



County of Orange
C a l i f o r n i a

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

August 14, 2007

Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, "What is Social Services Agency Doing to Help Family Resource Centers Fulfill Their Mission?"

Dear Judge Stock:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, enclosed please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. If you have any questions, please contact Theresa Stanberry at (714) 834-3727 in the County Executive Office who will either assist you or direct you to the appropriate individual.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas G. Mauk".

Thomas G. Mauk
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

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2006-07 Grand Jury Report
What is Social Services Agency Doing to Help Family Resource Centers
Fulfill Their Strategic Mission?
Response to Findings and Recommendations

Responses to Findings

F-1 **Services Provided:** The Family Resource Centers (FRCs) supported by SSA Families and Communities Together (FaCT) provide valuable services to their client populations and their neighborhoods, despite having to cope with serious financial resource limitations.

Response: Agree with the finding.

F-2 **Need for Financial Support:** SSA FaCT provides adequate in-kind services and support to the FRCs; however, SSA FaCT has not completely addressed the FRCs' need for additional financial support.

Response: Disagree partially with the finding.

While it is agreed that Families and Children Together (FaCT) provides adequate in-kind services and support to the Family Resource Centers (FRCs), Social Services Agency (SSA) disagrees wholly with the finding that it has not addressed the FRC's need for additional financial support. Long before the Grand Jury issued its Report; SSA solicited the State and was granted approval to extend the grant term from three (3) to five (5) years to allow FRCs adequate time to devote to developing additional financial support. It was never the intention that FaCT would be the FRC's primary source of financial support. The primary goal of FaCT's Strategic Plan is to assist FRCs with sustainability efforts, including technical assistance, training, and placement of a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) member, which is funded by the Children and Families Commission of Orange County to assist in the development of ongoing financial resources. Grant funding opportunities are also relayed to FRCs each week via the FaCT Bulletin and FRCs are consistently encouraged to apply for additional funding.

F-3 **FRCs Budget:** SSA FaCT funds typically represent 15-25% of the total budget of an SSA FaCT supported FRC. This means that every dollar spent by the SSA to support FRCs leverages about \$3-5 in other contributions to the FRC network.

Response: Disagree wholly with finding.

SSA FaCT funds typically represent 15-95% of the total budget of an SSA FaCT supported FRC. This percentage varies depending on the services and additional funding received by each of the FRCs. In addition, many funded and non-funded FRC partners provide in-kind resources such as space, services, and supplies to support families in the community. This allows FRC's to use SSA FaCT funds to leverage other contributions to the FRC network.

F-4 **Grant Funding:** SSA FaCT distributes Federal, State, and County grant and program monies to the FRCs without charging overhead allocations for SSA administrative costs.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-5 **Caseload Diversion**: The SSA FaCT supported FRCs handle a substantial caseload. While it is logical to expect that the majority of these clients are being diverted from the formal SSA Children and Family Services (CFS) system, it is difficult to prove this without objective statistical evidence.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-6 **Caseload of FRCs**: The SSA FaCT supported FRCs are exceeding their contracted caseload levels for many of their defined services.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-7 **Outcomes Assessment**: Outcomes evaluation is very difficult. This is a problem in determining whether SSA FaCT supported FRCs are meeting the SSA's strategic expectations. Nearly all the instruments that clients fill out to measure the outcomes of their interactions with SSA FaCT supported FRCs are essentially self-reports by the clients.

Response: Agree with finding.

While it is agreed that outcomes evaluation is difficult, and while it is true that all instruments completed by clients are self reports, the staff complete three out of five of the assessment tools utilized to measure outcomes.

- F-8 **Evaluation Technique**: SSA FaCT's outcomes evaluation shows that FRCs are increasing client's knowledge levels and reducing their calculated risk levels, but FaCT's evaluation technique does not actually measure whether the client's behavior has changed.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-9 **Evaluation Methodology**: SSA FaCT justifies its outcomes evaluation methodology by research indicating that linkages do not exist between increases in parents' knowledge of family preservation and child-rearing skills and changes in their behavior; however, none of this research is directly based on the Orange County population.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-10 **FRC Clients**: SSA FaCT's outcomes evaluation technique does not show whether or not FRC clients end up turning into SSA CFS caseloads.

Response: Agree with the finding.

- F-11 **Working Conditions**: Most SSA FaCT supported FRCs operate with very limited resources. They are often located in cramped quarters in storefronts or older buildings with very limited office space. The working conditions are generally substantially lower quality than the SSA's offices.

Response: Agree with the finding.

F-12 **Client Demographics**: About 70% of SSA FaCT supported FRC clients are Hispanic.

Response: Agree with the finding.

F-13 **Funding Guidelines**: Some FRCs have declined SSA FaCT funding because the RFP was too narrowly written, specifying a set of services to be offered that did not match the needs of their neighborhood.

Response: Disagree wholly with the finding.

The 2002 Request for Proposal (RFP) reflected the funding guidelines and of the 18-funded FRCs in 2002, one FRC did not reapply for SSA FaCT funding. In addition, the RFP requires each FRC to report on its own communities' needs, via their individual assessments, and to then propose services to address the needs of their identified communities.

Response to Recommendations

R-1 **Financial Support**: Increase the total financial support from the SSA to FRCs. If Federal or State funding is cut, make up the difference from the County general fund. Underwrite more of the infrastructure and overhead of the FRCs. (Findings F-1, F-2, F-3, F-4, F-5, and F-11)

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

SSA FaCT's goal is for FRCs to be self-sustaining, and approximately half of the FRCs have already achieved this goal. SSA FaCT helps FRCs maximize opportunities by offering technical assistance and supporting efforts to obtain multiple public, private, and collaborative funding sources.

R-2 **Caseload of FRCs**: Increase the contracted caseload levels at SSA FaCT supported FRCs to better reflect the actual demand for services. (Finding F-6)

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Caseload levels at SSA FaCT supported FRCs are based on funding received from SSA. Many FRCs are exceeding contract required caseloads and leveraging additional funding, however, this can not be mandated per the contract.

R-3 **Outcomes Assessment**: Develop an objective method of assessing service outcomes that directly measures whether changes in client behavior are occurring as a result of the client's engagements with the SSA FaCT supported FRCs. For example, a random sample of clients could be followed for some period of time after the end of their cases in order to observe whether their family situations stabilize or improve. The sample results could validate the logic models that relate the improvement in at-risk indexes and other changes between pre-tests and post-tests to concrete client behavior changes. (Findings F-7, F-8, and F-9)

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Developing and implementing an objective method of assessing service outcomes to directly measure changes in client behavior would require substantial funding. In addition, seeking consent for a longitudinal study by a government agency may be a disincentive for families to voluntarily participate in these prevention services. FRCs are a community service available to the public. Client's that go to FRCs do not give up their right to privacy and the primary purpose of the FRCs is to provide needed services, not to monitor families.

- R-4 **Caseload Diversion**: Develop an objective method of showing whether or not the SSA FaCT supported FRCs are effectively diverting caseloads from SSA CFS. For example, a random sample of FRC client's names and addresses could be matched with the names and addresses of SSA CFS clients. A low degree of overlap in the two databases could indicate that the majority of FRC cases do not ultimately turn into CFS caseload. (Findings F-5, F-7, F-8, F-9, and F-10)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.*

The FRCs are not designed to specifically divert caseloads from CFS. The FRCs are available to the community to provide support services to prevent child abuse and neglect. The example of looking for an overlap in the CFS and FaCT databases would be a violation to client's right to privacy and would not be an appropriate measure of the effectiveness of the FRCs in CFS recidivism.

- R-5 **Client Demographics**: Improve outreach to non-Hispanic communities and support additional FRC locations in areas of the county that are not primarily Hispanic/Latino. (Finding F-12)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.*

There are FRCs throughout Orange County, and additional Centers cannot be provided without additional funding. Using available data, the locations of the FRCs were selected to address communities with the highest need. Census Data, including 2000 Census Data identifying "Individuals Below Poverty Level," was a primary source used to determine the areas of need in the County. Reported cases of child abuse and the *Annual Report on the Conditions of Children* were also used to determine areas of need in the County. The identified areas of need parallel communities with a large Hispanic population;

- R-6 **Funding Guidelines**: Be flexible in the types of services to be supported, especially in developing RFPs for each program cycle, allowing the FRCs to be as creative as possible in programming their service offerings to be maximally responsive to the needs of their neighborhoods. Consider preparing individualized RFPs with targeted service mixes for specific neighborhoods. (Finding F-13)

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.*

The FaCT RFP is written according to state and federal funding guidelines and established best practices. The RFP requires each FRC to report on its own community's needs, via their individual assessments, and to then propose services to address the needs of their identified communities.