

County of San Diego

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Child Welfare Services Annual Report

FY 2021-2022



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Introduction

The County of San Diego is a geographically vast and diverse area, comprised of 3.3 million residents. One of eight service departments, Child Welfare Services (CWS) is housed under the umbrella of the integrated Health and Human Services Agency, providing necessary services to the most vulnerable San Diegans. CWS adheres to the County Mission and Values to strengthen our local communities with innovative, inclusive, and data-driven services through a skilled and supported workforce. Employees of the County of San Diego abide by the motto, “The noblest motive is the public good,” and strive to adhere to guiding principles centered around the belief that all we do should be for and created in partnership with the people we serve. In addition to this core belief, the County of San Diego functions under guiding management principles of strategic planning, operational planning, evaluation and accountability, continuous collaboration, and employee investment and satisfaction to operate in a manner consistent with these values.

Only through a [collective effort](#)—in which all of us work together toward a shared purpose—can meaningful change be achieved in a region as large and diverse as San Diego County.

As part of the County of San Diego’s vision and shared purpose, CWS is committed to strengthening families by providing trauma-informed prevention and protection services to over 4,700 vulnerable children, their families and communities across the county annually, to reduce child abuse and neglect. This work is guided by CWS’ practice framework, Safety Enhanced Together (SET), with a vision that every child should grow up safe and nurtured. Three priorities guide CWS’ work with children and families:

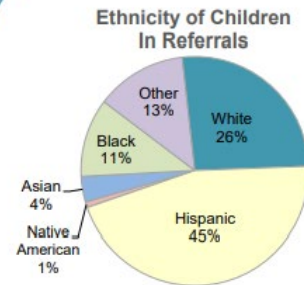
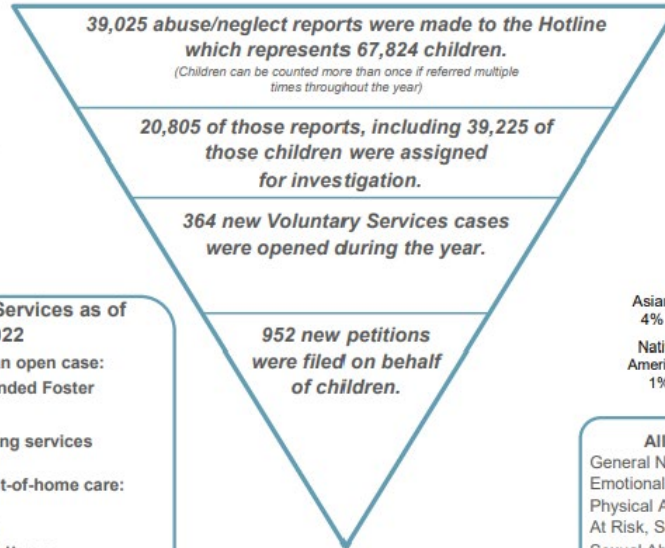
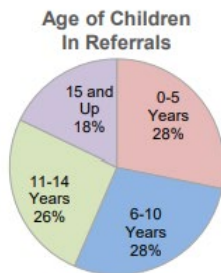
1. Safely stabilizing and preserving families; and if that is not possible,
2. Safely caring for children and reunifying children to their families of origin; and if reunification is not possible,
3. Safely supporting the development of permanency and lifelong relationships for children and youth.

CWS meets the needs of children, their families and the community through numerous programs that serve families countywide and ensure we are responsive to diverse community interests. In all regions of the county, CWS conducts investigations of abuse and neglect, provides case management services to families receiving voluntary services, family maintenance cases, and family reunification cases. Other CWS programs include Adoptions, Child Abuse Hotline, Extended Foster Care, Indian Specialty Unit, Legal Services, Open Case Investigations Unit, Policy and Program Support, Polinsky Children’s Center, Residential Services, Resource Family Approval, and San Pasqual Academy.

CWS has 1,379 total staff, 844 of which provide direct services to families and an additional 505 staff who support agency operations. The information shared through this report reflects data for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 (FY 21-22).

Countywide Data

Child Welfare Services Fiscal Year 2021/22 Statistics



Children Receiving Services as of July 1, 2022

2,967 children and youth in an open case:

- 255 young adults in Extended Foster Care (EFC)
- 607 children were receiving services in their home.
- 2,105 children were in out-of-home care:
 - 35% Kinship Care
 - 54% Non-kinship care
 - 27% Resource Family Homes
 - 11% Guardian and Court Specified Homes
 - 9% Foster Family Agency Homes
 - 4% Group Home
 - 2% San Pasqual Academy
 - 2% Temporary Shelter Care Facility
 - 3% Adoptions pending/finalized
 - 8% Other (e.g. trial home visits with parents, non-foster care placements)

Allegation Types

General Neglect	43%
Emotional Abuse	31%
Physical Abuse	29%
At Risk, Sibling Abused	21%
Sexual Abuse	21%
Severe Neglect	2%
Caretaker Absence/Incapacity	1%
Exploitation	0.4%

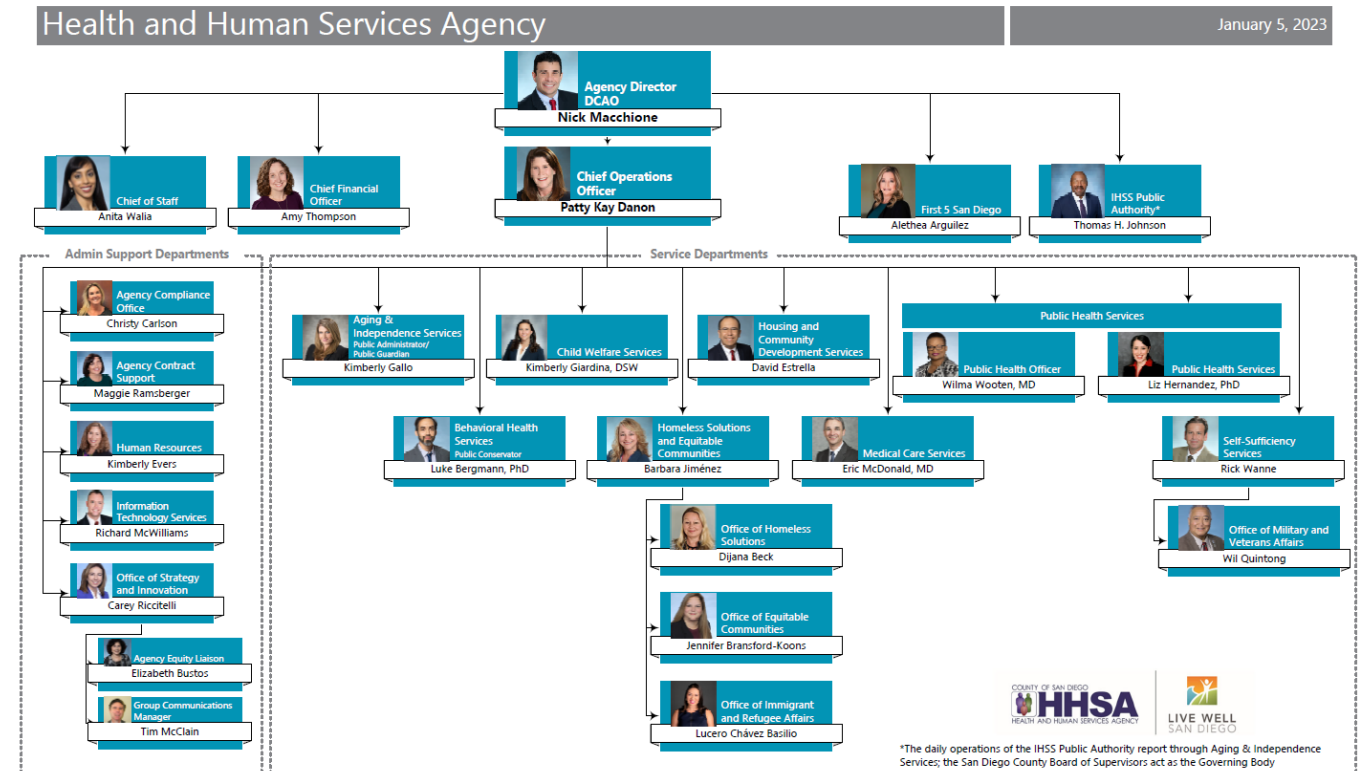
Children may have multiple allegations, therefore the percents will not equal 100%

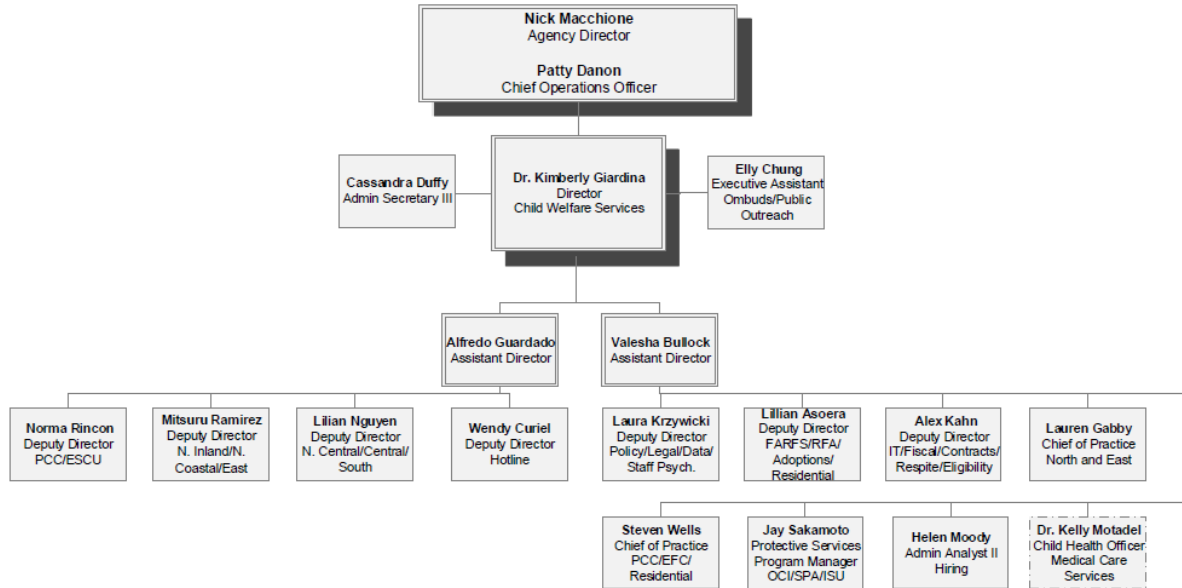
232 children were placed in adoptive homes during FY2021/22

For more information contact:
Laura Krzywicki, Deputy Director, Child Welfare Services at Laura.Krzywicki@edocounty.ca.gov

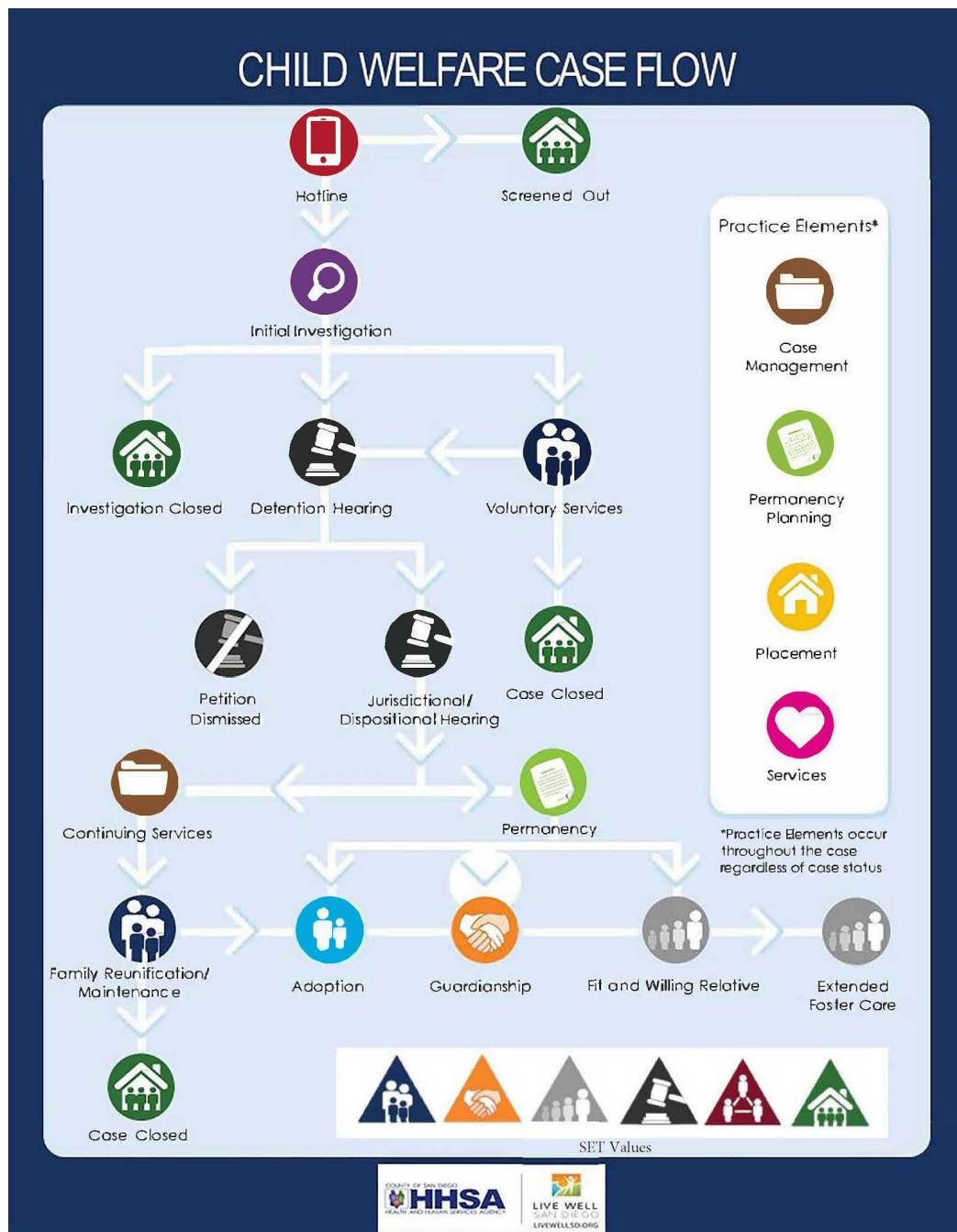
Sources: CWS/CMS Data
11-Jul-22

Organizational Charts





Child Welfare Case Flow



The Child Welfare Case Flow graphic depicts the flow of referrals and cases through the child welfare system. Children enter the system through an initial call to the Child Abuse Hotline, where the information is screened and a determination is made as to whether an in-person response is needed. An investigation then takes place to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred. If so, a court ordered or voluntary services case may be opened. CWS sets as its first priority to safely maintain children with their families, reunifying children with their family of origin, and if that is not possible, supports an alternate path for permanency.

Safety Enhanced Together Values

A practice framework is a way to outline and describe an agency's approach to social work practice with children and families. This is especially important in child welfare to provide a clear mission and purpose to staff and the community. CWS' practice framework is called Safety Enhanced Together (SET) and identifies six core values for the work that we do. Our values focus on the importance of relationships with children, youth, families, resource families, community and legal partners, and our workforce. Safety Enhanced Together aligns with the California Core Practice Model.

Value One - Relationships with Children, Youth, and Families are the Foundation

Value One acknowledges that meaningful, collaborative relationships with children, youth, and families are the foundation of the work we do in CWS. The information below demonstrates our commitment across CWS in how we actualize this value.

The Child Abuse Hotline

The Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) is available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and is operated by a team of social workers who process reports of alleged abuse, neglect and/or exploitation of youth under 18 years of age. The Hotline receives an average of more than 4,000 calls each month. Each call is evaluated for appropriateness of assignment and is either assigned to a regional office for investigation or screened out. The Hotline screener may also provide referrals for community-based services.

- Total number of calls: 68,506
- Completed calls: 47,610
- Percentage of Abandoned/Dropped calls: 31%
- Average wait times: 21 minutes, 42 seconds
- Number of after-hours referrals assigned totaled 309. After-hours referrals are assigned from 4pm-11pm Monday-Friday and 8am-11pm on weekends.

Emergency Response

After calls are determined by the Hotline to meet criteria for investigation, they are assigned to a regional social worker for an in-person investigation based on the family's address. The investigation includes interviews with children, parents, witnesses, and collateral contacts, gathering background information and assessing the immediate safety and ongoing risk to the child. The social worker must assess for all types of abuse, not only what is alleged in the report. Once the social worker has completed the investigation, the referral outcome will be determined in one of three ways:

- Unfounded: the allegation of abuse or neglect is false, did not occur, or is accidental
- Inconclusive: the allegation of abuse or neglect may or may not have occurred and there is insufficient evidence to say that it absolutely occurred

- Substantiated: based upon the evidence, it is more likely than not the child was abused or neglected. Allegations closed as “Substantiated” may result in notice to the Department of Justice (excludes allegations for general neglect). In FY 21-22:
 - A total of 20,805 investigations were completed, representing 39,225 children
 - Of those, 94% did not require any further intervention
 - 6% closed as Substantiated
 - 38% closed as Inconclusive
 - 54% closed as Unfounded
 - Less than 2% were entered in error or were still open at the end of the FY
 - 83% of all referrals closed as “Situation Stabilized”
 - Of the 6% that required intervention, 27% of those children were able to remain safely in their home with services in place (Voluntary Services)



Intensive Family Preservation Program (IFPP)

IFPP provides short-term, intensive, in-home services to families. IFPP services attempt to mitigate the risk of further maltreatment and embraces CWS' top priority of safely stabilizing and preserving families. IFPP also provides support funds to promote the safety of children and assist the family in meeting the needs of their children. The funds may be used to assist in obtaining housing or household items needed to promote family stability and safety of the children and are available with or without an open IFPP case.

- There were 304 children, representing 174 families with open IFPP cases
- There were 368 families, with 846 children that received tangible or financial support totaling over \$98,300

Continuing Services

In the event that an investigation finds that abuse or neglect occurred and the Juvenile Court determines that the family is in need of further intervention, the case will be assigned to a case manager. The family will receive either family maintenance (child remains in the home) or family reunification (child is removed from the home) services for up to 12-18 months. The Juvenile Court reviews the case every six months to assess the family's progress on their case plan goals.

- Of 928 youth that entered the foster care system in FY 20-21, 239 achieved permanency timely (within 12 months) in FY 21-22. Of those, two achieved permanency through adoption, three through guardianship, and 234 through reunification.
- During FY 21-22, 614 youth achieved permanency. Of those, 308 achieved permanency through adoption, 75 through guardianship, and 231 through reunification.

Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings

CFT meetings empower youth, their families, and their support systems to provide input to the Juvenile Court and service providers about placement, services, and the needs of the youth in regards to education, mental health and overall well-being at critical decision points in the case. The CFT meeting involves shared decision-making regarding safety, placement, visitation and case planning for the youth and family. CFT meetings are collaborative, client-centered, and inclusive to the family and their network group.

As the contractor for CFT meetings, Fred Finch Youth Center received 3,675 referrals from CWS, for which 3,594 CFT meetings were completed. The table below lists the number of meetings completed for each region and program.

REGION/PROGRAM	MEETINGS COMPLETED
Adoptions	727
Central Region	447
Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (children five years and younger)*	308
East Region	420
Extended Foster Care	145
San Pasqual Academy	96
North Central Region	308
North Coastal Region	303
North Inland Region	351
Residential Services	103
South Region	386
TOTAL	3,594

Fred Finch Youth Center conducted 99% of CFT meetings within five business days of the CFT meeting due date and invited two or more of the family's natural supports to 100% of CFT meetings conducted.

*DSEP is a program that assesses and addresses the developmental and behavioral needs of children who enter foster care. If a social-emotional need is identified, DSEP may make a referral for a CFT meeting prior to the assigned social worker to ensure the child is supported.

Success Stories

Having limited contact for many years, a transgender youth in foster care had a chance to reconnect and develop a relationship with his father this past year. Upon being released from prison, the father was able to benefit from graduated visitation with his son through the dedicated efforts of the youth's social worker. The social worker helped facilitate their conversations as they got to know one another and adjusted to their "new" relationship. The father has been instrumental in supporting the youth in his transition from female to male, and has served as a guide and role

model providing the youth with a male perspective and insight. From shopping for toiletries, to haircuts and getting ready for prom, the youth's father has been close at hand, actively engaging in CFTs and advocating on behalf of his son. When pronouns were repeatedly used incorrectly for his son by a particular program staff, the father immediately educated the individual on the importance of acknowledging and honoring his son's identity. The father has been able to provide his son with healthy and positive coping skills as he experiences both physical and emotional changes in his transition. Over the past year, the father's acceptance and support of his son has led the youth to feel safe, comfortable and confident in his own body. The youth, who is both charismatic and personable, continues to be a leader among his peers and has been recognized in the community and by the Juvenile Court as a promising agent of change.

Value Two - Collaborative Partnerships with Kinship and Resource Families

Value Two focuses on collaborative partnerships with our kinship and resource families, ensuring that children in out-of-home care are supported. The information below demonstrates our commitment to actualize this value.

Placement, Foster Adoptive Resource Family Services (FARFS) and Resource Family Approval (RFA)

At times, children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect may require a higher level of intervention and are placed in protective custody under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court. When this occurs, CWS makes every effort to keep children in familiar environments, ideally placing them with kin.

Whether children are placed with family or a member of the community, all caregivers go through RFA, a standardized clearance and training process. Our FARFS team recruits families across the community to find a diverse, caring and trauma-informed pool of caregivers to provide children with safety, love, and a sense of belonging until the child can reunify with their family or reach permanency.

Once approved, resource families may be considered for placement of youth in foster care, although approval does not necessarily guarantee placement of a child.

- 38% of children/youth are placed with kin (which includes relatives or non-related extended family members)
- Trauma Informed Pre-Service trainings for resource parents were attended by 1,157 individuals and 904 individuals attended Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) trainings
- Placement stability is critical for continuity and overall success of children, which is measured by a placement stability rate that can be determined by calculating all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, and the number of moves they experience per 1,000 days in care. Locally, children in the foster care system in San Diego experienced 4.56 moves per 1,000, slightly more than the national performance standard of 4.12
- On average over 73% of all children in care were placed with all or some of their siblings
- Seven Tribally Approved Homes provided care for ten youth
- Six RFA homes that have Indian ancestry provided care for eleven youth
- RFA approved 415 emergency placements

- Events to support resource families, such as a computer giveaway and two QPI Appreciation events were held
- QPI Quarterly trainings and events for resource parents and social workers together are provided to promote teaming through effective communication and partnerships
 - July 2021—155 participants
 - October 2021—361 participants
 - December 2021—Holiday Resource Fair—91 participants
 - March 2022—81 participants
 - May 2022—QPI Appreciation Events—216 participants
- Some examples of outreach events held to recruit new resource families include:
 - February 25-27, 2022—Kummba Fest
 - March 4, 2022—Human Trafficking San Diego Summit
 - April 30, 2022—IEP Day: The Involved Exceptional Parents Conference
 - June 18, 2022—Cooper Family Juneteenth Event

Options for Recovery (Options)

Options is a program within FARFS that recruits and provides specialized training, support and respite care for resource families caring for children ages birth to five who are drug and/or alcohol exposed and/or HIV positive. Options resource families provide a welcoming and healthy home for children with enhanced opportunities for developmental growth through special care and services.

- 50 new Options families completed the training series along with 27 respite care providers, bringing the total number of Options-trained resource homes to 95

Adoption Assistance Program (AAP)

The AAP provides financial and medical coverage to facilitate the adoption of children who otherwise would remain in long-term foster care. AAP eligible children may receive federally funded benefits or non-federally funded benefits per state guidelines. The request for AAP benefits, the eligibility determination, benefit negotiation and execution of the AAP agreement must be completed prior to the adoption finalization.

- Assisted 6,385 youth and their families, providing a total of \$80,311,742 in support to adopted children, youth and their families
- As a result of finalized adoptions, 264 new cases were opened

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

The ICPC is a contract among member states and U.S. territories allowing them to work together to place youth in foster care across state lines while coordinating case management services and referrals to community resources.

- Approved 57 homes through the ICPC process, allowing children to be placed with relatives, parents, or non-related extended family members in other states

Polinsky Children's Center (PCC)

The A.B. & Jessie Polinsky Children's Center (PCC) serves as a 10-day Temporary Shelter Care Facility. PCC provides services to children ages zero to 17 years old who cannot safely remain with their family of origin due to abuse and/or neglect. PCC staff are committed to building positive relationships with the children in their care, the community, and resource families (relatives, non-related extended family members, foster homes) and aid in transitioning youth from temporary to stable care.

To help divert children from PCC, the Emergency Shelter Care Unit, housed at PCC, oversees the specialized Nurturing Evaluation Stabilization Team (NEST) Program. NEST was developed to coordinate family-based placement within 10 days of their first entry into PCC. The program includes up to 25 specially trained, resource families who receive transition support services and an incentivized reimbursement rate for children in their care. NEST families evaluate the individual needs of every child in their care to successfully match youth with a long-term placement and allow time for the youth's relatives to obtain approval for placement.

- PCC served 2,260 children
- 35 children were placed in NEST homes

Family Urgent Response System (FURS)

The FURS is a coordinated statewide system designed to provide timely phone-based, in-home, and in-person mobile responses to caregivers in need of support to stabilize placement and preserve the relationship of the caregiver and youth.

- FURS received and responded to 35 calls, 100% of which resulted in a stabilized placement

Success Stories

A youth experiencing a developmental disability on the Autism spectrum had been at PCC for several months without any placement when an experienced resource parent who normally only cares for girls decided to stretch beyond her comfort level and take placement of this sweet boy. The caregiver reported not having experience working with children on the spectrum, but was willing to educate herself and advocate for services that would help him thrive. She would often reach out to the placement unit to talk about her challenges, as well as the progress she had made with him. The caregiver supported both parents in the reunification process, and although the mother was not able to make sufficient progress in her services, the father was able to progress to unsupervised visits with the support of the caregiver.

When the caregiver learned about the untimely passing of his mother, she reached out to the primary worker and the placement unit for support, as she did not feel comfortable sharing the tragic news with the child. The assigned worker, with the support of maternal relatives, visited the home and informed the child about his mother's passing. They then referred him to therapeutic services so he could have a space to process his grief. The caregiver knew that the child had an infant sibling who had been in the care of their mother and now needed a safe home. While the caregiver was not able to take placement of the baby, she reached out to her friends in the community and quickly identified a home that could take placement and ensure constant sibling visits.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later another tragedy occurred when the father died unexpectedly. The caregiver reached out to the Agency for support, as she was feeling overwhelmed by the incredible amount of pain and grief the child had to endure. She herself was struggling with the loss of the two parents. Unfortunately, the child was not in therapy yet, so the assigned worker reached out to the Comprehensive Assessment and Stabilization Services (CASS) program director who personally supported the child and caregiver during this difficult time. The caregiver thanked the Agency for the support and stated they gave her the courage and strength to support the child through these difficult losses. The caregiver modeled trauma informed care from which

the child benefitted greatly. He has been emotionally supported and heard, as should every child in foster care.

Value Three – Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Full Potential and Develop Lifelong Relationships

Value Three recognizes that supporting children and youth to achieve success and develop lifelong relationships is vital to our vision of ensuring children grow up safe and nurtured. The information below demonstrates CWS' commitment in how we actualize this value.

Permanency Services

Achieving permanency for children who touch the child welfare system is a top priority, namely through reunifying children with their parents. However, at times that is not possible, and youth need to achieve permanency through other means. This may include adoption, guardianship, or long-term foster care, which includes the extended foster care and residential programs.

Adoptions Program

The Adoptions Program provides services related to permanency in a variety of ways, including completing adoptions assessments for youth in open dependency cases. Independent adoptions require an assessment for individuals who want to adopt non-dependent children. Stepparent adoptions provide assessments for children when a spouse/partner expresses a desire to adopt their stepchild.

- Number of Adoptions finalized:
 - Dependency Adoptions: 308
 - Independent Adoptions: 40
 - Stepparent Adoptions: 141

Guardianship

CWS provides support to children/youth who have guardianship established through the dependency process, probate court, and with non-relatives. Across probate, relative and non-relative guardianship options, 24 new guardianship cases were opened, bringing the total to 262 children/youth served through the Guardianship Program countywide.

Extended Foster Care (EFC)

EFC allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster care until age 21, as nonminor dependents (NMDs). NMDs may leave EFC and re-enter the program, up until age 21.

- A total of 109 new youth were served, bringing the overall number of youth served throughout the fiscal year to 569

Residential Services

The Residential Services program serves youth who require a higher level of care than traditional resource family homes. Youth are assessed for need and assigned to specific social workers within the Residential program with extensive knowledge of therapeutic placement settings.

- 87 youth were served by Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs at any given time during the year
- Permanency Roundtables are intensive, structured case consultations among child welfare case managers, supervisors, administrators and permanency consultants, focused on finding permanency and re-establishing connections to life-long relationships for the youth at the center of the discussion. In the fiscal year, 30 Permanency Roundtables were held to enhance permanent connections for youth.

San Pasqual Academy

San Pasqual Academy (Academy), a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed specifically for foster youth, serves as a placement option for dependents of the Juvenile Court, 12-17 years old, and NMDs up to 19 years old. A seamless delivery of services is provided through a public-private partnership between the County of San Diego, New Alternatives, Inc., San Diego County Office of Education, and Access, Inc.

The Academy is a unique model for serving the whole child with a trauma-informed approach. While the Academy does not provide legal permanency for foster youth, it does provide a stable, long-term placement with strong linkages to transitional housing and post-emancipation services. The Academy offers a comprehensive support system for the youth, including an individualized education, independent living skills, work readiness training, therapeutic services, extracurricular and enrichment activities, family connections and relational permanency.

Recent federal and state legislation has resulted in sweeping mandates that identify home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth, and reduce the reliance on and use of congregate care. With this new direction, the County's Board of Supervisors has authorized the Academy be re-imagined with input from key stakeholders to preserve the existing residential education program for the foreseeable future, while exploring opportunities to expand the scope of the property. This expansion will include a continuum of diverse placement options as part of a multi-purpose campus, which may include foster family agency resource homes, a short-term residential therapeutic program, temporary shelter care facility, crisis residential treatment and/or transitional housing for current and former foster youth ages 18-24.

The Academy served 68 youth this year. There was a 100% graduation rate for youth at the Academy:

- 8 youth graduated from the on-site high school
- 1 youth graduated from an off-site high school
- 3 youth who were placed at SPA for a significant period of time completed their high school education once they transitioned from campus

Supports for Youth in the Foster Care System

CWS supports youth in a number of ways to ensure they are successful while in the foster care system as well as prepared when it is time to exit.

Education

Ensuring the educational success of youth during and beyond their time in the foster care system is paramount to the work done by CWS social workers. Given the priority on education, education liaisons through the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) are embedded in the work done by program social workers. They assist with gathering education transcripts, ensuring that credits are awarded to youth when school changes occur, attend CFT meetings, assist with transportation to school of origin, and assist with training educational rights holders of foster youth.

The following are high school graduation rates for youth served through Residential Services and/or Extended Foster Care from this fiscal year:

Dependents & Aftercare		
Graduated	62	92.54%
Did Not Graduate	5	7.46%
Total possible graduates	67	100%

Fostering Academic Success in Education (FASE)

FASE began in 2020 as a three-year collaborative pilot in South County, consisting of partners from the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, CWS, SDCOE, and Sweetwater Union High School District. FASE builds an infrastructure to coordinate wraparound supports for youth in CWS with partnering agencies, enabling the youth to achieve educational success in high school, post-secondary education and beyond.

The CWS FASE Educational Social Worker's role is to provide comprehensive educational case management and ongoing support to ensure participating foster youth receive a range of supportive services, such as tutoring referrals, technology assistance for distance learning, college financial aid guidance, supporting youth educational needs during Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and CFTs, and facilitating core partner meetings with the supportive individuals in the youth's life. The CWS FASE Educational Social Worker also works with the youth's assigned social worker, SDCOE, school psychologist, and support services to help address the youth's educational needs.



In FY 21-22, FASE expanded to Granger Junior High School, Sweetwater High School, and National City Middle School.

For FY 21-22, there were 18 participating foster youth.

- 74% of the students improved their GPA
- A ninth grade student increased his GPA from 0.7 to a 2.8
- Two students qualified for an IEP due to the educational social worker advocating for them to be assessed by a school psychologist
- One senior increased her GPA from 3.18 to a 4.0
- 84% of youth had no placement changes during the academic year, helping to stabilize placement and education success

An additional FASE Social Worker has started to support youth due to the program expanding to schools in North County in the upcoming fiscal year, while the program has further expanded in the South Bay area.

Specialized Care and Incentive Assistance Program (SCIAP)

California provides SCIAP funding to support youth with enrichment or other activities not covered by other funding sources.

- Over \$75,500 was distributed for items such as braces, summer camps, and extracurricular activities

Foster Youth Mentor Program (FYMP)

FYMP matches youth in CWS who are ages six and older with mentors who provide a stable, consistent, and genuine relationship to youth in foster care and help promote the youth's self-sufficiency and confidence.

- Mentors were matched to 113 children/youth in the foster care system

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

CANS is an assessment tool used with the CFT process to inform case planning and placement decisions. The CANS also functions as the required mental health-screening tool for children, youth, and non-minor dependents up to age 21. The CANS conversation in the CFT meeting is led by the social worker wherein the team identifies and prioritizes the strengths and needs of the family, resulting in an individualized case plan that addresses the unique needs of each child and family while incorporating cultural considerations of the family.

An initial CANS assessment is completed within 30 days of opening a CWS case and is updated at a minimum of every six months thereafter until the case closes.

- CWS completed 16,795 CANS assessments

Independent Living Skills (ILS)

For older youth, preparation for independence is completed through efforts by assigned social workers with the ILS program. The assigned ILS social worker meets with youth over the age of 16 on a regular basis to prepare them for life after foster care. Youth over 18 can also receive support through contracted ILS services. This support includes topics such as:

- Job readiness
- Educational support
- Housing support
- Financial literacy
- Applying for scholarships and obtaining financial aid

511 youth were served through ILS in FY 21-22.

- 100% of youth in the ILS program were connected to American Job Center of California – San Diego Workforce Partnership
- 85.5% of NMD participating in the ILS program have full time productivity, defined as employment or participation in a formal education program
- 89.8% of NMDs who have been with the ILS program for six months have maintained stable housing

Success Stories

A teen youth was removed from his parents. As the oldest child in the home, he was often a caregiver for his siblings and did not have a space to call his own. He experienced food scarcity, social isolation, inadequate supervision, and a home environment consisting of domestic violence, substance abuse and physical abuse. He also experienced educational challenges and had been out of school for at least two years when he was removed from his family. Additionally, an assessment determined his reading and writing were significantly below grade level. After an initial unsuccessful placement, the youth was placed at PCC. After two months, during a Placement Strategy Meeting, a newly approved resource family was suggested. After many conversations over a three-week period, the family realized that this was a youth they wanted to care for, yet they were apprehensive about their ability to meet his needs and connect him to needed resources. As first-time resource parents they were concerned about supporting his educational needs. The FASE Worker reached out to the resource parents prior to moving forward with placement. He explained the program, his role as a FASE PSW, the resources available to the youth, and answered all their questions. In addition, he offered to provide weekly in-home support to the youth and take him to and from school, should the family ever need it. It was after this vital conversation that the resource parents felt they and the youth would be fully supported and that the youth would be given every opportunity to thrive educationally. They happily decided to move forward with placement. They asked many questions about his interests and decided to plan a preplacement visit at a go-cart venue, because of the youth's passion for cars. They asked intentional questions, and worked hard to put aside their expectations. After this visit, the youth reported he would like to be placed with this family. Upon his arrival to their home, the resource parents put together a welcome gift consisting of Legos, an Amazon gift card to purchase model car parts he mentioned he wanted, and welcome balloons in his favorite color. This has truly been a collaborative effort to identify a great home for the youth and we could not be more hopeful about his future.

Value Four - Shared Responsibility with Community Partners

Value Four appreciates that CWS does not do this work alone and that we rely on our partnerships within the community to serve and support children and families. The community includes contracted service providers, non-profit and faith-based organizations, local businesses, schools, and other community agencies, as well as a family's natural support systems. The data below demonstrates CWS' commitment across this value.

The Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board (CFSAB)

The CFSAB of San Diego County was created to enhance the ability of the County to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. The CFSAB has absorbed the duties of the Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council and works closely with the Polinsky Children's Center Advisory Board and the San Diego Foster Care Services Committee. The CFSAB has broad oversight over the County's child welfare system.

The CFSAB consists of 25 voting members representing a broad cross-section of community and stakeholders as follows:

- Two members of the Board of Supervisors who serve as Co-Chairs
 - Supervisor Nathan Fletcher and Supervisor Nora Vargas
- Three Supervisorial District representatives
- Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court or designee
- Health and Human Services Agency Director or designee
- Child Welfare Services Director or designee
- Chief Probation Officer or designee
- First 5 San Diego Executive Director or designee
- Former Foster Youth
- Foster Parent association
- Foster Family agency
- Congregate care provider
- Court Appointed Special Advocate
- Legal counsel for minors in Juvenile Court
- Legal counsel for parents in Juvenile Court
- San Diego County Office of Education
- Juvenile justice community-based organization
- Children's health care professional
- Social worker
- Two individuals with lived experience who reflect over-represented populations in the system with a preference for former foster youth
- Representative from Polinsky Children's Center
- Representative from San Pasqual Academy

There were six meetings of the full advisory board, with subcommittee meetings occurring throughout the year.

In addition to the work of the entire CFSAB, there were initially five subcommittees and one ad hoc committee that focused on the following topics more closely: Child and Family Services (CFS), Workforce Development (WD), Organizational Structure (OS), Race and Equity Ad Hoc, and Foster Alumni and Youth Community Empowerment Subcommittee (FAYCES). During the last fiscal year, the WD, OS, and CFS groups were combined into one CFS group. There were six meetings of the CFS subcommittee and two meetings of the WD, and OS subcommittees. There were six Race and Equity Ad Hoc meetings. There were eleven FAYCES subcommittee meetings.

The subcommittees and CFSAB were charged with reviewing CWS' implementation of the 88 recommendations put forward by the CWS Working Group in 2019. During this fiscal year, the final remaining 88 recommendations were completed. Thirty-eight of those will be monitored by the group on an ongoing basis.

Some of the recommendations completed included:

- Restructured the CWS Office of the Ombudsman to provide three options to address concerns effectively, which includes the CWS Office of the Ombudsman, Resource Parent Ombudsman, and HHSA Agency Compliance Office. The Office is required to provide regular reports to the CFSAB.
 - This allowed for parents, children/youth, resource parents, or community members who wish to report grievances have an Ombudsman with expertise in their area of concern address and respond to them timely. It also allows for increased confidence that concerns are addressed effectively, as they are reviewed by an external agency office outside of CWS.

- Integrated regional placement units under two managers to ensure consistent practice and consolidated all specialty program placement units into one to provide specialized placement services and supports.
 - This change has led to an increase in the number of children/youth placed with relatives and placed with siblings, ensuring they are able to maintain connections to those close to them and modeling respect for familial relationships and cultural identity.
- Created SDCares4Kids.com, a recruitment and resource website where potential, new, and current resource families can access information about the Resource Family Approval process, foster and adoptive resource family resources, and mentor, volunteer, and advocate opportunities. Since its launch in June 2021, there have been an average of 2,625 visits to the website each month.
 - This streamlined the location that prospective or current resource families or members of the community went to for information, and allowed prospective families to complete the initial application process online. It also allows for a central point of contact that customers can reach out to with questions and receive a timely response.
- Strengthened the emphasis on safely stabilizing and preserving families through the implementation of an updated Voluntary Services policy.
 - This requires a multidisciplinary approach to determine family appropriateness for Voluntary Services, emphasizing the expertise each multidisciplinary team member brings to the assessment process to ensuring equity and provision of quality services to families.
 - A brochure clearly outlining families of their rights, program eligibility, and expectations was developed and required to be provided to families.

Community Outreach

CWS provides training to community partners upon request to help mandated reporters understand their role in supporting children and families and ensuring children are safe.

- In total, 33 mandated reporter trainings were facilitated, giving reporters more in-depth knowledge of their role and the process for reporting

In addition, CWS participated in the Agency Field Fair held for local universities. Students in both Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work programs have the opportunity to gather information on different internship opportunities. We also have the opportunity to talk with students who are interested in employment with CWS.

Family Support Liaison Program (FSLP)

This program aims to reduce the disproportionate number of African American children in the child welfare system by strengthening the relationship between CWS and African American families to create better environments and outcomes for our community. This service focuses on providing specialized assistance to San Diego families who represent distinctive cultural, ethnic, and linguistic populations within San Diego County. FSLP helps educate San Diego families involved in the child welfare system on child welfare laws, system processes, communication, and early intervention strategies that enhance child safety and help families better understand and navigate the multiple processes involved in the child welfare system. The program partners with African American and immigrant and refugee families countywide.

- FSLP received 326 referrals from CWS
- FSLP enrolled 111 families

- 66 families successfully completed the program

Faith in Motion

Faith in Motion fills resource and service gaps by connecting the local faith community to the needs of children and families. It also establishes lasting relationships through resource family recruitment and mentorship. The partnership is comprised of over 30 faith partners. During the past year, Faith in Motion simultaneously supported caregivers and the stability of youth in a variety of innovative ways. One partner purchased a set of bunk beds so three siblings could be placed and remain together in a resource home. This May, two partners co-hosted the annual Resource Parent Appreciation events. They provided two venues, one in North County, and one in South San Diego, along with gifts for the caregivers in honor and appreciation of all the hard work they do every single day. The evening was a celebration of caregivers' outstanding dedication, and included a sit down dinner, live music, and childcare.

Partners in Prevention

Partners in Prevention is a San Diego countywide initiative that is stewarded by YMCA Childcare Resource Services in partnership with CWS, San Diego State University's Social Policy Institute, Harder+Company Community Research, and encompasses many cross-sector partners as well as community members and those with lived child welfare experience. Partners in Prevention increased its focus on race, equity, diversion and inclusion convening around a racial justice action plan that centers personal and collective growth, intentional power sharing, courageous community partnerships, truth telling, creativity and design, and confronting all aspects of race, racism, power, and privilege with a goal of reducing the number of families involved in CWS.

County Self-Assessment (CSA)

The purpose of the County Self-Assessment (CSA) is for collaboration with community and prevention partners to review the full scope of Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation Services, examining agency strengths and needs, including reviews of procedural and systemic practices, current levels of performance, and available resources. Facilitated by Harder+Company Community Research, the CSA engagement process involved four levels of input:

- **Stakeholder Forums**

Over 100 agency partners were invited to participate in two forums, one held in February 2022 focused on the outcome Permanency by 12 Months and one held in March 2022 focused on the systemic factor of Service Array. Over 80 individuals attended each forum representing community based service providers, juvenile court, law enforcement, early childhood resources, SDCOE, Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP) and Foster Family Agencies (FFA), Independent Living Skills Service Providers, Public Health, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Services, Tribal partners, the Foster Parent Associations and staff from CWS and Probation.

- **Focus Groups**

In May 2022, four focus groups were held with former foster youth, parents, resource families, and tribal partners. Co-facilitated by Harder+Company Community Research and someone from within the community, small groups of 7-10 individuals with lived-experience in CWS or Probation were asked to provide insights to improve services to families and youth. Facilitators with lived experience helped tailor focus group questions and helped create a trusting environment to elicit deeper understanding of their focus group's experience with CWS and Probation. A total of 34 people with lived-experience participated in the focus groups.

- **Peer Review**

The Peer Review was conducted from April 7-15, 2022 as a collaborative effort between CWS and Juvenile Probation's Placement Division. This is a qualitative examination of Child Welfare Services and Probation practices, driven by the idea that social workers and probation officers have valuable insights on how these systems work and how to effect change in the outcomes for youth and families. Child Welfare peer reviewers from nine California counties reviewed 21 cases in total, focusing on the outcome P1- Permanency in 12 Months for children entering foster care.

- **Community Survey**

Harder+Company Community Research administered surveys to all partners invited to participate in the CSA process. This ensured engagement of all stakeholders in the analysis of these systems and gathered feedback, including from those who did not attend the other components of the CSA process.

Through the stakeholder forums, focus groups, peer review and community survey, over 150 representatives from private, public and community organizations assisted with the 2022 County Self-Assessment (CSA) process, and provided valuable insight to our system and input as to how CWS can improve services and partnerships with the community.

CWS and Tribal Collaborations

CWS established the Indian Specialty Unit (ISU) in 1992 in collaboration with the Native American community. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law passed in 1978 to address the removal and placement of Native children by child welfare agencies into foster care. CWS continues tribal collaboration by participating in the following workgroups:

- 7th Generation Workgroup: A community based collaboration workgroup that meets quarterly and guides local, state and national efforts at addressing the disproportionate number of Native American children involved in CWS.
- Data Reports: CWS continuously reviews data reports and measures to review trends and develop strategies to improve reunification and permanency outcomes for Native youth.
- Child Protection Teams and Case Consultation: ISU participates in monthly meetings with tribal social workers to coordinate child abuse investigations, prevention services, and family reunification services.
- Tribal Justice Collaborative: CWS attends this workgroup established by the Juvenile Court and the Intertribal Court of Southern California to address system issues impacting Native children, families and Tribes.
- CWS attended the State Indian Child Welfare Conference hosted by the Sycuan Tribe in June 2022, which allowed new social workers assigned to the Indian Specialty Unit an opportunity to meet tribal partners they previously did not know.
- CWS and Tribal child welfare representatives were asked to present at the 2022 Resource Family Approval Convening. Panelists shared learned experience, protocols and best practices for collaboration to improve outcomes for Native American children, families and Tribes.

Promises2Kids (Promises)

The County of San Diego works in partnership with Promises2Kids to support youth in the foster care system. Since 1981, Promises has provided over \$25 million in services to over 250,000 current and former foster youth. These programs assist Promises in its mission to create a brighter future for foster children®. From the moment children come into foster care through adulthood, Promises provides the hope, support, and opportunities needed to enhance their lives.

Promises has an annual budget of \$7 million with over 80% going directly to programs and youth. Programs include:



- **Camp Connect:** Reunites siblings who are separated in the foster care system through a residential summer camp, monthly events and individual family visits throughout the year. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Promises quickly pivoted to meet the needs of the children by implementing regular and frequent individual sibling set visits in a safe manner that ensured family bonding was not interrupted. During FY 21-22, Promises supported 121 children through 12 events, serving 41 sibling sets.
- **Guardian Scholars:** The largest provider for scholarships for former foster youth in the county, Promises annually supports 250 current and former foster youth with mentoring, case management and a financial scholarship to pursue their educational dreams, determine a career path and advance to complete vocational training, community college or university education.
- **Youth2Youth Peer Advocates:** Provides youth currently in care with consistent support from a highly knowledgeable and empathetic source by connecting them to former foster youth now pursuing their post-secondary education and career goals as part of Promises' Guardian Scholars program. Promises has committed to supporting all youth living at San Pasqual Academy (SPA) and has assigned a Youth2Youth advocate to the campus to support all youth including those who have transitioned off campus. Youth2Youth supports over 300 youth living at PCC, SPA, or participating in EFC.
- **Foster Funds:** Foster children can sometimes feel alone and isolated, and may go without simple pleasures of childhood, such as birthday gifts, a sports uniform, a musical instrument or extracurricular activities. Promises has special funds set up to support these needs not met through typical funding.
- **A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center:** In partnership with the County of San Diego, Promises funds four initiatives at PCC (Health and Wellness, Pet Therapy, Peer Mentoring (Youth2Youth) and KidSTART).

Housing

CWS supports families with housing assistance through a variety of programs:

- **Bringing Families Home (BFH)** is a short-term, nine-month Rapid Rehousing program for families, primarily in Central or South regions, experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with an open Family Reunification or Family Maintenance case. The applicant is assigned a CWS Housing Navigator to assist them with eligibility, locating housing, working with their landlord, and post-leasing housing case management. BFH served 34 new families, facilitating family reunification more quickly or helping to prevent the need for foster care.
- **Substance Abuse Treatment (SAT) Housing Vouchers**—SAT vouchers are for parents experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are actively participating or have recently successfully completed substance abuse treatment. Families accepted into this program will receive a housing voucher to pay a portion of their rent, based on their income, for up to 18 months. SAT vouchers serve clients with an open CWS Family Reunification or Family Maintenance case. A total of 20 new families were served.

- Family Unification Program (FUP) Housing Vouchers—FUP vouchers are specifically for families where lack of adequate housing is the primary factor in the imminent placement of the child in out-of-home care or in the delay of a child in out-of-home care returning to live with the family. Families approved for a FUP voucher will receive long-term rental subsidy assistance. Families with an open CWS Family Reunification or Family Maintenance case qualify for referral to this program. A total of 45 new families were served.

Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)

San Diego County has two accredited CACs, the Chadwick Center for Children and Families and Palomar Health. The CACs provide family-focused and trauma-informed services to children and adolescents who may have experienced or witnessed maltreatment, abuse or violence.

- Chadwick facilitates a multidisciplinary team, also known as the Child Protection Team (CPT), which includes trained professionals from law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical, family advocacy and other CAC staff and community partners. Thirty-three meetings were held, with 111 cases of CWS involved youth reviewed.
- Palomar Health Child Abuse Program held nine meetings and reviewed over 170 CWS referrals/cases.

Review, Assess, Direct (RAD) Team

The goal of the RAD team is to improve decision making at the Child Abuse Hotline regarding whether a family requires a CWS investigation or can safely utilize prevention services to mitigate risk factors and prevent child abuse and neglect to reduce unnecessary interventions with families. The RAD team is multidisciplinary in nature, and considers safety and risk factors, the family's strengths and resources, as well as cultural background and family history prior to making a final response determination decision. Referrals with an allegation of general neglect, but not meeting the threshold for a CWS investigation, from either the Hotline or a RAD team, are referred to the 2-1-1 San Diego CONNECT program. The 2-1-1 San Diego CONNECT program works with families to connect and meet their unique needs through resources within the community. RAD team meetings were paused in October 2021 as a result of the ongoing workload impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Region	North Central	Central
Referrals reviewed by RAD teams	15	9
Referrals determined to not need CWS investigation during RAD teams	5	1
RAD team referrals sent to 2-1-1	1	0
Hotline referrals sent to 2-1-1	292	296

Some highlights of the 2-1-1 program include:

- Primarily Latina or white mothers of school-aged children who were referred by mandated reporters were served by the program

- The most common areas of support were basic needs: housing, food, and utilities, followed by legal needs and parenting needs
- Half of the participants achieved their goals

The Office of the International Liaison (ILO)

The ILO is the point of contact with agencies abroad to ensure agreement and compliance with international treaties, policies and laws. The ILO assists with coordination of travel for staff outside of the country, serves as a resource regarding all issues that affect international services to families active to CWS, and reviews legislation and international issues that impact local policies. Some services provided include:

Service Type	Requests
Child Abuse Cross Reports to other countries	301
Home Evaluations (initial home study for placement, non-adoption)	33
Notices to Foreign Consulate	56
Parent Searches	94
Other (case consultations, home visits, vital records requests, etc.)	222
Total	706

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Human Trafficking Task Force

The CSEC Program includes several community partnerships to provide primary and secondary response services to youth experiencing, or at risk of, commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) and Human Trafficking (HT). The guiding principles for serving CSEC and HT survivors include incorporating the voices of individuals with lived experience, utilizing harm reduction strategies in safety planning, and collaboration across multiple agencies. Alongside our partners, we provide culturally responsive, individualized, and trauma-informed services. We share the goal of building trusting and consistent relationships with survivors to help them meet their needs, regain their authority, and continue their healing journey.

In FY 21-22, CWS investigated 132 referrals where there was suspicion or confirmation of CSE. CWS served 98 youth in foster care who were experiencing or at high risk of experiencing CSE. To best serve youth and families impacted by CSE, we relied on our relationships with our community partners. Examples of our community partnerships are:

- The CSEC Steering Committee is a collaborative team of staff representing all CWS regions and programs, as well as ten community partners consisting of several social service agencies, legal partners, law enforcement partners, victim advocates, and direct service providers. The committee has a shared responsibility to develop and oversee the CSEC Interagency Protocol. The protocol ensures coordination to improve early identification of CSE and provide multidisciplinary and individualized resources to youth and families to prevent or disrupt CSE and hold exploiters accountable.
- In partnership with the District Attorney's office, CWS increases awareness that HT and CSE are forms of child abuse through campaign ads and public service announcements. In FY 21-22, the campaign focused on the exploitation and trafficking of boys and LGBTQ+ youth. The campaign, which ran throughout the month of March, reached 613,213 individuals with 985,600 impressions.

- CWS staff are co-located with the San Diego Human Trafficking Task Force (HTTF), a cooperative of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The co-located staff act as liaisons between CWS and HTTF to streamline and coordinate services for survivors identified during recovery operations.
- The CSEC Response Team (CRT) program provides CRT Advocates who are available 24 hours a day to immediately respond to suspected or confirmed CSE victims with law enforcement and CWS. CRT Advocates have lived experience and help stabilize and address the victim's immediate needs. Advocates continue to provide intensive case management with frequent visits to triage youth to specialized services. In FY 21-22, CRT Advocates responded to 70 youth.
- CWS also collaborates with Behavioral Health Services to connect families to the I-CARE Program, a drop-in center and outpatient mental health clinic that offers vital resources to youth 12 to 21 years old who are at risk of or have experienced sex trafficking or other forms of sexual exploitation. The drop-in center served 110 unduplicated youth, while the mental health clinic served 47 youth this year.

Military Liaisons

CWS offices have designated military liaisons available for resources and information specific to military families. Each military liaison is a resource for social workers who have questions about military life, the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) and how it affects services to families. Military liaisons work with FAP and other service providers on base to ensure coordinated services for families involved with CWS. Military liaisons participate in quarterly meetings with Marine Corps Air Station for their Family Advocacy Committee Meetings to obtain updates to programs for service members. Quarterly trainings are also provided to families active to the Navy or Marines.

- A total of 373 families were served, including 135 new families that had active, veteran, or dependent military status.

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

CWS initiated implementation of FFPSA over the past year. FFPSA reforms child welfare funding streams, and offers an opportunity for child welfare agencies to rethink how they approach services for families and children. Instead of focusing on only supporting children once they entered foster care, FFPSA aims to fund services that will prevent children from entering care. Eligible services include substance use disorder services, mental health services, in-home parenting programs, and kinship navigation services. CWS is currently working with the California Department of Social Services and local community partners on developing a vision of an enhanced prevention based system of care in San Diego. These partners include First 5 San Diego, Behavioral Health Services, Probation, and the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, as well as Partners in Prevention, CFSAB, Tribal partners, and community based organizations.

Part IV of the FFPSA also requires court approval and oversight for children and youth that are recommended to receive mental health services in a congregate care setting. The process now includes an assessment by a licensed mental health clinician acting as a Qualified Individual (QI) and additional court and notification processes, so that all parties have a chance to object or support the placement recommendation, and the Court has the final authority for the placement order.

From the implementation of the Part IV requirements on 10/01/2021, through the end of the fiscal year on 06/30/2022:

- 39 youth were placed in an STRTP or Community Treatment Facility (CTF) for their first congregate care placement after being approved by Interagency Placement Committee (IPC) for STRTP level of care.
- Of the 39 youth, 35 were referred for a QI assessment. The QI assessment recommended an STRTP level of treatment for every youth except for one who left the STRTP prior to completion of the assessment.

Juvenile Court approved STRTP level of care for all youth who presented with an IPC approval for placement, approved QI assessment, and who remained in placement at the time of the court hearing.

Success Stories

Bringing Families Home received a referral for a mother and father who resided in a sober living environment after completing treatment. The parents could not have the child for overnight visits at the sober living facility. The parents were both recently employed, and while starting to save, they were not yet able to pay a lump sum of a deposit and first month's rent. Due to their income, they did not qualify for the full benefits of BFH (one year of rental assistance), but BFH was able to assist with paying a deposit and first month's rent for an apartment. The family was housed in January 2022, shortly after they began overnight visits with their daughter. The case progressed to the 60-day trial, then to a family maintenance case. The case closed successfully in October 2022.

Value Five - A Strong Working Relationship with the Legal System

Value Five conveys the importance of a collaborative working relationship with our legal system, including Juvenile Court, law enforcement, County Counsel, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Children's Legal Services, Dependency Legal Services, Juvenile Probation, Public Defender, District Attorney and others. CWS is governed by a number of regulations that provide guidance and oversight, including the California Penal Code, Welfare and Institutions Code and Juvenile Court. The data below demonstrates our commitment across CWS in how we actualize this value.

County Counsel

- County Counsel has embedded staff within six offices to support social workers with real-time legal support. These offices include Central, East, South, North Inland, North Coastal, and North Central/Policy and Program Support

- They provided informal “brown bag” trainings for CWS staff on areas aligning social work practice with legal guidelines, across which 1,072 staff participated
- An additional 71 formal trainings were held with a set curriculum and mandated attendees which included dependency law topics ranging from investigations, placement, voluntary services, and ongoing cases



Children’s Legal Services (CLSSD)

CLSSD protects and defends the rights of children and youth in the child welfare system through high quality and compassionate legal representation. CLSSD is a non-profit, interdisciplinary organization that consists of four law firms, which are court-appointed to represent minors and non-minor dependents in Juvenile Dependency Court within and out of San Diego County. CWS works closely with CLSSD to ensure that the voice of the child is represented in court proceedings.

Dependency Legal Services (DLS)

DLS is a multi-disciplinary, non-profit law firm providing quality representation to parents and children involved with California’s Child Welfare System to achieve the best outcomes possible. CWS works closely with DLS to ensure clients receive the services needed to achieve success.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

Voices for Children (VFC) is a non-profit organization that operates the only CASA program in San Diego County. Trained CASAs supervise volunteers who are appointed by the court to advocate for dependent children’s best interests and “ensure each dependent child’s right to a safe, permanent home”. These volunteers undergo an extensive screening and background process and participate in 35 hours of training before serving as CASAs. They are required to commit to a minimum of one year supporting a youth. CASAs are assigned to a child and meet with them between seven to 10 hours a month. Additionally, they submit a written report to court detailing the child’s current situation and needs, and can be appointed as an educational rights holder as needed. CASAs support SET Values Four and Five, collaborating with our community partners and legal system to ensure the child’s best interests.

CASA Program FY 21-22	
Total CASA Volunteers	972
New CASA Volunteers	226
Total youth served who were assigned a CASA	1,904
New youth who received a CASA	459
CASA court reports submitted	1600 +

Dual Status Unit

The Dual Status Unit in CWS is tasked with providing services and assistance to children in the foster care system who have committed a crime for which they are also involved in the delinquency system. The assigned social worker works closely with the Probation Department to determine which program, CWS or Juvenile Probation, can best meet the needs of the child. The dual status program served 53 youth.

Drug Endangered Children Program and Law Enforcement Liaisons

The Drug Endangered Children (DEC) and Law Enforcement Liaisons (LEL) programs were implemented in all regions to support, coordinate, foster and streamline communications between CWS and law enforcement, ensuring safety and better outcomes for children in our community. DEC workers are assigned to work with children impacted by substance use, which could range from a parent or caregiver's personal misuse of substances to selling or manufacturing of drugs.

- There were 215 DEC referrals representing 390 children

Five CWS offices have LEL staff who facilitate communication between CWS and various jurisdictions and institutions. LEL social workers can be DEC workers or other social work staff who are partially out-stationed in the community. Currently, outstations exist with the following jurisdictions/institutions:

- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)
- Escondido PD
- San Diego County Sheriff, Child Abuse Units, Alpine, Carlsbad, Lemon Grove, Rancho San Diego, San Marcos
- San Diego Police Department (SDPD) ICAC Child Abuse Unit Liaison
- Mid-City South East San Diego/SPPD Narcotics Team
- Chula Vista PD
- La Mesa PD
- El Cajon PD
- Las Colinas Detention Facility
- Family Justice Center

One Safe Place and Your Safe Place

One Safe Place (OSP) is the Family Justice Center (FJC) in North County and serves anyone who has experienced family violence, child abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, hate crimes, elder abuse, human trafficking, violent loss, or other crimes. Your Safe Place (YSP) is the FJC in central San Diego. CWS has two Senior PSWs out-stationed at OSP and YSP, where there are many other community partners. Both FJCs feature supportive offices that are a safe place to participate in interviews with law enforcement and/or CWS to reduce the number of times a survivor may have to tell their story. It is also a place for families to rest while all the collaborative partners are working behind the scenes to have their needs met, including obtaining clothing, food, shelter, restraining orders, counseling referrals, and sometimes extra things like Legoland tickets.

Success Stories

Teens in foster care without proper immigration documentation face challenges in obtaining employment and participating in other typical high school activities. This past year, all systems aligned to support a 17-year-old in obtaining his permanent resident immigration status and open additional doors of opportunities. Minor's counsel connected the youth with the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program where an immigration attorney was assigned to the case. The attorney

completed all necessary documentation on behalf of the youth and was diligent in keeping the social worker and youth apprised of each step, including time sensitive appointments. The social worker coordinated and accompanied the youth to have a physical exam, have his fingerprints taken, take passport photos and attend an interview with the Department of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Updates throughout the immigration process were provided to the CFT members, and in April 2022, the youth was ecstatic when he received his legal resident card. The youth immediately sought employment opportunities in the community to start saving for his future!



An investigation began after an incident of intimate partner violence, which left the mother in the hospital. A detective referred the mother from the hospital to One Safe Place (OSP). CWS was able to coordinate with OSP about where to meet with the family rather than meeting them at the home, as well as address the referrals provided to the family. When the social worker met with the mother, she was receiving support from OSP and actively getting a restraining order. CWS was able to coordinate with OSP and law enforcement to ensure child safety at the same time. The out-stationed worker was able to find a hotel for the mother and child to go to in order to be safe, as well as providing clothing, baby items, and meals. With the collaborative work of Palomar Hospital, OSP Care Team, the District Attorney's Office and CWS, the mother and child moved safely with their extended family out of state.

Value Six - A Workplace Culture Characterized by Reflection, Appreciation, and Ongoing Learning

Value Six reflects that we are a learning organization that values the wellbeing of staff at all levels. We value authentic, strength-based leadership that builds on engagement and shared accountability. The data below demonstrates our commitment across CWS in how we actualize this value.

Workforce Development

Child Welfare Development Services (CWDS), sometimes referred to as the "Southern Academy," is one of five child welfare training academies in the state of California. Established in July 1996, it serves the counties of Imperial, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Riverside. Additional workforce development, including advanced training, is offered to the counties of Ventura and Los Angeles. CWDS is a program of the Academy for Professional Excellence at San Diego State University School of Social Work. We work in partnership with southern region universities and their Schools of Social Work.

Social Worker Initial Training (SWIT)/Workforce Training and Development (WTD) Units

All newly hired social workers receive statewide mandated training called Common Core 3.5. CWS and CWDS partner together to coordinate the provision of these trainings.

- CWS had 102 line staff participate in SWIT and delivered five complete line worker Common Core series to staff

After staff have completed their initial training, they are assigned to a WTD Unit. WTD units support staff retention by ensuring consistency around training, graduated caseloads based on knowledge, skills, and abilities, and a supportive learning environment. Staff participate in SWIT and the WTD Units for their first six months of employment before transitioning to an Advanced Training Unit in a region or program.

Manager/Supervisor Core

The role of managers and supervisors in CWS is a critical one, providing guidance to line social workers. As such, additional core training is provided to these classifications that provides opportunities for participants to assess their knowledge, strengths and resources and apply critical thinking skills to real leadership scenarios. The participant exercises are designed to be relevant and applicable to child welfare managers and supervisors. The following themes are recognized as central concepts:

- Fairness and equity/Managing a diverse workforce
- Human Resources management
- Self-Assessment
- Engagement/Conflict management
- Outcomes and accountability
- Team building/Influencing and negotiating
- Strength-based practice
- Evidence-based and promising practice



Advanced Training

CWS is committed to the professional development and ongoing training of staff to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. CWS continues to promote a workplace culture characterized by ongoing learning by providing a variety of modalities for workforce development including training, coaching, and mentoring.

Four hundred and fifty-eight staff participated in a variety of advanced training to further their growth and development in FY 21-22. Topics ranged from being a culturally responsive social worker, to sexual and reproductive wellness of youth in care, to psychotropic medication for youth in foster care.

Cultural Responsiveness Academy (CRA)

CWS partnered with CWDS to provide the fifth series of the CRA for our workforce to actively create solutions to reduce disproportionality, specifically focused on African American children, youth, and families.

Participants attended six virtual facilitated discussions, received ongoing coaching support, and completed a practicum project designed to enhance cultural responsiveness in their region or across the county.

- In total, 55 staff participated in the CRA across the three cohorts (Leadership, Line Staff or Support/Non-Case Carrying), with 35 attending five out of six sessions and completing a project in order to graduate. An example of a project is:

- **Hotline Screening Referrals for Bias:** The Hotline updated the screening process and documentation to ask specific cultural questions beyond determining if the family had any known Native American heritage. The Hotline now asks if the family needs any particular resources and creates and provides a list of resources that might be helpful for various areas of need.

Coaching

Coaching is available to staff at all levels to assist them in competence and confidence related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to serve children and families. CWDS provided leadership-focused coaching to all levels of staff, focusing on teaming, quality supervision, professional development, cultural humility, and communication skills.

- 48 coaching days were dedicated to Manager level staff and above
- 132 coaching days were offered to Protective Services Workers, Seniors, and Supervisors

Additionally, Gallup Strengths coaches support staff with a variety of needs and objectives related to their Gallup Strengths and those of their colleagues.

- 668 participants in CWS Individual Training
- 31 CWS Group Training sessions
- 22 CWS Formal Training Events

Internship Program

San Diego CWS hosted 58 interns. Of those interns:

- Six were CWS employees
- Six completed the first of their two-year internships
- Eight were Bachelor of Arts in Social Work students, four of whom continued their education by enrolling in the Master of Social Work (MSW) Advanced Standing program
- Two employees graduated from an MSW program
- Of 40 interns who were eligible for employment with CWS, 31 were subsequently hired

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

CQI can help identify when staff are doing well and help spread and grow those practices throughout our system. CQI relies on shared responsibility for data and outcomes at all levels of staff. Workers, supervisors, and managers have the responsibility to input quality data and know about data and outcomes. CQI helps increase transparency by collaborating with families, youth, and other key stakeholders to review how we can improve our system through their feedback as a means to evaluate our work.

Child and Family Services Reviews (CSFR) are case reviews using a federal tool called the Onsite Review Instrument, which includes a review of documentation, and interviews with children, parents, caregivers, social workers, and others involved in the case. These reviews ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements, assess engagement with children and families active to CWS, and assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.

- Social workers conducted 75 CSFRs this year. The following areas were identified as strengths:
 - Coordinating a family's access to services to help prevent removal or re-entry into CWS

- Caregivers felt supported and liked that the agency asked about their needs and provided services for those needs
- Children's social/emotional and educational needs were accurately assessed and services were provided to address any needs identified
- Children who had siblings in foster care were either placed with their sibling(s) or separation was necessary due to needs of one or more of the children
- Visits between children and parents took place one to two times a week
- Most children were placed in relative placements or concerted efforts were made to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate relatives for placement
- The following areas were identified as areas for growth:
 - There is a need to assess risk and safety of non-dependent siblings while there is a dependent in foster care with a goal of reunification.
 - Common delays in achieving permanency were due to court continuances, placing children in a concurrent home, not observing visits between children and parents in order to assess visit progression from unsupervised to overnights, etc., and delays with completing the Adoption Home Study and Telling.
 - To further support the relationship between the parent and child, social workers should encourage parent participation in school activities, case conferences, attendance at doctor appointments, engagement in extracurricular activities, providing transportation to activities, providing opportunities for therapeutic situations to strengthen parent/child relationship, and facilitate contact with parents not living in close proximity to the child.
 - With case planning, parent(s) felt they did not have a voice in the case planning process nor did they feel the Agency inquired as to their needs. There was also a lack of concerted efforts in locating a father, whose whereabouts were known, or including fathers in activities with the child.

The SET case and referral reviews are an evaluation process to measure our fidelity to the SET Practice Framework and engagement with families through the use of Safety Organized Practice (SOP).

- Social workers conducted 139 SET case reviews, showing strong model fidelity in the following areas:
 - Identifying family strengths, acts of protection, and/or protective capacities
 - Attempts made to engage the family by using SOP tools during the investigation or case
 - Attempts made to connect the family with community resources, services, or assess services the family was already receiving
 - During the initial case planning process, partnering with the family to address the identified harm and danger
 - A Family Centered Meeting (FCM) held during the period under review

Human Resources (HR)

CWS works closely with the County's HR department to recruit and hire staff. In order to ensure sufficient staffing levels, enhancements were made to the process, including the creation of a video depicting the job of a Protective Services Worker. The video can be viewed via the following link: [CWS Hiring Video](#).

In order to ensure viewership of the video, a writing sample prompted from the video has been added to the interview process.

- 268 staff were hired/promoted in FY 21-22.

In order to support and retain staff, CWS works closely with HR to support some of the following programs, specifically mentorship, leadership training and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Mentorship

In an effort to support the County's diversity and recruitment efforts, CWS entered the second annual CWS mentorship program. The program provides opportunities for CWS staff to learn about different jobs, career paths, and educational opportunities available in CWS from experienced staff. A diverse group of CWS volunteer mentors representing various ethnicities and job classifications were recruited and trained to mentor others. Staff interested in participating in the program submitted mentee applications to be matched with staff that best met their interests. The program is a 12-month commitment. A total of 30 mentors were matched with 41 mentees.



Adoptions Training

Adoptions CORE Curriculum is offered to all case-carrying staff who are newly assigned to the Adoptions Program. The 12-hour series consists of six standardized trainings introducing workers to specialized adoption services, permanency assessments, tasks and processes. Training is facilitated by a worker's direct Supervisor, Senior Worker, or Policy Analyst and is paced in correlation with each worker's caseload progression and current workflow assignments.

- Nine Adoption Program staff received Adoptions CORE Curriculum training

Adoption staff attend ACT: An Adoption and Permanency Curriculum for Child Welfare and Mental Health Professionals (formerly known as Adoption Clinical Training). ACT is a 48-hour comprehensive curriculum that provides intensive practice and training designed to advance and inform adoption practices through the lens of the adopted child, birth and adoptive families.

- 34 County staff and local community partners attended ACT

Leadership Summit

CWS hosts leadership summits for staff at the Protective Services Supervisor, Protective Services Program Manager, CWS Policy Analyst, Chief of Practice, and Executive Leadership levels to support and grow the skill set of staff in leadership roles.

- Racial Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sessions were presented by the Program Coordinator for the CWS Office of Equity. These sessions included a review of key terminology, videos and self-reflection related to racism, small group work related to workplace micro-aggressions and bias towards children, youth, and families, and large group review and discussion of disproportionality rates and experiences for youth of color related to permanency.
 - 129 participants attended these sessions

Navigating Mental Health was presented by the Behavioral Health Team, addressing how to understand and partner with parents and youth with complex mental health presentations to improve engagement and the use of best therapeutic practices with our families. The training supported the utilization of a trauma-informed approach with our workers including skills learned

from our ongoing Components for Effective Clinician Experience and Reducing Trauma (CE-CERT) training.

- 121 participants attended these sessions

Strength Based Leadership Development Series

The CWS Executive Leadership Team initiated a Strength Based Leadership Development Series, which offers Protective Services Supervisors (PSS), Senior Protective Service Workers (SPSW), and Protective Services Workers (PSW) the opportunity to enhance knowledge in various topic areas, as well as provides resources to further develop their role as leaders. This series focused on equity, disproportionality and racial/social injustices, with an emphasis on leading from a perspective of courage and inclusion. Guest speakers included top executives of the County and HHSA who shared their leadership journey to inspire and encourage the team to continue their own career growth and commitment to best practice when working with families.

- Topics were developed based on the needs of the participants and included guest speakers
- All participants were encouraged to complete a mentor stretch project, which focused on diversity and inclusion efforts related to policy, practice, organizational structure, CWS employees, service providers, and client needs
- 35 PSWs, 24 SPSWs, and 16 PSSs participated in the series

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

CWS is committed to efforts to become an antiracist system, addressing racial bias, disproportionality, disparities, inequities, and diversity and inclusion issues involving communities of color, Immigrant/Refugee families, as well as gender and sexual minorities. Created in January 2021, the Child Welfare Services Office of Equity includes a dedicated position that oversees CWS efforts around diversity, race, equity and inclusion. This office convenes workgroups and stakeholders to address system barriers that cause disparate outcomes for children and families, as well as reviews policies from an equity lens. It supports SWIT to ensure the integration of a cultural humility lens, partners with HHSA Human Resources to develop strategies for recruitment and retention of social workers of color and engage the community in solution focused actions.

CWS Presentations:

- [2022 D&I Champion Showcase \(HHSA Best Practice\)](#)
- [2022 California Mental Health Advocacy for Children and Youth Conference](#)
- [2022 California Social Work Education Center \(CalSWEC\) Fairness & Equity Symposium](#)
- [2022 CalSWEC Title IV-E Summit](#)

CWS Disproportionality Data:

- There was an increase of slightly over 6% for African American children placed with kin from 29.1% (2021) to 35.8%
- Over a period of two years, the percentage of Black children entering Foster Care changed minimally (increased from 15.3% to 16.8%). The actual number decreased from 153 to 133. This is a reflection of overall decrease in placements from 997 to 794

Secondary Traumatic Stress Reduction (STS)

CWS has long recognized the impact of STS on staff and works to support them to address and reduce this trauma with a variety of resources. One such support is the use of our Behavioral Health Team comprised of three Senior Clinical Psychologists (referred to as staff psychologists) and a Licensed Mental Health Clinician (referred to as staff clinician), which is a new position hired specifically to address STS. This team provides critical support to staff, not only around STS, but also regarding the mental health services that could most benefit children and families. Examples of support they provided:

- Completed 786 Individual Case Consultations providing mental health resource support for our workers and families.
- Provided training to all regions on Serious Mental Illness (SMI) to help workers better understand how to engage parents with SMI.
- Completed 247 STS check-ins following a critical incident experienced by staff. This included individual and group check-ins, as well as individual work to respond to secondary trauma symptoms and work with staff before engaging with an emotionally difficult case to prevent STS.
- Completed the 12 new Resilience Builder trainings for Supervisors July through October of 2021 and began our Resilience Builders training for managers, with a total attendance of eight supervisors and eight managers. Topics ranged from a variety of coping skills to communication skills and work-life balance.

Components for Effective Clinician Experience and Reducing Trauma (CE-CERT)

CE-CERT is designed to increase employee awareness and understanding of the effects of STS in the workplace and assist supervisors with concrete tools and strategies to help mitigate the effects of STS. CWS began training staff on CE-CERT in January 2021 and training is ongoing. During this FY 448 staff and 73 supervisors were trained. Booster sessions for those who have completed the standard training began in April with the Workforce Training and Development unit supervisors and will continue to be rolled out to maintain the fidelity of the approach. Four staff were trained as trainers and will be continuing to educate new staff and supervisors on CE-CERT.

Policy and Program Support (PPS)

The PPS division of CWS provides critical support to the overall administration of CWS operations. PPS staff review legislation and draft policy to guide employees and ensure alignment with various laws. Given the role of child welfare social workers, transparency around these guiding policies was enhanced during this fiscal year.

- PPS policy analysts updated 107 policies (new, reviewed or revised)
- Approximately 300 policies have been published to the public facing site for increased transparency

Success Stories

A Hotline social worker wrote, “I became very sick and after several weeks was hospitalized. The entire time I was ill my Supervisor and two of my coworkers wrote me daily to lift my spirits, offer prayers, and told me some really, really awful ‘dad jokes’. They kept me connected to my job, which I love so much. They let me know I was missed, in their thoughts, and extremely valued. One of my coworkers even offered to give me 48 hours of his sick time if I did not have enough to cover my absence. That social worker spirit is the cornerstone of this organization. My coworkers and I all started working during the start of the pandemic and we have not met face-to-face more

than once. I am sure people wondered if staff would be able to develop strong bonds when not having an in-office setting to cultivate relationships. I assure you these people have become strong allies, lifelong friends, and invaluable supports.”

North Inland Region hosts monthly Sunshine Squad Events, which are an opportunity to escape the stress and the hustle and bustle of our agency’s daily work. These events bring our entire region together, from interns to management, with one purpose, “To share laughs, and have fun while playing fun and competitive games.” These games include Trivia, Pictionary, Bingo, and when possible, in-person activities.

North also hosts monthly Empower Hours to come together and talk about STS and burnout. It is a drop-in format where everyone is welcome to attend and join in psychoeducational activities and to learn and share coping skills. Trauma check-ins also happen on an individual basis after critical incidents, such as removals, fatalities, or difficult cases and investigations.

The Central Region Diversity Equity and Inclusion group and House Committee planned the annual celebration of Freedom Day Juneteenth Potluck, Tuesday, June 14, 2022. Sixty-two staff attended. It was important to bring together staff to celebrate the first National recognition of Juneteenth, since its establishment as a Federal Holiday in June 2021. Juneteenth, also known as “Emancipation Day” or “Freedom Day,” commemorates June 19, 1865 when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas and gave word to enslaved African Americans that they were free; more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. The event featured a robust agenda, including a reflection from CWS’ Assistant Director, the singing of the Black National Anthem led by the DEI Program Coordinator, and a special Juneteenth historical oral presentation by the President of the Black Storytellers of San Diego, Inc. Participants were engaged with drumbeats and a call and response rhythmic performance. The son of a social worker also presented an original rap and there was a dance routine by community youth from the San Diego High Steppers Drill Team.

Summary

The County of San Diego Child Welfare Services (CWS) is committed to excellence in the delivery of culturally competent, family-centered and child-focused protective services. We are guided by three priorities: 1) Safely stabilize and preserve families; and if that is not possible, 2) Safely care for children and reunify children to their families of origin; and if reunification is not possible, 3) Safely support the development of permanency and lifelong relationships for children and youth.

In Fiscal Year 21-22, significant factors have contributed to the ongoing improvement of CWS and the services it provides, beginning with the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which reforms child welfare funding streams, offering an unprecedented opportunity to rethink how the agency approaches services for families and children. The FFPSA aims to fund services that will prevent children from ever entering care. CWS is working with

community partners, based on state guidance, to develop a vision of an enhanced prevention-based system of care in San Diego.

CWS remains committed to its prioritization of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and its efforts to become an antiracist system. The newly created Child Welfare Services Office of Equity oversees CWS efforts around DEI, addressing racial bias, disproportionality, disparities, inequities and diversity and inclusion issues involving communities of color, Immigrant/Refugee families, as well as gender and sexual minorities.

In the coming year, CWS will evolve into one of two branches within the Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB) structure. This change brings a fundamental shift toward prevention with the Office of Child and Family Strengthening on one side and the Office of Child Safety replacing CWS. The Office of Child Safety will be structured by function, rather than office, region, or program. The Office of Child and Family Strengthening will provide services without involving Office of Child Safety, unless it is determined there is a true need for foster care intervention. By improving coordination, communication and partnership between family serving organizations in San Diego, we intend to decrease the chance that at-risk families will ever have to engage with the child welfare system. This structural transformation will help build stronger families and communities so that even fewer children experience abuse and neglect.

CWS staff are committed to the prevention and reduction of child maltreatment through timely response, community education and family preservation. Our primary focus is to strengthen families so children grow up safe and nurtured. We maintain a workforce committed to reflection, appreciation, and ongoing learning with an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion and reducing the impacts of secondary traumatic stress on staff so that a well-supported workforce can better support the community we serve. For more information about Child Welfare Services, including additional outcomes, please visit our website at [Child Welfare Services](#).