-start when funding appears."*

The task of capacity building for us to make this our regular practice has been independent of funding. Savings from placing foster children in permanent placement homes will not diminish as a result of the discontinuation of the Destination Family Grant.

The annual cost savings result from placing 10 foster children in permanent placement homes through the Adoption process is estimated at \$69,282. The savings are derived from the difference in net County cost between the average Foster Care Placement cost and Adoption Assistance cost.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVED:
TERRY SCHUTTEN
County Executive

LYNN FRANK, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

By: _____
PENELOPE CLARKE, Administrator
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Attachment
Attachment 1 - Foster Children