

County of Ventura  
PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY  
MEMORANDUM

To: M.L. Koester, Chief Administrative Officer      DATE: August 14, 1997  
FROM: B.J. Fitzgerald, PSSA Interim Director      L#: 4400  
SUBJECT: Responses to FY 1996-97 Grand Jury Final Report

On behalf of the management staff and all employees of the Public Social Services Agency (PSSA), I would like to express appreciation for the FY 1996-97 Grand Jury's dedication and obvious concern about issues related to PSSA, our clients, and ultimately all County residents. I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's recommendations related to PSSA's mission and responsibilities.

As you know, the Grand Jury made recommendations in two areas calling for responses from PSSA: (1) Ventura County Welfare Reform and Child Care Services; and (2) Casa Pacifica. The Grand Jury's recommendations and PSSA's responses are detailed below.

**VENTURA COUNTY WELFARE REFORM AND CHILD CARE SERVICES**

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** *The Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant should be closely maintained and monitored efficiently so that funding is equally distributed utilizing a time limited system which would gradually be reduced over time, freeing money for future children to receive assistance.*

**RESPONSE:** The Grand Jury is absolutely correct in the conclusion that available, accessible, affordable quality child care is a major issue in the success of welfare reform. In recognition of this fact, local welfare reform planning efforts have included a targeted focus on child care - both identification of needs and development of effective solutions. One of the performance outcomes established for the Ventura County PRIDE Program is increased access to affordable child care. The draft PRIDE Implementation Plan of January 1997 includes a chapter on child care, which is attached to this response (Attachment 1).

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PSSA and the Ventura County Child Care Planning Network agree that the efficient management and monitoring of limited child care funds is essential. This includes development of a time-limited system which would gradually be reduced over time. Not only will this ensure an equitable distribution for more families to receive help with child care, but it is consistent with the fundamental principle of welfare reform, time-limited assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 2. *PSSA should train all intake personnel about the variety of child care services available within the County as well as provide centralized computer access to the necessary information needed to process a client's application at the time eligibility is established.*

RESPONSE: PSSA is beginning to develop training for intake workers about available child care services. We envision the initial point of application for public assistance to include: providing information and referral to needed resources, including child care; and screening for eligibility for other income-based services and programs. The foundation of PRIDE (Partnerships to Restore Independence and Dignity through Employment) is a business-oriented, outcome-driven, comprehensive, community-based intervention system of public and private partnerships and services. The service delivery system will be managed by Regional Service Coordination Teams, which will consist of interagency, multidisciplinary staff. They will have primary responsibility for achievement of the PRIDE performance outcomes for families from their respective geographic areas. A child care specialist from Child Development Resources (CDR) will be an integral member of each team, and will have the primary responsibility for addressing the child care needs of each family.

RECOMMENDATION 3. *Ventura County should continue its established alliance with CDR in trying to consolidate funds into a single network coordinating agency to eliminate fragmentation.*

RESPONSE: CDR is a key partner with Ventura County for development and implementation of child care strategies and a child care system to meet the needs of TANF and low-income working families. Elimination of administrative duplication and system fragmentation is a critical goal for the effective and efficient use of scarce child care dollars.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *The Board of Supervisors needs to become more supportive and seek greater community involvement in helping to establish more on-site child care centers at the various businesses where parents moving off welfare are to be employed.*

RESPONSE: The Board of Supervisors, with the leadership of Supervisor John Flynn, is very supportive and involved in all the numerous welfare reform issues. Supervisor Susan Lacey has the lead role on child care issues. Under her leadership, a number of ideas and strategies are being discussed and developed to increase the number of child care sites and individual providers. In addition to the possibilities of employer-based child care, other possible solutions include: school-based child care for before and after school hours; expanded Head Start hours; evening and weekend child care; training of licensed child care providers in effective business practices, utilizing the successful entrepreneurial academy; and training appropriate TANF recipients to be child care providers. Under the leadership of Supervisor John Flynn, a drop-in child care center is being developed at the Oxnard One-Stop Employment Center.

RECOMMENDATION 5. *Utilize the only extensive centralized waiting list established by CDR, of available child care services within Ventura County, in order to centralize resource and referral services.*

RESPONSE: The need for a centralized waiting list was identified by CDR and the County early in the welfare reform planning process, and continues to be a priority need for development. It is anticipated that the development will occur prior to County implementation of the State welfare reform program in January 1998.

## **CASA PACIFICA**

RECOMMENDATION 1. *The Board of Supervisors should appoint an advisory panel to make recommendations to them and all related agencies regarding all of the children's service programs of the county.*

RESPONSE: On April 15, 1997, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer to establish a Ventura County Children's Services System Workgroup. The workgroup was to review issues and concerns pertaining to Casa Pacifica and the children's services system as a whole, and prepare a report with recommended actions necessary to improve the level of cooperation and effectiveness. On July 22, 1997, the Board approved the workgroup's report and recommendations. Among the recommendations approved by the Board at that time was the establishment of a 24 hour Family Care Provider Workgroup, comprised of foster parents, other 24 hour care providers, and children's services system managers from appropriate County agencies and Casa Pacifica. One of the

functions of this group will be to make recommendations to the Board related to the improvement of the children's services system as a whole.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** *Casa Pacifica must add a surveillance system for the entire campus. It should cover open area of cottages, hallways, gym, Refocus Room, all areas of the campus, and include a 24-hour monitor.*

RESPONSE: Casa Pacifica has responded to this recommendation. (Attachment 2)

**RECOMMENDATION 3.** *Casa Pacifica should hire a uniformed security guard to patrol the campus during late afternoon and evening hours.*

RESPONSE: Casa Pacifica has responded to this recommendation. (Attachment 2)

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** *Casa Pacifica should add another building, not a cottage, in order to separate all the different kinds of programs, genders, and ages.*

RESPONSE: Casa Pacifica has responded to this recommendation. (Attachment 2)

**RECOMMENDATION 5.** *Casa Pacifica should designate one cottage for displaced shelter children from foster homes, group homes, and failed adoptions and try to rehabilitate them.*

RESPONSE: The issue of children failing or being rejected from current placement is a statewide problem. On a practical level, the County must respond to a child's rejection from placement with an alternative placement, which is often, of necessity, a temporary shelter care placement. A cottage dedicated to this population is an option which should be explored by the Oversight Committee. Other options to be considered include contracts with foster family agencies and other service providers.

**RECOMMENDATION 6.** *PSSA should place infants and preschool children in foster homes within 48 hours. Other children under age ten should be placed in foster homes within two weeks, if possible.*

RESPONSE: PSSA will, as a first choice for placement of children ages 0-2 years, use selected foster care homes for emergency shelter care. Contracts will be developed for Board approval, in consultation with the Foster Parent Association. Casa Pacifica will act as a back-up facility for

this age group when a foster home cannot be located or health and safety issues preclude a foster placement.

For children older than 2 years, Casa Pacifica will be considered after other options have been explored and found to be inappropriate. The Coordinated Assessment and Response Team (CART) will be responsible for keeping shelter care lengths of stay to a minimum.

RECOMMENDATION 7. *PSSA must substantially reinvigorate the size and quality of the foster parent program because it is more cost effective, and the family atmosphere is better for the children.*

RESPONSE: PSSA will work closely with the Foster Parent Association, the Board of Supervisors, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to increase the number of foster homes in Ventura County. The first step in this process will be a cooperative review of the current rate structure for foster families. This rate structure has not been adjusted for a number of years and represents a barrier to foster parent recruitment and retention. Other issues to be addressed include: foster parent training and support, specialized care for medically involved children, and an expanded role for the Foster Parent Association in development and retention activities. PSSA will be working with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to provide competency training for foster parents.

RECOMMENDATION 8. *Casa Pacifica should hire older staff members who have more life experience and mature judgment.*

RESPONSE: A copy of Casa Pacifica's response is attached.

RECOMMENDATION 9. *Casa Pacifica should change children's activity patterns in the late afternoon and evening hours to prevent incidents.*

RESPONSE: A copy of Casa Pacifica's response is attached.

RECOMMENDATION 10. *Casa Pacifica, PSSA, and BH must improve communication between management, line staff, and one another. Directors of PSSA, BH, and Casa Pacifica should meet on a regular basis to discuss mutual problems and clarify roles of the various agencies now that they know what the problems are.*

RESPONSE: An Operations Committee has been established and will include members of the key departments and Casa Pacifica. Meetings of this committee will occur on at least a monthly basis. All findings and

recommendations will be communicated to the Oversight Committee that was established by Board action, to review policy issues.

RECOMMENDATION 11: *Casa Pacifica, DSS, and the Superintendent of Schools must settle legal and liability issues regarding the Refocus Room.*

RESPONSE: Casa Pacifica has responded to this recommendation. (Attachment 2)

RECOMMENDATION 12: *The Superintendent of Schools should close the public school operation and bus Shelter children to local schools.*

RESPONSE: Immediate access to education is a critical issue when children enter emergency shelter care, and is best addressed by an on-site public school. The allocation of educational resources to operate the necessary classrooms is the responsibility of the local education agency.

RECOMMENDATION 13: *PSSA and Casa Pacifica need to change admittance applications to include a parental consensual release of pertinent information to staff who have a need to know.*

RESPONSE: The issues associated with the timely release of information to appropriate parties will be an important agenda item to be reviewed by the Oversight Committee. The legal requirements and procedures will be defined and included in the M.O.U.s developed by the Committee and approved by the director of each participating agency and the Board of Supervisors.

RECOMMENDATION 14: *County personnel who are involved in making decisions regarding Casa Pacifica and County policies should refrain from participating in either one to eliminate the perception of conflict of interest.*

RESPONSE: Employees of PSSA who have a potential conflict of interest when dealing with Casa Pacifica will consult with their immediate supervisor prior to engaging in formal or informal decision-making processes. If it is determined that a conflict of interest exists, a designee will be appointed to represent the Agency.

RECOMMENDATION 15: *Casa Pacifica should consider taking RTC children from outside the county to increase revenue.*

RESPONSE: Consistent with the July 22, 1997 action by the Board of Supervisors, and as a private non-profit agency, Casa Pacifica has the discretion to consider RTC children from outside the County, and will accept

RTC children from other counties. The impact of these placements on Ventura County resources must be carefully considered, however, on a case by case basis, in order to avoid a local service burden related to these placements.

**RECOMMENDATION 16.** *Casa Pacifica needs to increase its fund raising from the private sector to balance its budget and eliminate the costly line of credit it carries. Private funds should represent a larger portion of its finances. Only 15% of its revenue as a nonprofit organization comes from private sources.*

**RESPONSE:** Casa Pacifica has responded to this recommendation. (Attachment 2)

If you have any questions or need further information, please call me at 652-7602.

Attachments

## CHAPTER V

### Section G

## CHILD CARE

### Introduction

In recent years, parents, employers and government have recognized the correlation between reliable child care and success in the workplace. Indicators include productivity, consistent attendance records, and the ability to better focus on the job task when children are involved in safe quality child care while parents are working.

Three factors are essential to the success of the required systemic change: (1) An adequate supply of jobs to meet the demand of TANF recipients entering the workforce, (2) Community involvement that allows and encourages easy access to child care services, and (3) Quality child care services which support families in their efforts and provide a two generation (parents and children) approach to change.

This document is based on the following assumptions:

1. Child care funds overall may not meet the demand for child care for TANF recipients.
2. All children deserve quality, reliable child care options.
3. Two delivery models of subsidized child care exist for TANF parents:
  - **Direct Services**, such as a California Department of Education funded child care center, and
  - **Parental Choice**, wherein parents can select a child care option including centers, family child care homes or exempt care (child care legally exempt from licensing; usually a friend or relative). Both options are desirable, yet, due to limited resources, duplicative efforts such as the maintenance of individual waiting lists and administrative costs can no longer be supported if we are to meet our performance goals.
4. Individuals who become child care providers must want to do so.
5. Child care services must be easily accessible to parents.
6. All parents deserve consumer education about choosing child care that will assist them in their search for and selection of child care; therefore, interface with Resource & Referral services is necessary.
7. The linking of child care services to other key components of the Welfare Reform plan, such as eligibility and job training, is essential to the success of the plan.
8. Given the complexity of Welfare Reform, coupled with several unknowns, this process will be evolutionary by design and its success will depend upon regular communication between the key players.



Based on these assumptions, the following document, which primarily addresses services delivered through the Parental Choice model, has been, and will continue to be developed.

### **Description of Current Child Care System in Ventura County**

There are a variety of agencies delivering several different types of child care and development programs in Ventura County. The eligibility requirements and administrative procedures are also varied, causing unnecessary complexity for both recipients and providers.

- **Various Programs and Funding.** The following program descriptions attest to the variety of program options including Direct Services and Parental Choice models, and the possible duplication of efforts in the delivery of child care in this region. This is especially true of the Parental Choice model where four agencies currently deliver this type of service. (The following information regarding State and Federally funded programs was taken from the Memorandum from the Child Care Planning Network Steering Committee to the Welfare Reform Steering Committee, January 24, 1996.)
- **California Department of Education Funded Programs.** State funded programs are administered by the California Department of Education (CDE), Child Development Division. These state funded Direct Services programs and Parental Choice models, totaling \$6,000,000, are administered by a variety of public and private agencies throughout Ventura County.
- **Center Based Programs** receive funding directly from the CDE to subsidize child care. The following Center Based Program service delivery models exist in Ventura County: Public School Programs, which are located on public school sites and are operated by school districts, county offices of education, and community colleges; Community Based Programs, which provide the same services but are contracted through other public and private agencies; School Age or "Latch Key" Programs, which provide care before and after school and during vacations to children enrolled in kindergarten and above, on or near public school sites; and State Pre-school Programs, which offer a part day comprehensive program for three and four year olds.
- **Parental Choice Models** allow eligible parents to choose the child care which best meets their needs and are delivered through community based organizations or Ventura County Public Social Services Agency (PSSA) which contract with private child care providers that include child care centers, family child care homes, in-home care and exempt care (child care providers exempt from licensing requirements) to provide services to eligible families. Child care subsidies are made directly to the child care provider after the parent has made a selection. The following are Parental Choice programs in Ventura County: Alternative Payment Program, which pays the child care costs for parents while they work, are in training, or are seeking employment, until the fourteenth birthday of the child; GAIN Child Care, which offers child care assistance to AFDC parents who are receiving education or training; NET Child Care, which helps provide child care to AFDC parents who are attending a county approved education or training program and are unable to participate in GAIN; Transitional Child Care, which assists former AFDC families with child care expenses on a sliding fee scale for 12 months after terminating aid due to employment; Child Care Income Disregard, which allows AFDC families to deduct child care costs from their earnings; Supplemental Child Care, which helps working AFDC parents pay for child care expenses that exceed the allowable amount under the child care income disregard; California Alternative Assistance Program, which gives working AFDC parents the option of receiving child care assistance and Medi-Cal

benefits in lieu of a cash grant; and Cal Learn, which is a component of GAIN for teen parents receiving AFDC who are under age 19 and do not have a high school diploma, providing financial rewards and penalties based on school performance and offering child care, transportation, counseling, and other assistance.

- **Federally Funded Programs.** The following federally funded programs in Ventura County are administered by the California Department of Education, which contracts with local agencies: Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (1991), in the amount of \$1,300,000, which provides grants to improve the affordability, availability, and quality of child care, with eligibility requirements being similar to the state funded programs (income may not exceed the 75th percentile of the state median and parents must be involved in employment or job training); and At Risk Child Care (Title IV-A) which requires a state match, in the amount of \$1,500,000, which provides funding for subsidized child care, on a sliding fee scale, for low-income, working families to help them remain employed and avoid AFDC.

The following federally funded programs receive funding directly from the Federal government:

- **Head Start**, which receives \$5,430,000 for a comprehensive part day pre-school program for children ages three and four from very low-income homes; and
- **Work Force Development**, which receives funds to provide for an array of employment and training support services to eligible participants, including child care assistance.

### Capacity issues

The approximate number of children served by child care and development agencies with direct state or federal dollars in Ventura County per year is 24,646. Currently, Ventura County child care agencies receive approximately \$13,296,750 annually, to fund these services. The following tables contain a list of agencies, children served, and Ventura County funding levels:

<i>Parental Choice</i>		
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Children served per year</b>	<b>Funding per year</b>
CDR - Subsidized Child Care	1514	\$3,145,518
Children's Home Society	1000	\$1,300,000
Workforce Development	unknown	\$62,000
Subtotal	2514	\$4,507,518
<b>Ventura County PSSA Programs</b>	<b>Children served per year *</b>	<b>Funding per year *</b>
GAIN Child Care	416	\$69,086
NET Child Care	0	0
Transitional Child Care (TCC)	123	\$29,834
Child Care Income Disregard	1035	\$20,567
Supplemental Child Care only	66	\$10,469
CA Alternative Assistance Prog.	0	0
Cal Learn	13	\$2,480
Subtotal	19,836	\$1,589,232
<b>TOTAL PARENTAL CHOICE</b>	<b>22,350</b>	<b>\$6,096,750</b>

\* The numbers supplied for the Ventura County PSSA Programs are rough estimates; the numbers for the month of November 1996 were multiplied by twelve to calculate approximate annual totals.

<i>Direct Services</i>		
Agency	Children served per year	Funding per year
Child Development Inc.	850	\$850,000
Santa Paula, Ocean View, and Ventura School Districts	200	\$600,000 (combined)
Camp Fire Inc.	160	\$204,000
Simi Valley YMCA	100	\$116,000
<b>TOTAL DIRECT SERVICES</b>	<b>1310</b>	<b>\$1,770,000</b>

  

<i>Other</i>		
Agency	Children served per year	Funding per year
CDR - Head Start	986	\$5,430,000
<b>TOTAL OTHER</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>\$5,430,000</b>
<b>TOTAL PARENTAL CHOICE, DIRECT SERVICES &amp; OTHER</b>	<b>24,646</b>	<b>\$13,296,750</b>

(Source: Memorandum from the Child Care Planning Network Steering Committee to the Welfare Reform Steering Committee, January 24, 1996.)

### TANF impact on child care

The following issues worthy of consideration have arisen since the passage of Federal Welfare Reform:

- **No Priority for Abused and Neglected Children** - California state law has defined a priority for abused and neglected children; however, the new federal funding for child care does not contain a priority for abused children. (Source: Integrating Child Care & Child Welfare Services, Issues & Recommendations, [Draft for Review], Integrated Services Workgroup, Child Development Programs Advisory Committee, February 15, 1996.)
- **Exceeding Numbers of At-Risk Families** - The California Department of Education's definition given to "at-risk of becoming dependent on welfare assistance" is a concern, as this will set up a much larger group of people eligible for this funding than the funding sources could ever meet. (Source: Child Care & Development Block Grant Fund [CCDF] & TANF Supportive Services Issues Summary, Prepared for William G. Steiner, 4th District, Orange County Board of Supervisors, by Orange County Social Services Agency, October 18, 1996.)
- **High Cost** - Certain types of child care that are more expensive than others, for example child care for infants and toddlers is more expensive than preschool aged child care, present a challenge to the amount of available resources. (Source: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, October 18, 1996, Testimony of Dianne Edwards, Director, Sonoma County Human Services Department, County Welfare Directors Association.) Many TANF recipients have three, four or more children, making the cost of child care more than anticipated income. Subsidized child care will cost far more than these participants receive per month in TANF benefits. Even if maximally employed, they will remain on TANF. (Source: Ventura County PRIDE Assessment/Contract/Case Management Task Force, Barriers to Employment #1.)
- **Limited Amount of Transitional Child Care** - Transitional Child Care (TCC) is currently available for one year after leaving aid and recent legislation extends TCC for two years. TCC is a good beginning, but ideally, subsidized child care should be available to all working poor and those trying to get off welfare. A system in which

everyone below a certain poverty level gets subsidized care, perhaps with a co-pay which increases with income, would be beneficial. This will avoid the "cliff effect" currently experienced by many families whose eligibility to Transitional Child Care ends. (Source: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, October 18, 1996, Testimony of Dianne Edwards, Director, Sonoma County Human Services Department, County Welfare Directors Association.)

- **Varying Rate Structures** - A strategy which eliminates the current variations in rate structures among categorical child care programs should be developed. In certain communities, the subsidized payment rate has driven the local market rate, especially for exempt care. (Source: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, October 18, 1996, Testimony of Dianne Edwards, Director, Sonoma County Human Services Department, County Welfare Directors Association.)
- **User Unfriendly System** - The current child care system is not user friendly. We have multiple programs each with its own eligibility criteria, forms, rate structure, payment methods and points of access. The eligibility process needs to be simplified and streamlined so that all families needing child care assistance whether on welfare or not can rely on one set of rules, standards and criteria from which their eligibility for child care assistance is determined. In general we have found that a certificate system (Parental Choice model) provides more flexibility when a change in child care arrangements is needed. (Source: Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, October 18, 1996, Testimony of Dianne Edwards, Director, Sonoma County Human Services Department, County Welfare Directors Association.)
- **Extensive Child Care Reporting** - The volume of reporting and paperwork will increase with TANF while administrative caps are reduced. Therefore, streamlining of the process of intake and certification and automation of the system are imperative in order to meet reporting requirements in a cost effective manner while insuring the delivery of quality services to families.
- **Supply and Demand** - The new Welfare Reform legislation includes very specific and demanding work requirements for TANF recipients. As these welfare recipients are transitioning into the labor market, there will be increased demand for child care availability. The current child care spaces, in both center-based and licensed family day care, are inadequate to meet this need. There will also be an increased need to help parents choose appropriate care for their families.
- **Personal and Individualized Barriers** - There are also many personal and individualized barriers to self-sufficiency for AFDC applicants/recipients, based on emotions and values. In addition, there is a great lack of knowledge of the child care resources available. (Source: Ventura County PRIDE Assessment/Contract/Case Management Task Force, Barriers to Self Sufficiency for AFDC Applicants/Recipients.)
- **No Provisions for Parents with Special Needs Children**- Parents that have children with special needs face special problems. Schools often require parents to be available to come to school as needed. There can also be physical problems such as asthma or behavioral problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). (Source: Ventura County PRIDE Assessment/Contract/Case Management Task Force, Barriers to Self Sufficiency for AFDC Applicants/Recipients.)

- **Children needing special supervision can also be demanding.** Frequently parents of children with problems are required to make time to participate in activities by schools or law enforcement. Even if not required to do so, many parents feel a need to be available to care for their children with special needs. (Source: Ventura County PRIDE Assessment/Contract/Case Management Task Force, Barriers to Employment #7.)
- **Lack of Resources to Meet the Demand** - There is not enough funding to provide child care for all eligible low-income families. It is estimated that about 3,000 unduplicated families are currently on waiting lists around the county. In addition, each agency maintains its own waiting list which, depending on the demand for the program as well as the income level of the applicants, determines the wait period on the list prior to entry into the program.
- **Lack of "Seamless" Child Care Subsidies** - Fragmented and uncoordinated multiple access points for funding make it difficult for parents to quickly and effectively access services.
- **Lack of Availability of Traditional and Non-Traditional Hours of Care** - There is not enough child care available in Ventura County, including both traditional and non-traditional hours of care. Clearly the majority of child care offered in this county and throughout the state is generally for day shifts. Entry level positions often are those during non traditional hours such as swing shifts, night work and weekends. Currently in Ventura County, there are approximately 1,400 licensed child care providers. Per CDR's Resource & Referral Department, currently 218 provide evening care, 161 provide weekend care and 122 provide both evening and weekend care. It is anticipated that these services must increase in order to meet the demand.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on the preceding assumptions and facts:

### **Supply and Demand**

A significant factor in meeting TANF performance goals is the availability of reliable child care which meets the varied needs of TANF participants and their families. While there are a number of child care options in Ventura County it is estimated that the demand for child care will outweigh the supply. It is highly recommended that an ongoing effort to increase the supply of quality licensed child care, first in targeted areas and then throughout the county, be maintained. In addition, the influx of this population into the child care system, demands not only more child care, generally, but specific types of child care as well. For example, both infant care and school age care remain a scarce resource in this region. Finally, it is imperative that non traditional hours of care also be expanded.

Ventura County is currently developing a plan to train interested TANF recipients who are qualified based on personal characteristics, parenting ability, and other appropriate criteria, to be child care providers and child care workers in child care centers. This plan includes a collaboration with local community colleges, existing child care organizations, federal Job Training Partnership Act services providers, and the Public Social Services Agency (PSSA) to provide training, education and mentoring assistance to enable selected participants to

meet state licensing requirements for employment in child care and to provide quality child care for both their own children as well as the children of others. (Source: SB 1584, Chapter 12, Page 18, July 18, 1996.) The Head Start Program has been selected as one of the training sites due to its reputation for delivery of quality programs.

## **Accessibility**

**One Stop Shops** - It is imperative that we design a system that is "user friendly" for clients. A One Stop Shop concept would include establishing various sites throughout the county where families can access welfare services, job training and placement, and child care services. Child Care Specialists should be out-stationed at these locations, who would work side by side with TANF Specialists and other support staff.

**Resource & Referral** - Connection to Resource & Referral is mandatory. Subsidies for child care are multidimensional with several funding streams and a myriad of eligibility requirements and administrative guidelines. While many families are well served by these programs, the service delivery is fragmented, at best, and requires families to contact several potential entry points in an effort to more quickly gain access to the program. The constant in this uncoordinated system is the Resource & Referral service which all parents must utilize in order to access licensed child care.

**Centralized Waiting List** - In the current system, families in need of subsidized child care can be on multiple waiting lists throughout the county. This makes it impossible to insure that the most in need are being served first. With a county-wide centralized waiting list, program applicants would be entered into a single database. As funding and slots became available, children would be enrolled. In the future, eligibility rules and paperwork requirements should be simplified, leading to a paperless system, while maintaining program integrity. (Source: SB 1584, Chapter 2, Page 3, July 18, 1996.) A centralized waiting list would be an important step toward a paperless system.

**Priorities For Care** - It is recommended that priorities for care that ensure the greatest success rate for families while stretching the child care dollar be established in order to ensure care for eligible families. This does not mean that the cheapest care should be encouraged as that would ultimately erode the quality of child care which has been built over the last several years in the state of California. Rather, for example, it is important to identify those families that would most likely succeed in a short period as a high priority since the dwell time and ultimate use TANF child care dollars would be minimal. In addition, infant care is the most costly care available at this time. Efforts to find the most cost effective care for infants and toddlers while maintaining quality is recommended.

**Working Poor** - Funding needs to remain available for the working poor, as well as for TANF recipients. Many of the working poor will be unable to work, if they do not receive child care subsidies, and will therefore become TANF recipients themselves.

**Priority for Child Protective Services Children** - State law should be amended to read, "All child care services, whether state or federally funded, shall maintain a priority for children who are abused or neglected or at the risk of abuse or neglect." (Source: Child Care & Development Block Grant Fund [CCDF] & TANF Supportive Services Issues Summary, Prepared for William G. Steiner, 4th District, Orange County Board of Supervisors, by Orange County Social Services Agency, October 18, 1996.)

## **Affordability**

**Sliding Fee Scale** - It is recommended that a sliding fee scale based on income and/or dwell time on the program be established to insure self sufficiency for TANF participants once eligibility is terminated. While there currently exists a sliding fee scale for state funded subsidized programs, the co-pay is unrealistically low leaving many parents in disbelief at the cost for child care once they leave the program. Therefore, while potentially difficult for parents at the front end, it is suggested that a more realistic co-pay be established for participants in an effort to produce positive long term results.

## **Quality Issues**

**Training and Technical Assistance** - For many years the state of California has sought to move beyond the basic assurances of health and safety in child care (basic licensing issues) to the provision of quality environments and programs for children and their families through avenues such as Title V requirements, the Child Care Initiative project, Mervyn's Family to Family projects, increased coursework for both family child care and center based providers through community colleges and four year institutions and various accreditation programs. A potential pitfall in the rapid expansion of any service is an erosion of quality. It is recommended that monies be set aside to expand current training and technical assistance services for child care providers to insure the maintenance of minimum standards.

**On Going Support Once Employment Occurs** - As with any human services program, families may not be 100% successful at the conclusion of a program. For example, parents often need to practice parenting skills after intensive training. In like manner, individuals new to the workforce may need an adjustment period to successfully integrate all the factors of home and work life including adequate budgeting for child care services. It is recommended that a transition period be established for parents moving into the workforce that would pay for time limited child care as parents juggle the many challenges associated with their new lifestyles in order to produce positive long term outcomes.

## **Service Delivery**

TANF participants in need of subsidized child care will go to one of the One Stop Shops in Ventura County. After the Ventura County Public Social Services Agency (PSSA) determines eligibility for Subsidized Child Care, the client will be directed to meet with an Child Care Specialist. This will provide the parent with information about subsidized child care, as well as assist them in completing any required paperwork.

If a family has not yet selected a child care provider, the Child Care Specialist will assist the family in this process. Utilizing the Resource & Referral database, containing the only list of all licensed child care providers in Ventura County, the Child Care Specialist will provide the family with a list of several child care providers in the correct geographical area that have spaces available for additional children. The Child Care Specialist will then provide consumer education to the family, regarding how to identify a quality child care provider, as well as specific characteristics or attributes in a child care setting that are important to the family. These attributes often include, but are not limited to: language(s) spoken, physical environment, ages of other children receiving care, etc. The Child Care Specialist will provide the family with verbal as well as written information, and encourage them to personally speak with the individual child care providers who have openings in their area.

If a family has already selected a child care provider, and the provider is already contracted with the Subsidized Child Care System, the Child Care Specialist will call the provider and

inform him or her that the family is eligible. Although the parent has already selected a provider, a brief consumer education session will also be provided by the Child Care Specialist, in the event that the parent may want to change child care providers in the future.

After a family has made a selection, the Child Care Specialist will call the child care provider that the family has chosen and inform him or her that the family is eligible. The Child Care Specialist will not make this choice for the family, but will provide the tools and support for the parents to choose the child care setting.

The parent must sign an attendance (voucher) form on a daily basis, verifying that the child received care. At the end of the month, the child care provider (vendor) will submit the attendance (voucher) form to the Child Care Specialist, who will submit the voucher for payment.

The Child Care Specialist will regularly verify the continued eligibility of the families in his or her case load, and families will be instructed to notify their Child Care Specialist of any changes in their status immediately. The Child Care Specialist will then update the centralized waiting list database with the new information. Parents will be re-certified for services, as required.