

Quality and Productivity Commission
27th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Saluting County Excellence"

48.0

2013 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):
NAME OF PROJECT: THE ART OF PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: APRIL 2002
(Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before June 30, 2012)

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner

In April, 2002, in response to recommendations resulting from an audit of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Board of Supervisors passed a motion requiring the Department to provide written reports regarding child deaths within Los Angeles County. The Critical Incident and Child Fatality (CICF) section was formed in order to serve as the Department's link to the Board of Supervisors and County Counsel in order to provide them with these mandated reports on child deaths.

The Critical Incident/Child Fatality Review process provides a comprehensive review of critical injuries and fatalities that occur in connection with the county's child protective/foster care services program. These reviews enhance immediate child safety; identify and recommend corrections to systemic issues contributing to such occurrences, provide needed information to the Board of Supervisors and County Counsel, and reduce the county's exposure to related litigation.

(1) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ESTIMATED/ACTUAL BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$ 0	X
SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Children and Family Services 425 Shatto Place Los Angeles, CA 90020			TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-351-5600	
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Francesca LeRue, Division Chief			TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-738-3000 EMAIL leruef@dcfs.lacounty.gov	
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE <small>(PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)</small> Tricia Denson SIGNATURE ON FILE		DATE 06/24/2013	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-739-6435 EMAIL densot@dcfs.lacounty.gov	
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Phillip L Browning 		DATE	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-351-5600	

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Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: THE ARRT OF PROMOTING CHILD SAFETY

FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project, written in plain language. Include a discussion of the technology and linkage to the County Strategic Plan. The description should identify Performance Measures.

CHALLENGE

SOLUTION

BENEFITS

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS):

The Risk Management Critical Incident/Child Fatality (CI/CF) Section receives notifications of all child fatalities and near fatalities that occur in Los Angeles County. Upon receipt of each notification, CI/CF is responsible for determining if the family associated with the fatality or near fatality has current and/or prior child welfare involvement within Los Angeles County. If it is determined that there is past and/or present child welfare involvement within Los Angeles County, CI/CF will conduct a thorough analysis of that history in order to assess the quality of service delivery and identify immediate safety concerns to be addressed, and to discuss, recommend correction on, and track and report systemic issues identified through the review process.

The analysis requires familiarity in areas such as case work practice; services and programs provided by the Department as well as services provided by community partners, and the Department's policies. The analysis includes reviews of all case notes completed by field social workers, court reports completed by social workers, minute orders from court hearings, medical records as documented within the Child Welfare Services/Case Management Services (CWS/CMS) database, reviews of other documents completed regarding the case (referrals to service providers, etc.), and discussion with regional staff knowledgeable about the individual case.

In those instances where a determination is made that deficiencies have contributed to the fatality or near fatality of a child; and/or that there are systemic or operational areas of concern requiring further exploration; and/or the quality of service delivery or best practice did not appear to be adhered to, an Administrative Review Roundtable (ARRT) is convened. Department executives and staff from the involved DCFS regional office(s) are required to attend the ARRTs. Additional participants normally include County Counsel, other senior level managers, as well as staff from the Department's Internal Affairs and Performance Management Sections.

The objective of an ARRT is to highlight, with the assistance of legal counsel, the operational and systemic deficiencies identified during the case analysis which impede the Department's ability to ensure child safety.

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Issues and outcomes of the ARRT meetings are tracked and the information is presented to the Board of Supervisors and County Counsel in a report which is ultimately discussed with the Board of Supervisors. This allows for the joint development or corrective action plans and policies, reducing the Department's exposure to litigation and further increasing the safety of the children within Los Angeles County.

CI/CF utilizes the California database on child welfare, Child Welfare Services/Case Management Services (CWS/CMS, which is California's version of the federal Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System), an internal database known as Child Incident and Fatality Tracking (CIFT), eSCARS (Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Report), and various public websites to access media reports.

The linkage to the County Strategic Plan is through Operational Effectiveness. The CICF goal is to improve child welfare practice and policy. The ARRT process is a vehicle by which case-practice, operational and systemic issues are discussed to determine follow up actions to avoid litigations and improve case work practice. Some examples are amending policies, training enhancements or new training courses.

The program's Performance measures are based on the decrease of operational issues identified in prior cases, for example a decrease in the misuse of "unfounded" determinations, and providing the mandated reports for the Board of Supervisors on child deaths.

The ARRT's process' top priority is child safety. The first item on the agenda is discussion of the surviving children; their current status and needs, and developing a list of tasks with responsible parties to ensure the child (ren)'s safety and wellbeing. We further extend child safety by evaluating the social work staff in a post-ARRT meeting. Upper level managers along with our Human Resources' Performance Management discuss if safeguards and action are indicated such as conducting a case review of the social work staff to determine if there are trends in their practice and skills; if the social work staff should be placed on desk duty; and if the matter needs to be referred to Internal Affairs for an investigation.

As a result of the emphasis on education in the ARRT process a training program and curriculum was developed that utilized real life cases in which there were multiple opportunities to intervene and perhaps avoid a child death. The training was designed to navigate an new social work trainee or a seasoned social worker through an entire case to provide insight and education into the complex nature of an actual case with the goal of learning from past missteps, and to provide a cognitive imprint on the trainee/student to recall "lessons learned" from past missteps so that similar missteps would be less likely to occur in future cases or investigations.

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As a result of analysis within an ARRT, policies within the Department have been identified as problematic and subject to misinterpretation by social workers. Such policies have been amended as a result of recommendations from an ARRT.

Additionally, new policies have come into existence as a result of ARRTs. One such policy requires that when a parent refuses to submit to a drug test, the social worker must consult with one of the Department's attorney's about the case. In the past, a parent refusing a drug test effectively prevented the Department from conducting a thorough investigation of possible substance abuse, because without a positive drug test it was believed that there would not be enough evidence for a Court to support removal of the children from a home. Now through consultation with an attorney, social workers are assisting in analyzing available evidence in an investigation to determine if there is enough without a drug test to show that child safety issues exist.

During case analysis it was sometimes discovered that safety measures were not utilized to their full advantage. One such safety measure is the Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting. TDM meetings are held when a child is at risk for removal from parents, moved from one placement to another, or removed from placement and reunified with a parent or guardian. During the TDM a child-centered safety action plan is created that is agreed upon by the meeting or "team" participants.

Occasionally, the safety plans that were created during TDM meetings were insufficient to adequately address all of the concerns regarding the child. Through the ARRT process concerns were brought to the attention of the management team that oversees the TDM program model and the TDM facilitators. Through hindsight case analysis it became clear that a proper safety plan or alternative plan may have saved a child's life. Therefore because of the ARRT process several changes were implemented to the TDM process which included roundtable discussions with TDM facilitators regarding their obligation to be thoroughly familiar with the case issues, their need to maintain objectivity not neutrality, and their mandate to conference the case with regional management if there was concern that the created plan did not adequately ensure child safety.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFIT): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation.

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL= 12 MONTHS ONLY