

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Executive Office

SUBMITTAL DATE:
August 24, 2004

SUBJECT: Response to the Grand Jury Report: Riverside County Department of Social Services – Children’s Service Division – Child Protective Services, Blythe

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Approve with or without modifications, the attached response to the Grand Jury’s recommendations regarding the Riverside County Department of Social Services – Children’s Service Division – Child Protective Services, Blythe
- 2) Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board’s finalized response to the Grand Jury, to the Presiding Judge, and the County Clerk-Recorder (for mandatory filing with the State).

BACKGROUND: On July 13, 2004, the Board directed staff to prepare a draft of the Board’s response to the Grand Jury’s report regarding the Riverside County Department of Social Services – Children’s Service Division – Child Protective Services, Blythe.

Section 933 (c) of the Penal Code requires that the Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury’s recommendations pertaining to the matters under the control of the Board, and that a response be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days.

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Rhonda King

RHONDA KING
Deputy County Executive Officer

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ N/A	In Current Year Budget:
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$	Budget Adjustment:
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$	For Fiscal Year:

SOURCE OF FUNDS:	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote <input type="checkbox"/>

G.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE.

County Executive Office Signature _____ *[Signature]*

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Wilson, seconded by Supervisor Tavaglione and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Buster, Tavaglione, Venable, Wilson and Ashley
 Noes: None
 Absent: None
 Date: August 24, 2004
 cc: E.O., Grand Jury, Presiding Judge, DPSS CPS, Co. Clerk & Recorders (?)

Nancy Romero
Clerk of the Board
By: *[Signature]*
Deputy

Policy
 Policy
 Consent
 Consent
 Not Recommended
 No Eval. Cncl.

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
RESPONSE TO FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

FINDINGS:

Finding Number 1:

Blythe CPS Office does not have reasonable access to community services and county support systems that are required to implement the vision and missions of the Children's Service Division. Although money has been appropriated in the budget, the following services and support systems are not available in the Blythe Community:

- *Foster Care Facility*
- *Temporary Shelter*
- *Sufficient number of Staff*
- *Necessary Mental Health Department Support*

Response:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

DPSS currently has 7 licensed foster homes in Blythe. All have been contacted to request their assistance in providing shelter care on a temporary basis. One Blythe foster parent has agreed to provide three shelter beds for children 0-10 years of age. We will initiate this process with her immediately. We will aggressively pursue recruitment of shelter facilities in Blythe for children 11-18.

An RFP was initiated in early 2004 for a professional Foster Parent Recruiter. A provider was selected specifically for the desert area to include Blythe. The contract for this provider has been recently approved. The deputy director and the regional manager of placement services will be meeting with this provider in the next few weeks to establish the priorities for the desert area recruitment beginning with Blythe. Additionally, a contract has been established for a Parent Partner Program. This program will provide experienced foster parents to support and assist newly recruited foster parents. This program is also specifically focused on the desert area and Blythe.

Access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services for adults and minors is limited due to insufficient fiscal and staffing resources within the Department of Mental Health.

Finding Number 2:

The CPS, Blythe Office, does not have security-warning devices installed nor does it utilize an on-site security officer to provide protection for the staff. In more than one instance, angry parents or family members have threatened social workers.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

A new office for Blythe CPS was just completed. The interface barrier and panic buttons have been installed and are operational in the receptionist work area. The building alarms are now operational for the CPS/APS building and notify law enforcement of the need for immediate assistance. These devices are working well and provide added safety for the Blythe CPS clerical and social work staff.

Wireless panic buttons are installed at the new CPS, Blythe Office. The new wireless system can accommodate up to eight activators. Currently one activator is available with two on order. The activators will be issued by the CPS supervisor for use during family meetings or parental conferences. When the panic button is pushed, supervisors and staff will be alerted of a problem. Once on scene, the supervisor or staff can notify the police if deemed necessary. Interface barriers are installed to protect clerical staff.

Finding Number 3:

Children who are removed from their home during late evening or early morning hours due to neglect or abuse are held in the CPS Office due to the unavailability of temporary shelters or Foster Care facilities. A staff member must remain awake to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Response:

Respondent disagrees with the finding.

Emergency Standby/Call-Back staff is available to respond to late night or early morning emergencies. If an immediate relative placement cannot be identified for a child, CPS staff do return to the CPS office to work with placement staff to identify the most appropriate home for the child's needs. This process can take up to two hours. During this period of time the staff is responsible for the child's safety and well being, providing food, toys, comfort and other necessities.

Finding Number 4:

In Blythe there are no temporary shelters or Foster Care Facilities for child placement. Children who are removed from the home in Blythe, are transported by CPS staff members to Indio or more distance locations within Riverside County; i.e. Moreno Valley, Corona and Riverside. These trips can take up to 6-8 hours.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

See response to Recommendation Number #3.

Finding Number 5:

Blythe CPS staff, which transport children (mid-day to late evening) to cities in Western Riverside County, are expected to work their normal work schedule the following day without sufficient rest.

Response:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

CPS staff are allowed to take flex-time the following day to obtain the rest they need before returning to work.

Finding Number 6:

In 2003, Blythe CPS staff recorded 228 trips out of Blythe. Approximately seventy percent (70%) of these trips were made to seven (7) cities in Riverside County including Indio (85), Moreno Valley (17), Corona (12), Cathedral City (12), Desert Hot Springs (11), Rancho Mirage (10), and Riverside (11). The purpose of the trips were for:

- ***Family Visits***
- ***Child Placement***
- ***Court Appearances***
- ***Staff Training***

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

Finding Number 7:

Children, who are removed from their home in Blythe due to neglect or abuse, linger in the Foster Care System while their parents enter Department of Mental Health programs for counseling to become more responsible parents, as required by the courts.

Response:

Respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.

Children removed from their homes in Blythe are placed with relatives or licensed foster parents, providing them with a safe and nurturing home environment. DPSS must adhere to strict Court timelines which require that children are reunified with their parents or placed in an alternative living arrangement. We disagree that children, "linger" in Foster Care.

The Department of Mental Health acknowledges there is limited access to mental health and substance abuse services in the Blythe Mental Health and Substance Abuse clinic. This limited access, however, is not a reason for children to remain in foster care, as Blythe CPS makes other arrangements for treatment whenever possible. Length of stay in foster care is determined by the Court, and not by access to MH treatment.

Finding Number 8:

Blythe CPS staff were using vehicles later to be found defective to transport children to placement locations in Riverside County. On two (2) separate occasions while transporting children and family members CPS staff experienced major mechanical problems, including brake malfunction and parts falling off the vehicle.

Response:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

DPSS had not received any complaints regarding malfunctioning vehicles. However, all of the DPSS vehicles assigned to Blythe have since had a thorough safety inspection. Of the seven vehicles assigned, four required minor repairs which have been completed and one vehicle was replaced. The policy for vehicle dispatchers is being updated to reflect the requirement that preventative maintenance service be conducted every 4,000 miles. In addition, arrangements will be made through County Fleet Services to check out other vehicles while they are being serviced in order to ensure adequate availability of cars for the workers. County Fleet Services has been very responsive to our maintenance needs.

Finding Number 9:

Blythe CPS Teleconference system, which is utilized for training and would reduce traveling to Indio, has been inoperative for approximately two years.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

Operational teleconferencing equipment has been placed in the recently remodeled Blythe CPS office conference room. Currently, the CPS supervisor and staff are making use of this equipment for program meetings, supervisor meetings and trainings.

Finding Number 10:

The Blythe CPS Office budgeted position and actual staffing are shown in the chart below:

Position Title	Budgeted	Actual
Social Worker	5	3
Office Assistant	1	1
Receptionist	1	0
Social Service Assistant	1	1
Total	8	5

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

One additional Social Worker has been reassigned to Child Protective Services in Blythe. This social worker started Induction Training on July 26, 2004 and the social worker will be ready to assume the duties and responsibility of a Children's Services Social Worker V in the Blythe CPS office on September 2, 2004. One Office Assistant III was hired for the Blythe CPS office on June 30, 2004. This OA III is assigned to the reception desk and manages other duties as assigned by her supervisor.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation Number 1:

Department of Social Services immediately hire or reassign the number of social workers, as budgeted, in Blythe to adequately support the mission of Children's Service Division.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

One additional Social Worker has been reassigned to Child Protective Services in Blythe. This social worker started Induction Training on July 26, 2004 and the social worker will be ready to assume the duties and responsibility of a Children's Services Social Worker V in the Blythe CPS office on September 2, 2004. One Office Assistant III was hired for the Blythe CPS office on June 30, 2004. This OA III is assigned to the reception desk and manages other duties as assigned by her supervisor.

Recommendation Number 2:

Establish a temporary public shelter or contract with a local provider to provide temporary shelter of placement children who are removed from their homes during late evening or early morning hours.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The department currently has 7 licensed foster homes in Blythe. All have been contacted to request their assistance in providing shelter care on a temporary basis. One Blythe foster parent has agreed to provide three shelter beds for children 0-10 years of age. We will initiate this process with her immediately. We will aggressively pursue recruitment of shelter facilities in Blythe for children 11-18.

Recommendation Number 3:

Establish new Foster Care Provider contracts and/or reactivate contracts with former Foster Care providers for child placements, with the approval of Community Care Licensing.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

An RFP was initiated in early 2004 for a professional Foster Parent Recruiter. A provider was selected specifically for the desert area to include Blythe. The contract for this provider has been recently approved. The deputy director and the regional manager of placement services will be meeting with this provider in the next few weeks to establish the priorities for the desert area recruitment beginning with Blythe. Additionally, a contract has been established for a Parent Partner Program. This program will provide experienced foster parents to support and assist newly recruited foster parents. This program is also specifically focused on the desert area and Blythe.

Recommendation Number 4:

Repair, update and maintain the teleconferencing system in the Blythe CPS Office to reduce the number of trips for staff training.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

Operational teleconferencing equipment has been placed in the Blythe CPS office conference room. Currently, the CPS supervisor and staff are making use of this equipment for program meetings, supervisor meetings and trainings.

Recommendation Number 5:

Riverside County Fleet Services Department elevate vehicle maintenance standards for county vehicles used by the Blythe Children's Service staff members to ensure reliable mechanical operations and maximum safety.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

All of the DPSS vehicles assigned to Blythe have had a thorough safety inspection. Of the seven vehicles assigned, four required minor repairs which have been completed and one vehicle has been replaced. The policy for vehicle dispatchers is being updated to reflect the requirement that preventative maintenance service be conducted every 4,000 miles. In addition, arrangements will be made through County Fleet Services to check out other vehicles while they are being serviced in order to ensure adequate availability of cars for the workers.

Recommendation Number 6:

The Department of Mental Health develop and implement a tracking system in Blythe to monitor the effectiveness of the Substance Abuse and other Mental Health counseling services provided to family members.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

- a. DPSS has indicated they will use the standardized referral form (DPSS 2212) to refer individuals for both substance abuse treatment and mental health services. DPSS has indicated they will attach, whenever possible, documentation of consent to release information, signed by the client (for adults) or parent/guardian (for minors), to allow the exchange of confidential patient information between CPS and MH/SA.
- b. A monthly meeting has been established, attended by staff from CPS and MH/SA, to exchange monthly updates on treatment status and progress for all cases open to both agencies (with signed consent of client). Client status and intervention plans are documented in the client's MH/SA record.
- c. MH/SA has developed a status update form, which is given to CPS whenever a barrier to successful treatment outcomes is identified (e.g., positive drug screen, failure to attend treatment, poor compliance with treatment, etc.)

Recommendation 7:

Install security devices (panic buttons, alarms, interface barriers between staff and the public) to alert the staff and law enforcement of possible danger and provide protection for the clerical staff.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

The interface barrier and panic buttons have been installed and are operational in the receptionist work area. The building alarms are now operational for the CPS/APS building and notify law enforcement of the need for immediate assistance. These devices are working well and provide added safety for the Blythe CPS clerical and social work staff.

Wireless panic buttons are installed at the new CPS, Blythe Office. The new wireless system can accommodate up to eight activators. Currently one activator is available with two on order. The activators will be issued by the CPS supervisor for use during family meetings or parental conferences. When the

panic button is pushed, supervisors and staff will be alerted of a problem. Once on scene, the supervisor or staff can notify the police if deemed necessary. Interface barriers are installed to protect clerical staff.

Recommendation Number 8:

The Department of Mental Health in Blythe, provide the court required Substance Abuse counseling and other needed Mental Health Services for family members prior to returning the child to their home.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

- a. DPSS will identify a source of funding for 1.0 FTE Clinical Therapist II position, assigned to the Blythe Mental Health clinic. This position will expand capacity to provide mental health services for adults and minors referred by Blythe/CPS.

Timeline for funding the position is 10/1/04. Timeline to recruit and hire for the position is predicted to be prior to 12/15/04.

- b. Dept. of Mental Health will fund a 1.0 FTE Behavioral Health Specialist III, assigned to the Blythe Clinic, to expand capacity to provide substance abuse services, including adults and children referred by Blythe CPS.