

Grand Jury Report

REQUIRED RESPONSE FORM

Grand Jury Report Title : MENDOCINO COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
"The Broken Process at Family and Children's Services"

Report Dated : May 7, 2024

Response Form Submitted By:

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road
Ukiah, CA 95482 (use address block as inserted on first page)

Response MUST be submitted, per Penal Code §933.05, no later than: August 7, 2024

I have reviewed the report and submit my responses to the FINDINGS portion of the report as follows:

I (we) agree with the Findings numbered:

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered below, and have *attached* a statement specifying any portion of the Finding that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons therefore.

I have reviewed the report and submit my responses to the RECOMMENDATIONS portion of the report as follows:

The following Recommendation(s) have been implemented and **attached, as required**, is a summary describing the implemented actions:

R10, R12, 13, R21

The following Recommendation(s) have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future; **attached, as required**, is a time frame for implementation:

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- The following Recommendation(s) require further analysis, and attached, as required, is an explanation and the scope and parameters of the planned analysis, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared, discussed and approved by the officer and/or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed: (This time frame shall not exceed six (6) months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report)
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- The following Recommendations will NOT be implemented because they are not warranted and/or are not deemed reasonable; attached, as required, is an explanation therefore:

R23

I have completed the above responses, and have attached, as required the following number of pages to this response form:

Number of Pages attached: 4

I understand that responses to Grand Jury Reports are public records. They will be posted on the Grand Jury website: www.mendocinocounty.org/government/grand-jury. The clerk of the responding agency is required to maintain a copy of the response.

I understand that I must submit this signed response form and any attachments as follows:

First Step: E-mail in pdf file format to:

- The Grand Jury Foreperson at: grandjury@mendocinocounty.org
- The Presiding Judge: grandjury@mendocino.courts.ca.gov

Second Step: Mail all originals to:

Mendocino County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 939
Ukiah, CA 95482

Printed Name: Maureen Mulheren

Title: Chair, Board of Supervisors

Signed:  Date: 12/17/24

MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT TITLED:

MENDOCINO COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
"The Broken Process at Family and Children's Services"

Discussion

The Board of Supervisors welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report titled "Mendocino County Family and Children's Services, 'The Broken Process at Family and Children's Services'". The Board appreciates the Grand Jury's deep dive into these issues concerning the families and children of Mendocino County.

Pursuant to the request of the Grand Jury, the Board is responding to the following:

- R10. Mendocino County implement a QA department in FCS. (To be completed by May 2025) F10

The recommendation has been implemented.

Mendocino County FCS has a quality assurance program. Mendocino County FCS provides quality assurance pursuant to the guidelines set forth by the California Department of Social Services as provided by All County Information Notices (ACIN) and All County Letters (ACL), including but not limited to ACIN I-84-16, ACL 15-24 and ACL 15-24.

See attachment R10 for a detailed description of the Mendocino County FCS quality assurance program.

- R12. Prior to the beginning of Fiscal Year 2025-26, the County budget provide more transparency concerning decoding and identifying line items and specifics of distribution and allocation of funds for FCS. (To be completed by January 2025) F12

The recommendation has been implemented.

The County budget currently includes line items and specifics of distribution and allocation of funds for FCS. The FCS budget narrative provides an overview of the services provided by FCS. The Budget Unit Detail pages for Social Services Administration and CalWORKS/Foster Care/Adoptions both list line items pertaining to FCS.

The FY 2023-24 Budget Book can be found at the following link, <https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/home/showdocument?id=61390&t=638351121897407916>. The FCS budget narrative begins on page 438, and Budget Unit Detail for Budget Units 5010 and 5130, which include FCS budget items, begin on page 442 (BU 5010) and page 446 (BU 5130).

- R13. Mendocino County use monies in the FCS budget for staffing, reducing overtime

and salary adjustments. (To be completed by January 2025) F13

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Board interprets this recommendation as relating to the salaries of social workers. On January 9, 2024, Mendocino County adopted a resolution approving a Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Mendocino and Related Agencies, and Service Employees' International Union, Local 1021, effective July 1, 2023-June 30, 2026 (SEIU MOU), which applies to social worker positions. The SEIU MOU provides that raises occur for social worker salaries over a period of two years so that these salaries will be at market by FY 25/26. Additionally, pursuant to the same MOU, Social Worker Assistants, Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors whose regular full-time assignment is Family and Children's Services receive a ten percent (10%) premium. The SEIU MOU also provides a bilingual pay premium of \$75.00 per pay period for positions which require bilingual skills on the average of ten percent (10%) or more of the employee's work, and a \$25.00 per pay period bilingual pay premium for positions which require bilingual skills on the average of less than ten percent (10%) of the employee's work time. The SEIU MOU also provides a five percent (5%) assignment premium for employees whose regular assignment is in the coastal region including Fort Bragg, Mendocino, Point Arena, or in Covelo.

The goal of offering market rate salaries is to attract people to these hard to fill positions and provide appropriate staffing.

- R21. FCS use all possible means to reference the California DSS Ombudsperson for information and assistance. (To be completed by October 2024) F21

The recommendation has been implemented.

Based on the section of the Grand Jury's report discussing the Ombuds Program, the Board is interpreting "California DSS Ombudsperson" to mean the California Foster Care Ombudsperson. A link to the California Foster Care Ombudsperson website has been placed on the Mendocino County Family and Children's Services website.

- R23. The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors create a committee whose sole mission is to independently and accurately evaluate the status of timely court filings by FCS. They will report their findings quarterly to the Board of Supervisors. (To be completed by October 2024) F7, F9, F10

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The status of court reports is information that is available through reports generated in the Family and Children's Services computer systems. This information will be presented to the Board quarterly through the CEO Report, beginning October 2024, without the need for a committee.

Attachment R10 – Board of Supervisors Response

FCS's quality assurance (QA) program follows the continuous quality improvement (CQI) guidelines outlined in CDSS All County Information Notice (ACIN) No. 1-84-16. ACIN No. 1-84-16 states that "... the goal of strengthening the state's quality assurance (QA) processes [is] through the model of continuous quality improvement (CQI)" (ACIN 1-14-16, Nov. 22, 2016, p. 2).

FCS's QA and CQI Process

QA evaluates past performance to ensure that services meet specific standards and mandates. CQI is a corrective process that identifies steps to improve service delivery, aiming for measurable improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, and performance. QA provides the necessary data for CQI projects.

Overview of Mendocino County FCS Quality Assurance Program Process:

1. **Assessment of Practice and Outcomes** - Managers, Supervisors, Operational Support, and Case Review (OSCR) Unit:
 - a. OSCR Unit conducts case reviews, collects data, and identifies areas for improvement.
 - b. FCS Leadership and Management review the areas identified as needing improvement and discuss practices during operational meetings.
2. **Data Utilization – Gather and Analyze Data** - OSCR Unit, HelpDesk Unit, Managers, Supervisors:
 - a. Case review feedback from program staff and California Department of Social Services ("CDSS")
 - b. County Self-Assessment (CSA) and System Improvement Plans (SIP):
 - i. CDSS requires an in-depth CSA every five years, including data mining, community surveys, focus groups, and social worker interviews.
 - ii. CDSS mandates a five-year SIP based on the CSA, identifying areas for improvement and outcome measures, with annual updates. The five-year SIP plan with annual updates has not yet been submitted or finalized with CDSS. FCS plans to work with CDSS to create an action plan moving forward.
 - c. Utilization of Databases:
 - i. Databases used by FCS provide monthly monitoring updates.
 - d. Gather feedback from FCS staff, families, and community providers.
3. **Define the Problem and Areas for Improvement** - Managers, Supervisors:
 - a. Evaluate and interpret relevant data, including CSA data.
 - b. Review applicable state mandates (ACLs, ACINs, CFLs).
 - c. Identify problems based on patterns, trends, and correlations.
4. **Design Interventions and Outcome Measures** - Managers, Supervisor(s) responsible for initiative:

- a. Ensure that FCS operations follow state mandates.
 - b. Review literature and other counties' procedures.
 - c. Solicit feedback from stakeholders, including staff.
 - d. Develop changes/programs/initiatives.
 - e. Define outcome measures/goals.
5. **Write Policy and Procedure** - Procedure Development and Training Unit
 6. **Train Staff in New Program/Protocol** - Procedure Development and Training Unit, Supervisor(s) responsible for initiative
 7. **Implement Changes/Program/Initiatives** – Managers, Supervisor(s) responsible for initiative
 8. **Solicit Feedback and Utilize Data Feedback** - OSCR Unit, HelpDesk Unit, Managers, Supervisors
 9. **Adjust Program if Needed** - Managers, Supervisors
 10. **Continuously Monitor and Evaluate** - OSCR Unit, HelpDesk Unit, Managers, Supervisors

The goal of FCS's QA and CQI is to ensure high-quality service delivery, meet mandates, and foster a high-performing, collaborative team. The process facilitates growth and inclusion, focusing on adding value to service provisions.