

# SHELTER CARE MASTER PLAN

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## SUMMARY

The County is mandated by the state of California to provide emergency care for children who cannot safely remain in the care of their parents or legal guardians. These facilities can be either public or privately operated shelters. Orange County is one of twelve counties in California to operate a public 24-hour emergency children's shelter. The Orange County shelter, Orangewood Children's Home, is located adjacent to Juvenile Hall and the Theo Lacy Jail. With a design capacity of 236 beds, Orangewood Children's Home is one of the largest in the state. The Social Services Agency's ten-year plan to expand emergency shelter capacity by an additional 280 beds—for a total of 516 beds—commencing in Fiscal Year 2000-01, is documented in the 1998 Shelter Care Master Plan. The plan recommends a three-phase expansion of County facilities on the closed Tustin and El Toro Marine Bases with a capital cost for design and construction of \$39.1 million. This plan is due to be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors in the first quarter of 2000.

The Grand Jury recommends the Board downsize this expansion plan or any plan increasing emergency shelter capacity for the following reasons:

1. The federal, state, and county governments are expanding prevention programs designed to keep children united with their families or maintained in the least restrictive family-like setting possible.
2. The Social Services Agency is adding resources to accelerate the placement process, in some cases completely bypassing Orangewood Children's Home.

The impact of these programs is to reduce the Orangewood Children's Home population and the average stay of that population.

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On August 17, 1999, members of the Orange County Grand Jury toured Orangewood Children's Home. This facility is a temporary 24-hour County shelter for dependent children, operating under the auspices of the Social Services Agency and the Juvenile Court.

Based on recent newspaper articles and the extensive orientation material prepared by the Social Services Agency, the Grand Jury expected to see an overcrowded facility. However, only 51 percent of the available beds were occupied (120 children for 236 beds).

After this August visit, the Grand Jury further reviewed the Agency-provided orientation material. Two documents in this information indicated that a possible explanation for the recent population decline may be the improved economy. This point of view, equating a good economy with reduced child abuse, seems reasonable. Law enforcement officials frequently advance this same theory in explaining the recent reduction in the crime rate.

However, were there more significant factors besides the healthy economy affecting the decline at Orangewood Children's Home? The search for an answer to this question started the Grand Jury on the path to developing a formal study on the population trends at Orangewood Children's Home.

## METHOD OF STUDY

Several reports and documents were reviewed that focused on the foster care system. The

**Twenty-six interviews were conducted as part of the fact-finding process.**

following reports played a key role in the findings and recommendations:

- *Critical Issues*, Orange County Rescue Mission, December 1998.
- *Little Hoover Commission Report* of August 1999.
- Orange County 1997/98 Grand Jury Report *Orangewood Admissions and the Placement Process*.

- Orange County Social Services Agency *Grand Jury Notebook*, 1999/2000.
- Social Services Agency *Business Plan*, January 1999.

Tours were taken of Juvenile Hall, Orangewood Children's Home (five visits), selected group homes (three visits), the Youth Resource Center in Santa Ana, homeless shelters (three visits), the Orangewood Foundation, and the San Diego County Emergency Shelter.

A survey was sent to the other eleven California counties currently operating 24-hour emergency shelters for children. Information was collected based on the following five questions:

1. What is the bed capacity of your shelter or shelters?
2. What was your average daily population for September 1999?
3. What was your average daily population for September 1998?
4. Do you have any plans to expand your capacity in the next three years?
5. If yes, by how many beds?

## **BACKGROUND**

The Child Abuse Registry (CAR) is the entry point into the Social Services Agency for families receiving child welfare services. CAR operates a 24-hour child-abuse hotline. Each year, CAR receives over 25,000 telephone calls and facsimiles regarding suspected child abuse. The senior social workers staffing CAR evaluate these reports alleging child abuse to determine if the children involved are in danger. The first priority of the social worker is to help children remain with their families, especially if it is the first CAR Report and the child does not appear to be in danger. In trying to keep the family together, a wide array of services is provided by the Social Services Agency.

Among these are:

- Mental health assistance
- In-home support services
- Parent education
- Respite care

**The 1999 Hoover Commission reports “only 15%” of California families losing children were provided with assistance prior to the event!**

These services, sometimes categorized as “prevention services,” have increased over the last several years. As resources have permitted, services such as day care, in-house tutoring, and transportation support have all been added. If all these efforts fail, a Welfare and Institutions Code Section 300 Petition is filed with the Juvenile Court for the protection of the child. A process map can be found in Appendix A.

Children being referred to Orangewood Children’s Home fall into the following categories:

- 37% neglect, lack of parental care and supervision
- 17% physical abuse
- 20% parents unable or unavailable to provide care/destitute
- 6% sexual molestation
- 12% sibling abuse
- 8% emotional abuse

## ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN’S HOME

**Only 12 of the 58 California Counties currently operate emergency shelters.**

As presently configured, Oranewood has a design capacity for 236 children. It began operations in 1985 when it replaced an older facility. Children at Oranewood are assigned to living units called “cottages” based on their age and, for older youth, gender. Recently, one cottage has been dedicated to the care of siblings. These cottages are arranged around an inner-courtyard, which creates a park-like setting. Each cottage contains a central living room, kitchen, and bedrooms. The residential units are clean, brightly decorated, and well-supplied with educational and recreational materials. When not attending the on-site school, the children have a full range of social and leisure activities. The “common core” recreational facilities are excellent:

- a wading pool
- a swimming pool
- a well-stocked library
- a large, well-equipped game room
- a large gymnasium
- a recently-refurbished ball field
- a large and very attractive dining hall
- several well-equipped playgrounds

### TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

As Table 1 below indicates, the Oranewood Children’s Home’s average daily population for 1999 was 110, or 47 percent of capacity. The 1999 average daily population will represent the lowest average since Oranewood Children’s Home opened in 1985. The average daily population in the five years prior to 1999 ranged from 231 to 265 children.

**TABLE 1**

<b>Oranewood Children’s Home 1998-99 Summary</b>		
<b>Average Daily Population</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1998	234	—
1999	110	-53.0%
<b>Average Length of Stay (Days)</b>		
1998	28.9	—
1999	20.8	-28.0%

The Grand Jury reviewed six other juvenile-activity measures to determine if they were exhibiting a significant drop in activity comparable to the population decrease at Orangewood Children’s Home.

- Child Abuse Registry Reports (Table 2)
- Family Maintenance Court (Table 2)
- Court petitions (Table 2)
- Children in Dependency (Table 3)
- Juveniles (under 18) in detention (Table 4)
- Population at other county-operated emergency shelters in California (Table 5)

**TABLE 2**

	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>1998/99</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Child-Abuse Registry Reports	33,791	25,312	-25.1 %
Family Maintenance (Court)	13,259	14,312	+7.9%
*Court Petitions filed	2,198	2,146	-2.4%

\*A petition is a legal document submitted to the court by the intake social worker, which contains allegations showing why a minor should be declared a dependent child of the Juvenile Court.

**TABLE 3**

<b>CHILDREN IN DEPENDENCY*</b>	
September 1998	4920
September 1999	4990
% Change	+1.4%

\*Includes children in family maintenance court, family reunification, permanent long-term foster care, and dependent guardianship.

**TABLE 4**

<b>ORANGE COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT TOTAL INSTITUTIONAL POPULATION Average Daily Population Analysis Secure and Non-Secure Facilities</b>				
	<b>Under 18</b>			
	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Change</b>
August 1998	739	68	807	—
July 1999	711	76	787	-2.5%

**Table 5**

<b>ELEVEN-COUNTY EMERGENCY SHELTER SURVEY (EIGHT COUNTIES RESPONDED)</b>			
	<b>POPULATION</b>		
	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Sept. 1998</b>	<b>Sept. 1999</b>
Fresno	40	31	18
Imperial	35	30	20
Los Angeles	196	104	133
Placer	28	22	18
San Diego*	170	184	179
San Joaquin**	71	183	224
Santa Clara	132	111	124
Sonoma	40	<u>22</u>	<u>25</u>
Total		687	741
			+ 7.9%
			(% Change 1999 over 1998)

\* Peak Population of 242 in May 1999

\*\* Population numbers include satellite homes

With the exception of child-abuse reports, the measures in Tables 2 through 5 do not parallel the significant decline in population that has occurred at Orangewood Children’s Home. This supports the premise that other, more significant factors are involved besides the economy.

Several respondents to the shelter survey (Table 5) added unsolicited comments relative to the question concerning plans to expand capacity in the next three years. The following ideas were mentioned:

- Plans are underway to build a new facility, which the county hopes will be operational in three years. Initial plans call for three cottages of 18 beds each. The current facility was built in the 1920’s as a hospital nursing home. (This was the only county that had specific expansion plans).

- There are no plans to expand the bed capacity of the emergency shelter within the next three years. The county is approaching the need from the perspective of expanding the placement resources in the community and using the Wraparound Service concept as strategies for delivery of service. With adequate long-term placement resources, it is believed that there will not be a need to expand the capacity of the emergency shelter.
- Arrangement with a private provider to assume operation of our emergency shelter home is underway.

In a visit to San Diego, the Grand Jury determined that San Diego has no plans to expand its emergency shelter. To handle seasonal fluctuations, temporary employees are added to assist the regular staff. However, the County is working on a “new concept” permanent-placement boarding school for teenagers in foster care who are unable to return to their parents. This facility would be located near Escondido on a 250-acre site that was previously a private school. Currently, an active public/private fund-raising effort is underway, and if it is successful, the plan is to open a 300-bed facility in 12 to 18 months.

### **ENHANCED PLACEMENT OPTIONS**

At about the same time Orangewood Children’s Home started to experience significant declines in population (Summer/Fall 1998), the Social Services Agency increased the emphasis on programs designed to keep children either united with their extended families or maintained in the least restrictive family-like setting possible. In the next several years, this continued emphasis on providing and developing improved placement programs will continue to impact Orangewood Children’s Home.

In the *Social Services Agency 1999 Business Plan*, under Goal 3 (page 24), Section 3 states, “Oversee the development and effective utilization of out-of-home placements to care for abused and neglected children as proposed in *The Placement Resources and Support Services Strategic Plan*.”

Under expected results Numbers 1, 4, and 5:

1. “Increase the number of foster care homes through ongoing recruitment and maintain existing homes through increased support.”
4. “Increase the percentage of children cared for by relatives through use of relative-home evaluation, increased emergency access to criminal-index clearances, and improved support services to relative caretaker.”
5. “Develop a plan to manage and use placement resources more effectively.”

These three expected results are consistent with recent state legislation. Four state mandates are especially significant: AB1544, SB1901, AB1197, and the *Governor’s 1996 Adoption Initiative*.

AB1544 (Kin-Gap) became effective in January 1998, requiring “concurrent planning” for all children in and out of home care. As a result, for every child who has the possibility of reuniting with parents, a placement plan must be developed at the time of initial entry into the foster care system (in case reunification fails). This law also expanded the definition of relatives, directed courts to have parents identify maternal and paternal relatives, allowed relatives to be told why the child was in dependency, established minimum standards for emergency assessments for placements with relatives, and created new procedures for “kin-adoptions.”

SB1901 also became effective in January 1998. This bill established the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program to provide financial assistance. After 12 months, it requires the Social Services Agency to evaluate whether guardianship by relatives could be safely continued. If the evaluation is favorable, dependency jurisdiction could be terminated by the court.

AB1197 became effective in January 1994. This mandate is primarily aimed at children in the foster care system who are under the age of six. Among its provisions, shelters must have one staff member for every three children for all twenty-four hours. Orangewood Children’s Home hired approximately 80 additional staff members to meet the requirements of this law. The legislation also restricts the placement period a young child may be held in “a community care facility licensed as a group home for children or in a temporary shelter care facility, as defined in Section 1530.8 of the Health and Safety Code.”

The *Governor’s 1996 Adoption Initiative* was to provide increased adoption opportunities for children in foster care who are unable to return to their parents. This initiative provided additional funding for county programs to provide additional adoption caseworkers and supervisors. However, to continue to receive these funds, counties have to reach specific annual goals (Orange County’s target is 468 adoptions).

For the past year, the Social Services Agency has been implementing these significant changes and developing other initiatives to improve placement programs. Some of these activities are current, and others are planned for next year:

- Adding additional placement staff so referral starts the day the child enters Orangewood (or before).
- Providing additional hours for a coordinating supervisor so that coverage will be seven days a week, ten hours a day.
- Improving services to group homes to help reduce transfers back to Orangewood Children’s Home.
- Recruiting of foster care parents with increased focus on retention. Follow-up interviews are being conducted with foster parents leaving the system to help develop improved programs.



- Paying for day-care costs for working parents and relative-caretakers (for children 12 and under).
- Adding staff to assist the adoption process as a result of increased state funding.
- Contracting with private agencies for assistance in the adoption process.
- Implementing the Kin-Gap Program.
- Increasing respite care for foster care parents, based on length of service.
- Developing a Wraparound Service Program to assist children to remain in, or return to, the family.
- Testing of substance-abusing parents whose children have been identified to be at risk of abuse or neglect, or dependent minors with a history of substance abuse whose case plan includes a Juvenile Court order requiring drug testing.

All these initiatives by the state and county have produced positive results as measured by the following performance indicators for 1999:

1. Adoptions are up 44 percent, 1998–99 over 1997–98. The absolute numbers have increased from 260 to 374 after having been flat for several years. However, a disturbing trend has developed this year in that the annualized rate for nine months has stabilized at 364 adoptions.
2. Placement activity with relatives appears to be on the increase, but no hard data supports this trend. The Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) estimates that relative-placements represent approximately 35 percent of the children in the foster care system.
3. For 1999 the average daily population for Orangewood Children’s Home was 110 children. The daily average for 1998 was 234. The preschool population has declined even more significantly. In September 1999 there were only 24 children under age six at Orangewood Children’s Home.
4. The average length of stay has also decreased: In 1998 it was 28.9 days, whereas in 1999 the average length of stay was 20.8 days.
5. The only performance indicator that has not improved is the number of licensed foster care parents. The total for the last four years has remained flat at 600 parents. The recruiting process is adding about 200 new licensed parents per year. However, approximately the same number are also leaving the system.

**The momentum in the adoption process has slowed over the last nine months.**

## THE SHELTER CARE MASTER PLAN—A SUMMARY

In late October the Grand Jury received the *County of Orange Strategic Financial Plan*, dated October 20, 1999. In Section I, pages 97-23A, 97-23B, and 97-23C, it describes in detail the Shelter Care Master Plan (now called the *Placement Resources and Support Services Strategic Plan*.) This report will continue to refer to it by the former title.

This document is the Social Services Agency's ten-year plan for the future child-abuse county-operated shelter care system in Orange County. This plan was prepared by California State University, Fullerton, the Orangewood Foundation, and by a private consultant. It was completed in July 1998, when Orangewood Children's Home was operating at or over capacity. Table 6 summarizes the key components of the Shelter Care Master Plan.

**TABLE 6**

<b>SUMMARY</b>				
<b>SHELTER CARE MASTER PLAN</b>				
	<b>Phase 1<sup>*</sup></b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Phase 4</b>
Capital cost	—	\$6.0 M	\$18.4 M	\$14.7 M
Timing	—	FY 2000/01	FY 2002/03	FY 2007/08
Capacity	—	60 beds	135	85
Target Audience	—	Ages 0-6	New Admissions/ Court Returns	Court Returns
Location	—	Tustin	El Toro	El Toro
Operation	—	Private	Private/Public	Private

<sup>\*</sup> This phase is no longer active

This plan places a major emphasis on the expansion of additional out-of-home placement services, especially the capital development of the closed Tustin and El Toro Marine Bases into group shelters for young children (0–6) and problem adolescents. It projects a daily average of 276 for Orangewood Children's Home in 1999 and projects that the daily population will increase steadily through 2010, when it is expected to hit 380 children. To address this projected shortfall of capacity, the Shelter Care Master Plan recommends an expansion of 280 beds over the next ten years (in three phases) at a design and construction cost of \$39.1 million. This expensive expansion of the county Emergency Shelter Facilities appears inconsistent with current trends and operating procedures.

**Ten-year plan with design and construction costs of \$39.1 million.**

The Shelter Care Master Plan is currently being revised for submission to the Board of Supervisors for review the first quarter of 2000. The latest status report (November 3, 1999)

from the Social Services Agency indicates that the revised plan will not focus on bricks and mortar but will include plans for improvements in a broad array of Social Services Agency programs.

## **FINDINGS**

Under *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, responses are required to all findings. The 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at the following findings:

1. Recruitment of licensed foster care parents is adding about 200 new parents per year. However, approximately the same number of foster parents are also leaving the system.

A response to Finding 1 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. The Social Services Agency has been successful in expanding placement programs (Enhanced Placement Options) designed to keep children united with their extended families or maintained in the least restrictive family-like setting.

A response to Finding 2 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. Based on current and future Social Services Agency plans, additional resources will continue to be dedicated towards advancing and expanding placement programs.

A response to Finding 3 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. Until the second half of 1998, Orangewood Children’s Home was operating at or over capacity. This was the operating environment in which the 1998 Shelter Care Master Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors. This plan focuses primarily on fixing the problem by constructing new buildings.

A response to Finding 4 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

5. Overcrowding at Orangewood Children’s Home has not been an issue for the last year. In fact, the facility is now under-utilized.

A response to Finding 5 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections 933 and 933.05, each recommendation must be responded to by the government entity to which it is addressed. These responses are submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Based on the Findings, the 1999–2000 Orange County Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The Social Services Agency should strive to improve the retention rate for foster care parents. Some suggestions to consider:
  - Continue to lobby the state to raise payments.
  - Work with the Board of Supervisors to obtain additional funding for pilot projects focused on retention (e.g., bonus payments for years of service).

A response to Recommendation 1 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

2. The Shelter Care Master Plan should be revised to emphasize the placement of children in family-like settings rather than out-of-home placement.

A response to Recommendation 2 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

3. The Social Services Agency should develop monitoring tools to evaluate whether the expanded placement program results in increased permanency of placement (increased adoptions and placement with relatives and foster parents).

A response to Recommendation 3 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

4. The Social Services Agency should consider utilizing the planned Tustin (phase 2) Facility as a community multi-care center offering services such as parent counseling, day-care nursery, and respite-care for central/south Orange County. It is also recommended that any El Toro expansion (phases three and four) be eliminated from the five-year strategic plan.

A response to Recommendation 4 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

5. The Social Services Agency should appoint a committee to develop other uses for Orangewood Children's Home.

Some suggestions to consider:

- Use part of Orangewood Children’s Home as a 24-hour day-care nursery based on the successful 16-year-old *Minneapolis Crisis Nursery* Program. Orangewood Children’s Home is fortunate to have 300 active volunteers who could help develop and support this program.
- Use part of Orangewood Children’s Home as an intensive pre-emancipation and Independent Living Program overnight-training facility for youths about to “age out” of the foster care system.

A response to Recommendation 5 is required from the **Board of Supervisors** and requested from the **Social Services Agency**.

## COMMENDATIONS

The 1999-2000 Orange County Grand Jury commends:

1. The **Department of Children and Family Services** of the **Social Services Agency** for its success with the Enhanced Placement Options program. To the entire **Social Services Agency** for:
  - The Grand Jury Orientation Notebook.
  - The cooperation and responsiveness of the staff in the interviewing process.
2. The **Juvenile Justice Commission** for its dedication and commitment to improving the health and welfare of the children of Orange County. The Commission’s willingness to share background information and advice was extremely helpful in identifying key issues to be studied.
3. The **Orange County Rescue Mission** for making available the report: *Critical Issues Regarding the Orange County Social Services Agency Children and Family Services, December 15, 1998*. The background information, conclusions, and recommendations in this report identified a number of important issues in the foster care system.

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August 18, 1999. Toured Juvenile Hall.

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August 24, 1999. Visited Olive Crest group home headquarters.

September 7, 1999. Interview with Orangewood Children’s Home staff.

September 14, 1999. Visited with Family Solutions Group Home.

September 23, 1999. Interview with Orange County Strategic and Intergovernmental Affairs.

September 23, 1999. Interview with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

September 28, 1999. Toured the Shelter for the Homeless.

September 28, 1999. Visited the Social Services Agency Department of Children and Family Services in Anaheim.

September 30, 1999. Interview and tour of Orangewood Children’s Home.

September 1999–February 2000. Attended Juvenile Justice Commission meetings.

October 1999–February 2000. Attended Group Home Forum.

October 5, 1999. Visited the House of Hope Rescue Mission.

October 19, 1999. Toured the Canyon Acres Group Home.

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January 20, 2000. Toured Salvation Army, Central Warehouse.

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AB1454 [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab\\_1451-1500/ab\\_1454\\_bill\\_19990917\\_status.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_1451-1500/ab_1454_bill_19990917_status.html)

FBI Uniform Crime Reports <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr.htm>

SB1501 [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/97-98/bill/sen/sb\\_1501-1550/sb\\_1501\\_bill\\_status.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/97-98/bill/sen/sb_1501-1550/sb_1501_bill_status.html)

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-89), Title IV-D, Section 453 of the Social Security Act as amended, 45 CFR 303.21, and 45 CFR 303.70.



# APPENDIX A

## CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROCESS MAP

