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Who Is The CCR Team?

Welcome to the first edition of the CCR Newsflash newsletter brought to you from the Continuum of Care Reform Branch. This newsletter will be published monthly and sent to a wide array of stakeholders. More frequent publications will be distributed as needed. We welcome your suggestions and questions, which can be sent by email to ccr@dss.ca.gov.

The Continuum of Care Reform Branch was developed in September 2015 and includes five units:

- Program and Services (Rami Chand, Mai Yer Vang, Irma Munoz, Rosalind Hyde)
- Licensing and Regulations (Ahmed Nemr, Shanie Humbert-Rico)
- Performance and Outcomes (Erika Braccialini, Paula Ensele, Gina Jones, Anetria Turner)
- Policy (Teresa Owensby, Lee Turner)
- Resource Family Approval (Kim Wrigley, Kendra Ellmendorf, Christina Desmet, Rebecca Buchmiller)
- Stakeholder Collaboration, Outreach, and Training (Theresa Thurmond, Tracy Urban, Loretta Miller)

The branch also includes an Office Technician (Tobias Lake), a Branch Chief (vacant), and Bureau Chief (Sara Rogers). The Branch is also supported closely by the Foster Care Audits and Rates Bureau, Community Care Licensing Division, staff from the legal and fiscal departments, and several consultants from CFPIC, Shared Vision Consultants, CWDA, DHCS, and CBHDA.

“The goal for all children in care is to live in a stable home where they, their parents and their caregivers have a voice in defining their needs and placement, and when necessary, specialized trauma-informed services are provided to support successful development and relationships.”

-CDSS Director Will Lightborne

What Is The Continuum Of Care Reform

Continuum of Care Reform, or AB 403, authorized by Assembly Bill 403 (Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015) is a comprehensive reform of the foster care system that is the culmination of years of effort. Through the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders (youth, parents, probation, tribes, mental health, and others), this law was signed in October 2015 and is being implemented to ensure that foster youth have the opportunity to grow up in permanent supportive homes and to become self-sufficient, successful adults.

The intent of the law is to:

- Increase the number of children placed with resource families.
- Improve the assessment process to help make sure that the first out-of-home placement is the right one.
- Provide counties with more funding and support to better recruit and train resource families.
- Transform the group home system and replace it with short-term residential treatment programs that will provide temporary specialized support.
- Create a time line to phase in changes and recommendations.

Youth Voice Making A Difference



Senior Youth Engagement Program (YEP) Ambassador Briana Saldivar and County Welfare Director’s Association CCR Consultant Jennie Pettet facilitate discussions at the CCR Youth Convening. See page 3 for more info.

The Key to the Success of CCR: CCR Workgroups!

....Committed stakeholders from across California have joined state staff in developing the essential elements of CCR in the following workgroups:

CCR State/County Team: Monthly meeting of state and county administrators from CDSS, DHCS, CWDA, CPOC, CBHDA, and CSAC. Next meeting is June 16, 2016, County Behavioral Health Directors Association, 3pm-5 pm. By invitation only. Includes Child and Family Team and County Review of Program Statement subworkgroups. Contact Tracy.Urban@dss.ca.gov.

CCR Stakeholder Implementation Advisory Committee: Committee purpose is to obtain input and recommendations from stakeholders on policy, best practices, and other aspects of CCR implementation. Participants include various stakeholders who meet quarterly. Next meeting is July 26, CDSS Auditorium, 1pm-4pm. Contact Loretta.Miller@dss.ca.gov.

CCR Foster Family Agency (FFA)/STRTP Workgroup: Workgroup purpose is to address AB403 requirements for both facility types and provide policy recommendations for the implementation of CCR. Next meeting is July 22 and will focus on Interim Regulations & Instructions, Group Home Extensions, and Mental Health Certification Requirements.

Mental Health Workgroup: This workgroup is convened by the Department of Health Care Services with the purpose of providing guidance regarding Mental Health Plans and Mental Health Certifications. The workgroup kicked off with an identification of over 12 priority issues that will be addressed. The May revision of the State Budget has identified additional funding for Mental Health representatives for the Child and Family Team meetings. Next meeting is June 27. Contact Michelle Taylor at michele.taylor@dhcs.ca.gov.

Training: The workgroup conducted a gap analysis with stakeholders to determine training needs across the Child Welfare system including county staff, resource families, provider staff and others. Several training action items have been identified such as expansion of E-learning for resource families, incorporation of CCR into Child Welfare and Probation staff core training, and statewide consistency in the training of culturally relevant and trauma informed services for children, youth, resource families, and FFA and STRTP providers. In support of these efforts, California has been selected as one of eight states to pilot the Adoption Competency Training with a focus on social workers, probation officers, mental health staff, and FFA and STRTP providers. The CCR Branch is working with the National Training Institute on implementation of the pilot.

Performance and Oversight Workgroup: Various stakeholders meet with the purpose of developing a coordinated oversight plan for FFA and STRTP providers, including the development of provider performance measures and satisfaction surveys. Volunteers will be solicited for specialized sub workgroups. For additional information or questions, contact ccroversight@dss.ca.gov.

Rates: Includes various stakeholders with the purpose of developing a rate structure for home based family care systems and STRTPs. The CCR Home Based Family Care and the Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program rates and structure were released with the May Revised Governors Budget. CDSS has engaged, and will continue to engage counties, advocates, and other stakeholders regarding questions, concerns, and the implementation process associated with the new Rates and the Level of Care structure. The new structure essentially shifts from an age-based rate and Level of Care structure to a rate determination associated with the needs of children and youth. The Foster Care and Audits Rates Branch will be releasing its standard CNI (California Necessities Index) Rates Letter once the State Fiscal Year 2016/2017 budget is approved. A separate Rates Letter will be issued announcing the new Rate Structure and other related information.

CCR Unit Updates

Performance and Oversight Unit: The unit produces quarterly RCL Placement data profiles for counties. These reports are distributed to the child welfare directors, probation chiefs, and behavioral health directors and include a detailed methodology, point in time data, data for RCL 12 and 14 placements, out-of-state placements, and breakouts by ethnicity.

Licensing and Regulations Implementation: (formerly known as the STRTP Unit) is developing draft interim regulations on the provisional STRTP license and new FFA licensure requirements, including substantial changes to the Program Statement components of license applications. Additionally this unit is revising existing license forms and guides or instruction booklets pertaining to the Plans of Operation and Program Statements.

Program and Services: The unit is developing county, FFA, and STRTP implementation guides; the unit is also developing an optional process for county review of program statements, extension requests for group homes, and facilitation of the Probation Workgroup.

Recruitment, Retention, and Support of Resource Families

One of the most critical objectives of the CCR is to increase the availability of home based placements (resource families) through innovative recruitment, retention and support strategies. Counties, FFA, and STRTP providers, and stakeholders must work together to identify new and effective ways to work with current and potential resource families and to improve recruitment and family finding for youth transitioning from congregate care.

In order to assist in this effort, the state provided upfront financial resources to counties under the Foster Parent Retention and Recruitment Support program for the Fiscal Year (FPPRS) program for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2015/16 and proposes an expansion of the program in the SFY 2016/17 proposed Governor's Budget. County expenditures will be tracked through the claiming process and counties will be required to report the outcomes achieved through the use of the funds.

According to statute, the FPPRS funds can be spent on the following:

- staffing to provide and improve direct services and supports to licensed foster family homes, approved resource families, and relative caregivers, and to remove any barriers in those areas defined as priorities in the county implementation plan and subsequent reports on outcomes;
- exceptional child needs, not covered by the caregiver-specific rate that would normalize the child's experience, stabilize the placement, or enhance the child's well-being;
- child care for licensed foster parents, approved resource families, and relative caregivers;
- intensive relative finding, engagement, and navigation efforts;
- emerging technological, evidence-informed, or other nontraditional approaches to outreach to potential foster family homes, resource families, and relatives.

Currently the SFY 2015-16 FPPRS funds awarded to counties must be expended by June 30, 2016, because there is not rollover authority for the SFY 2015/16 funds. However, please note, there is proposed budget bill language that gives the authority for the FPPRS 2015/16 unspent funds to be rolled over to SFY 2016/17. Once the 2016 Budget Act is signed by the Governor, CDSS will be working in conjunction with CWDA on the county specific methodology distribution for the unspent funds.

Resource Family Approval (RFA)

An essential component of CCR is the Resource Family Approval program, whose goals is the implementation of a streamlined, unified family-friendly approach to developing home-based placements for children in the Child Welfare and Probation systems. All new resource families in California will participate in RFA effective 1.1/17.(RFA)

RFA Implementation is guided by Written Directives, and the most recent release, Version 2.1 is posted on the RFA website. Version 3 will be released in July 2016 and an All County Letter with more detailed information regarding the submission of implementation plans, CWS/CMS instructions, social worker competencies and other information will be provided to stakeholders in July 2016. The template for the implementation plan has been updated and available on the CDSS RFA website.

- Counties are being supported by monthly implementation workgroup meetings for the early implementing counties in addition to regional CWDA meetings that provide more detailed technical assistance on the county implementation plans to the counties that have not yet implemented RFA. Child Welfare and Probation staff are welcome attending these meetings.
- Five Foster Family Agencies (FFAs), Aldea Children and Family Services, Aspiranet, Bienvenidos Children's Center, Family Care Network, inc. and Lilliput Children's Services, have been selected by CDSS to be early implementers of the RFA Program. The providers are meeting with CDSS to problem solve, share progress, and to receive training and technical assistance. The goal is for the FFAs to pilot the process beginning in August 2016. Additional information about RFA is on the CalSWEC website at [RFA Toolkit](#) or by email at RFA@dss.ca.gov.

STRTC Now STRTP

Following a considerable amount of input from stakeholders, the Department of Social Services has changed the name of STRTC (Short Term Residential Treatment Center) to STRTP (Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program). Stakeholders expressed concerns about the stigma associated with the words "treatment center" prompting the change. The name change will be officially reflected in future amendments to AB403.

Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program or STRTP is a residential facility licensed by CDSS pursuant to Section 1562.01 [Health and Safety Code] and operated by any public agency or private organization. An STRTP will provide short-term, specialized, and intensive treatment, and 24-hour care and supervision to children and youth who have been assessed by an interagency placement committee, as recommended by a Child and Family Team (CFT), to require this intensive level of care.

Youth Making a Difference for CCR

As a result of stakeholder concerns about the impact of negative messaging about CCR to youth and their caregivers, on May 5th, over 100 stakeholders including current and former foster youth, joined with county, state, and community partners to answer three key questions regarding the Continuum of Care Reform:

- How can/should youth be involved in changes to group homes and foster homes;
- How can we work together to support youth engagement in changes to group homes and foster homes; and
- What should be our next steps?

Participants recommended more than 150 distinct actionable ideas for engaging youth in the CCR. The convening was a result of stakeholder's concern about the impact of negative messaging of the CCR on youth and the staff and caregivers who work closely with youth. The recommendations will be released this summer in a brochure format. Contact Youth Engagement Project Coordinator, AlyssumMaguire@cfpic.org or (530) 520-1676.

CCR Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following Frequently Asked Questions have been gathered from the CCR email box and questions asked at CCR workgroups or presentations. The list will be updated on a continuous basis and will be listed on the CDSS internet page.

Q1: Once the STRTPs have transitioned January 1, 2017, how long is “short term” considered? I have heard that the period is six months.

A: The amount of time a child/youth is in the STRTP is based upon an assessment of the child or youth’s needs. Some placements will require additional time based upon youth completing specialized programs. The placement should be assessed at six months and a process will be developed for county review and signature authority for extending placements.

Q2: Is it a requirement for an FFA to contract to provide Mental Health Services?

A: No, it is not necessary for an FFA to contract to provide Mental Health Services. But FFAs must either provide or arrange for Mental Health Services to occur. The FFA must demonstrate a relationship with those available services to ensure the child or youth has access to the needed services. If you would like to become a provider of Mental Health Services or have a TFC program, you will need to be Medi-Cal Certified and have a Contract with the Mental Health Plan (MHP). Stay tuned for more information regarding the process.

Q3: Will the out-of-state group homes be required to transition to STRTPs?

A: Yes, the out-of-state group homes are required to follow the same requirements and standards under AB403.

Q4: Is it a requirement for an FFA to contract to provide Core Services?

A: No, it is not necessary but FFAs must either provide or make available each core service. The FFA must demonstrate a relationship with available services to ensure the child or youth has access to the needed services.

Q5: If a group home or FFA is currently working on accreditation but may not be completed by January 1, 2017, will the new rate be tied to accreditation?

A: Providers will receive the new rate effective 1/1/17 but it will be a provisional rate until you are accredited and Mental Health certified. You will have until 1/1/19 to complete both the accreditation and MH certification with check points at 12 months and 18 months. If you need more time to become accredited and certified you can ask for an extension, which will be reviewed on a case basis.

Q6: Does a relative have to be approved as a resource family before a child is placed with the relative?

A: No, following a check of the home and background checks, the child may be placed as an emergency placement pending the completion of the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Process

Q7: Are Regional Center homes affected by CCR?

A: Dual agency children/youth placed in Regional Center vendorized homes or the Regional Center Small Group/Care Homes are not required to meet the STRTP requirements under AB403.

Q8: Will every youth in an STRTP receive Specialty Mental Health Services?

A: While it is assumed that a youth in placement in an STRTP is experiencing symptoms or demonstrating behaviors which are demonstrable or observable and necessitating care at this level, the determination as to which types of mental health, substance abuse or other services and supports will be determined by the counties’ screening and assessment processes in collaboration with the county Mental Health Plan.

Children and Family Services Integrated Practice Technical Assistance Calls

The California Department of Social Services and Department of Health Care Services host a monthly call to discuss questions and issues regarding Child Welfare and Mental Health integrated practice. Topics covered include all aspects of the CCR, Pathways to Mental Health Services (Core Practice Model), Intensive Care Coordination, Intensive Home-Based Services), and Therapeutic Foster Care. When: First Wednesday of each month Phone: 877-922-9924, Pass Code: 144611

Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Implementation Committee Meetings

The TFC Implementation Committee met on April 28, 2016 and focused on the final steps for the TFC Model and Parent Qualifications. The committee will continue to meet bi-monthly and the next meeting is scheduled for June 30, 2016 with future meetings planned for August 19th and October 17th.

Tribal Engagement

CDSS has continued to invite tribal stakeholders to the CCR workgroups in order to continue the collaboration already established prior to the signing of AB403. CDSS has been working on a Tribal Consultation Policy with Federally Recognized Tribes and is planning to pilot the Tribal Consultation Policy with the implementation of the Continuum Of Care Reform Branch.

CCR Communication Tools

CCR Overview: CDSS has developed a webinar that is prerecorded and available on the California Social Work Education Center website (link). The webinar provides an overview of CCR and the provisions of AB 403, and the framework for implementation. Link: Center <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/continuum-care-reform>

CDSS Internet Webpage: Webpage that will include a variety of information including the CCR Fact Sheets, links to Assembly Bill 403, and calendar of presentations or workgroups. Link: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/P4869.htm>

CDSS Extranet: The CCR Extranet will be the mechanism for posting and sharing documents between CDSS and stakeholders. The Extranet will also include calendars of presentations and workgroups: Link: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/ccr/>

CCR Tool Kit on CalSWEC Website: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/toolkits/continuum-care-reform-ccr>

CCR Email Box: ccr@dss.ca.gov: The initial portal for stakeholders to ask questions and to be connected with CCR workgroup.

CCR Fact Sheets: Several short documents on key topics such as Home Based Family Care, Assessment, Probation, etc. that serve as informational leaflets.

Additional CCR Updates

- A decision has been made to pilot the use of the TOP (Treatment Outcome Package) and CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths) assessment tools. Both tools assess a child or youth's needs in order to determine a level of care. CDSS is in conversation with the counties who have volunteered to pilot the tools. These tools will not replace the Mental Health Assessment.
- The County Implementation Guide will be released as an attachment to the CCR ACIN on AB 403
- CDSS is developing regional collaborative meetings that will begin the Fall of 2016 to provide technical assistance to the counties.
- Several FFAs have volunteered to mentor other FFAs in the accreditation process. Contact Jerry Johnson with The COFFA (Coalition of Foster Family Agencies) at jerry_johnson@coffa.org or 209-988-8348.
- California has been selected one out of eight states to pilot the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative developed by the National Training Institute. The NTI is being implemented by the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.), a national leader in adoption-competent support with foster and adopted children and adults, their families and the network of professionals who assist them. In addition to its mental health services, C.A.S.E. provides training opportunities through workshops, seminars, and webinars. C.A.S.E. has led the national movement in building an adoption competent workforce through its nationally acclaimed, evidenced informed, manualized, intensive, and clinically-focused *Training for Adoption Competency (TAC)* now in 15 states.

Probation Workgroup to Start in July

In recognizing the unique circumstances of Probation youth and the need to increase the availability of home-based placement and support options for those youth CDSS will be convening a Probation Workgroup in July.

AB403 has several benchmarks specific to Probation Departments to help build this capacity, including the development of strategies to recruit, approve, retain, and support foster homes for Probation youth. Twelve Probation departments were awarded the Foster Parent Recruitment Retention and Support (FPRRS) funding for FY 2015/16 to identify, engage, and support kinship resource families. Additional Probation Departments joined with Child Welfare Departments in submitting plans and receiving funding. Probation will be offered the opportunity to make requests for the FPRRS funding in the next fiscal cycle. Probation departments are also invited to participate in RFA regional convenings.