LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

MENDING OUR BROKEN CHILDREN: RESTRUCTURING FOSTER CARE *in* CALIFORNIA

April 1992

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

Nathan Shapell
Chairman

Richard R. Terzian
Vice Chairman

Senator Alfred E. Alquist
Arthur F. Gerdes
Haig Mardikian
Assemblywoman Gwen Moore
Abraham Spiegel
Assemblyman Phillip D. Wyman
Mary Anne Chalker
Albert Gersten
Senator Milton Marks
Angie Papadakis
Barbara S. Stone

STAFF

Jeannine L. English
Executive Director

Michael R. Tritz
Deputy Executive Director

Kathleen L. Johnson
Research Manager

Dan Flynn
Analyst

State of California

Little Hoover Commission

1303 J Street, Suite 270 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • (916) 445-2125
FAX • (916) 322-7709

April 9, 1992

Nathan Shapell
Chairman

Richard R. Terzian
Vice-Chairman

Alfred E. Alquist
Senator

Mary Anne Chalker

Arthur F. Gerdes

Albert Gersten

Haig Mardikian

Milton Marks
Senator

Gwen Moore
Assemblywoman

Angie Papadakis

Abraham Spiegel

Barbara S. Stone

Phillip D. Wyman
Assemblyman

Jeannine L. English
Executive Director

The Honorable Pete Wilson
Governor of California

The Honorable David Roberti
President Pro Tempore of the Senate
and Members of the Senate

The Honorable Kenneth L. Maddy
Senate Minority Floor Leader

The Honorable Willie L. Brown Jr.
Speaker of the Assembly
and Members of the Assembly

The Honorable Bill Jones
Assembly Minority Floor Leader

Dear Governor and Members of the Legislature:

Taking a child away from his or her natural parents is a last-resort decision that the State sometimes must make. The weight and importance of this wrenching decision is such that all logic dictates that the State must then see that the child has a better, fuller, healthier life than is possible with the natural parents.

Unfortunately, the Little Hoover Commission has seen compelling evidence that this is not occurring. Children too often are cast adrift in a foster care system that fails to safeguard their lives and their futures. Despite spending $1.4 billion on welfare services for abused and neglected children, the State has failed miserably to ensure that these children, ripped from their troubled homes, are given the necessary nurturing for them to become well-rounded adults and productive citizens.

The Commission has reviewed California's Child Welfare Services Program for the second time in five years and is dismayed to discover that many of the same problems and trends are still evident. In the report that is being transmitted with this letter, the Commission documents its extensive concerns and issues five findings, as well as 16 recommendations for reforms that would substantially impact the quality of life for foster children.

That children can come to harm--and even die--while supposedly under the protection of foster care is not in dispute. Recent newspaper stories have included:

* A foster mother was arrested in Los Angeles on charges of beating to death her 23-month-old foster son, allegedly over toilet training problems.

* Another Los Angeles woman was arrested for the attempted murder of a 19-month-old foster child who she said fell from a jungle gym. Doctors believed the severe head injuries, which may result in blindness, could only have come from abuse.

* A Sacramento woman who was injured in a car accident voluntarily placed her daughter in a foster care facility. During a tantrum by the child, an employee of

the facility wrapped her in a blanket and squatted on her. She was later discovered dead.

It is an indictment of the State program that each of these children is now dead or irreparably injured. And it is enough to cause grave concern about the welfare of the approximately 81,000 children who have been removed from their homes--a number that is climbing dramatically each year.

The Commission believes the State should take steps to safeguard these children and to enhance their lives by focusing on several fronts, including:

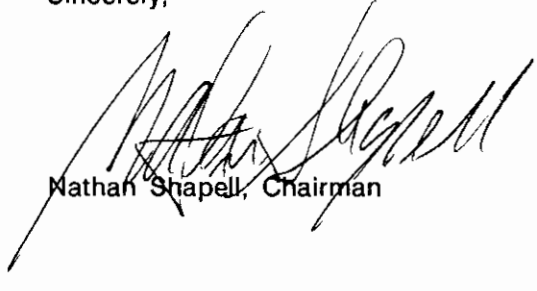
* **Family Preservation.** Only about 20 percent of children are removed from their homes because of abuse; the rest suffer neglect for varying reasons. Getting at the cause of that neglect--whether it is drug use by parents, lack of parenting skills, extreme poverty--is a far more productive method of improving the lives of children than removing them from their parents. Some experts have estimated that between 35 and 70 percent of foster children should never have been removed from their homes and have suffered far more psychological injury than had they remained with their parents. Others believe that for every $1 spent on family preservation efforts, $3 in long-range costs are avoided. For the mental health of the children and to avoid staggering costs, the State should shift resources to family preservation programs.

* **Foster Parents.** Poorly trained and poorly compensated, today's foster parents face the responsibility for troubled children with very little help from the State. This has resulted in a lack of adequate numbers of foster parents who are capable of nurturing children into healthy adults. It has also added greatly to the costs faced by the State: The State pays approximately $6,500 to support a child in a foster family compared to more than $32,500 to place him in a group home. It is crucial that the State upgrade the status of foster parents through higher payments and ensure their parenting skills by requiring adequate training and a psychological evaluation.

* **State Oversight.** Because counties both license facilities and place children in them, there is an inherent conflict of interest when complaints arise or abuse is alleged. Counties rely on foster homes to be there when children must be placed, so the potential for less-vigorous investigations exist. The State must ensure that children are not left with an advocate to oversee their interests. The creation of an ombudsman program, much as there is for the elderly in out-of-home residences, would provide a means of protection.

Children who have cried out to our hearts because of abuse and neglect should not bear the pain of finding themselves in even worse situations once the State has removed them from their parents. The State must take steps to improve the Child Welfare Services Program--for the sake of the children.

Sincerely,



Nathan Shapell, Chairman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
INTRODUCTION	1
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
FAMILY PRESERVATION	11
FOSTER PARENTS	35
ETHNIC PLACEMENTS	57
STATE OVERSIGHT	67
COORDINATED SERVICES	77
CONCLUSIONS	83
APPENDICES	87
ENDNOTES	97

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		Page
Figure 1 -	Reason for Removing Children from Their Homes, Calendar Year 1991	17
Figure 2 -	Number of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care, Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1991-92	18
Figure 3 -	Out-of-Home Placement Costs, Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1992-93	19
Table 1 -	Percent of Children Leaving Foster Care That Stayed Longer Than 18 Months, Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1991-92	21
Figure 4 -	Annual Costs of Placing Children in Group Homes, Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1992-93	25
Figure 5 -	Annual Cost Per Child Residing in Out-of-Home Placement	26
Figure 6 -	Average Monthly Cost Per Child for Child Welfare Services, Fiscal Year 1989-90	29
Figure 7 -	Number of Children in Foster Care, By Reason for Removal	38
Table 2 -	Outcomes for Drug-Exposed Infants, Fiscal Year 1988-89	39
Table 3 -	Amount of Foster Parent Training Required by Counties	43
Figure 8 -	Types of Placements Made by County Welfare Departments, Calendar Year 1991	46
Table 4 -	Statewide Basic Rates for Foster Care, Effective Since July 1990	50

(Continued on next page)

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS (Continued)

Figure 9 - Ethnicity of Foster Children, Calendar Year 1991 58

Figure 10 - Proportion of Ethnic Minority Children in Foster Care, Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1991-92 59

Figure 11 - Comparison of Ethnicity of Foster Care Children and General Population, Fiscal Year 1991-92 60

Table 5 - Percentage of Foster Children Placed With Relatives, Calendar 1991 64

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently, more than 81,000 children are in the foster care system, having been removed from their homes and their natural families. These children are living in settings such as foster family homes, group homes and specialized care homes. The costs of placing and maintaining the children in these homes and of providing county services to the children amount to approximately $1.4 billion per year.

In response to widespread criticisms of the foster care system, the federal government enacted the Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272), which required states to enact specific reforms in order to continue receiving federal funds related to foster care. In 1982, California incorporated the required federal changes into state law through the enactment of Chapter 978 (SB 14, Presley), which had the major goals of:

* providing treatment services to families to reduce unnecessary placement in foster care:

* safely reuniting more foster care children with their families;

* increasing the stability of foster care placements; and

* placing more adoptable foster care children into adoptions.

Since these reforms took place, a number of studies of the foster care system have been conducted including a 1987 review by the Little Hoover Commission that found a number of major problems

in the delivery of children's services in California. More recently, and primarily in response to serious problems in Los Angeles County's foster care program, additional reviews have been done by the California Legislative Analyst, Auditor General and Senate Office of Research. There have been few indications that the foster care system has improved; indeed, all signs point to a worsening of conditions.

In July 1991, the Commission initiated this study of child welfare services to follow up on the foster care portions of its 1987 report and to identify and review any recent issues related to foster care. As a result, the Commission developed the following findings and related recommendations.

Family Preservation

The State's foster care system runs contrary to the preservation of families. Generally, it is best for children to remain with their natural families and, thus, it is most appropriate for government to invest in "front-end" services that work at removing the problems from dysfunctional families rather than removing the children. Such an investment could save more than three dollars for every dollar spent. Moreover, given the fact that only 20 percent of foster children are removed from their homes because of physical or sexual abuse, the remaining children are good candidates for family preservation services. To date, however, California has not provided a sufficient investment in such services and, instead, has continued to rely on out-of-home placements. As a result, the numbers of children removed from their homes and the associated costs have spiraled upward. Further, children are staying in the system longer once they are removed from their homes; the percent of children remaining longer than 18 months has increased from 27.5 percent in fiscal year 1988-89 to an estimated 30.8 percent in fiscal year 1991-92. Finally, the future of graduates of the foster care system is bleak: 45 percent of runaway youths have been in foster care and many foster children grow up poorly educated, in poverty, suffering from drug and alcohol abuse, and in trouble with the law.

Recommendations

1. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that would ensure that greater emphasis is focused on placement prevention programs and associated family preservation services for those families whose problems do not stem from physical or sexual abuse.

2. The Legislature should enact a resolution stating California's support for federal legislation that would provide additional federal funding for family preservation services.

3. The Governor and the Legislature should continue to re-examine and monitor the effects of state-county realignment and enact any legislation necessary to ensure the realization of realignment's intended effect of encouraging counties to invest in family preservation programs and place children out of their homes only when warranted.

Foster Parents

Training, support services, screening and rates of reimbursement are woefully inadequate for the State's foster parents. Individuals who elect to be foster parents have a critical need for comprehensive training to develop the skills necessary to cope with today's troubled foster children. These children are extremely "damaged," largely due to the adverse effects of drug and alcohol abuse on their families. Nevertheless, there is no statewide mandated training for foster parents, and the training required by most counties is minimal. Further, support services necessary to assist foster parents in coping with the children is deficient. In addition, the State lacks a policy to screen prospective foster parents for their suitability to parent abused and neglected children. Furthermore, although foster parents should be adequately compensated for the responsibility of parenting these children, they are not even reimbursed enough to cover the basic costs of raising children. As a result, foster children are exposed to potentially abusive situations and are not provided the help needed to overcome their disadvantaged circumstances. Moreover, there exists a shortage

of qualified foster parents in the State and a consequent reliance on more costly types of placement facilities.

Recommendations

4. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that makes training and a psychological evaluation a prerequisite to the licensure of foster parents.

5. The State Department of Social Services should provide the leadership necessary to encourage counties to maximize the use of federal Title IV-E funds for the purposes of training foster parents.

6. The Governor and the Legislature should provide additional funding for the Foster Parent Training Program administered through the California Community Colleges.

7. To the extent that reliance on more costly types of out-of-home placements can be reduced, the Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that increases the statewide basic foster care rates of reimbursement to adequately cover the costs of raising foster children in foster family homes.

8. The Governor and the Legislature should aggressively lobby Congress and the President to enact legislation that would make all foster children federally eligible for AFDC-Foster Care.

Ethnic Placements

More attention needs to be paid to the needs of ethnic minority children in foster care. Although state law requires that foster children be placed with relatives or families of the same racial or ethnic background to preserve the children's cultural identities, the disproportionate share of some ethnic minority children in foster care outnumbers the available "culturally competent" homes. For example, approximately 40 percent of foster children are African-American

(compared to 6.3 percent of all children in California), but indications are that there is not a commensurate availability of African-American foster family homes or group homes. The possible causes for this situation include racism and insufficient recruitment. In addition, ethnic minority children who are placed with relatives may be adversely affected because of an inequitable reimbursement rate structure that does not generally allow relatives to receive as much reimbursement as non-relative foster parents. This situation affects a great many ethnic minority children because they are place with relatives at a much higher rate than are white children.

Recommendations

9. The State Department of Social Services should reinstate funding for its Minority Home Recruitment Program and concentrate its recruitment efforts on ethnic minority foster parents.

10. The State Department of Social Services should monitor counties' administration of the foster care program to ensure the counties are making placements in accordance with the law.

State Oversight

The State's foster care system suffers from inadequate monitoring and oversight. Because of problems inherent in the foster care system, there is a potential that children could languish in intolerable situations when counties do not take appropriate action against inadequate homes. These problems include the counties' conflict of interest in performing both the licensing and placement functions, and the lack of an independent reporting mechanism for complaints regarding the system. Further, the State may not establish performance standards in accordance with timelines set by law, and there has been no bona fide longitudinal study of the foster care system and its clients. These circumstances render the State's decision makers uninformed regarding the effectiveness of the foster care program.

Recommendations

11. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation establishing a statewide foster care ombudsman program.

12. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation eliminating the ability of the State Department of Social Services to contract with counties to perform the licensing functions in the foster care system, thus making the Department solely responsible for those functions.

13. The State Department of Social Services should complete the foster care performance standards in accordance with Chapter 1294, Statutes of 1989. Once the standards are developed, the Department should monitor counties' adherence to the standards, while allowing counties discretion in how to meet those standards.

14. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation requiring a bona fide longitudinal study of California's foster care system and its clients to determine the long-range effectiveness of the system.

Coordinated Services

Counties lack sufficient interagency screening of children coming into the foster care system. Despite the foster care system's goal to protect abused and neglected children, a "re-abuse" of these children occurs when counties lack sufficient interagency coordination to protect the children from the trauma of being shuffled from agency to agency for multiple screenings. Counties that promote such coordination have more success in mitigating further trauma to the children and reducing duplication of effort. Further, there currently exists an ideal opportunity to create the vehicle through which State leadership could be provided in the area of interagency coordination: State legislation (SB 479, Morgan) is pending that would establish the Child Development and Education Agency, which would transcend

departmental boundaries to most effectively encourage interagency coordination at both the state and county government levels.

Recommendations

15. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation to establish the Child Development and Education Agency.

16. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation providing start-up funds for counties to establish systems that institute interagency coordination.

When government intervenes and takes over the responsibility of parenting children, it should be held to the same standards as the children's parents. Unfortunately, California's foster care system cannot even ensure the immediate safety and well-being of the children in the system, much less guarantee that these children will grow and develop into productive, well-adjusted adult members of society. Without true reform, the State's system will continue to remove children from their homes unnecessarily, encourage unstable placements, and perpetuate uncertainty regarding the safety and best interests of children.

INTRODUCTION

Abuse and neglect of children by those whom they love and trust most -- their parents -- is a horrifying nightmare. Unfortunately, that nightmare does not always end when children are "rescued" and thrust into California's foster care system. Despite the good intentions of those who shape and administer child protective services, all too often the program does not deliver on its promises.

In this study, the Little Hoover Commission focuses on some of the key issues surrounding out-of-home placement for children in California.

Background

The foster care system in California is part of the Child Welfare Services Program, which falls under the authority of the State Department of Social Services but is administered at the county level. The program is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse, neglect and exploitation; providing services to children and their families to end abuse, neglect and exploitation; supervising children in foster care through case management; and, when necessary, working to place children in out-of-home care, either temporarily or permanently.[1]

It is important to point out that an implicit goal of the Child Welfare Services Program is to provide the safety, stability, nurturing and guidance necessary for children to be able to grow up into productive, well-adjusted adult members of the community. This goal is most clearly articulated in a recent report issued by the California Child Welfare Strategic Planning Commission:

> *... that they reach adulthood having experienced a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. The resulting sense of self-worth, coupled with equal access to*

resources, will empower them to develop their unique potentials, so that they mature realizing a strong sense of responsibility to self, culture and society.[2]

Currently, there are more than 81,000 infants, children and youths in out-of-home placements in California's foster care system. Each of these minors has been either:

* adjudged a dependent of the court because of child abuse, neglect or exploitation;

* adjudged a ward of the court because of being a law violator;

* placed in foster care by a county welfare or probation department pursuant to a voluntary agreement between the department and the child's parent(s) or guardian(s);

* relinquished for adoption and placed in foster care by an adoption agency, prior to his or her adoption; or

* placed in foster care by an individualized education program that determined the child needs special education services, is seriously emotionally disturbed, and needs 24-hour out-of-home care to meet his or her educational needs.[3]

Once placed in foster care, the children are supervised by either the county welfare department -- as is the case for approximately 93 percent of the children[4]-- or the county probation department.

The state, federal and county costs of maintaining foster children in out-of-home care facilities such as foster family homes, group homes and special homes for seriously emotionally disturbed youths, are budgeted to run more than $900 million in fiscal year 1992-93.[5] The budgeted cost of counties' provision of child welfare services is an additional $500 million, bringing total annual costs for the Child Welfare Services Program to more than $1.4 billion for fiscal year 1992-93.[6]

The present Child Welfare Services Program reflects federal and state changes enacted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These changes were sparked by widespread criticism from child welfare professionals (social workers, attorneys and academicians) of the services that were provided to abused and neglected children and children in foster care.[7] Some of the specific criticisms:

* Too many children were removed from their parents' care, with little or no effort to keep the families intact.

* Children in foster care received few, if any, services to facilitate reunification with their families.

* Children in foster care were allowed to "drift" from one placement to another, with no long-term plan for their future and little likelihood that they would ever enjoy a stable, family-like placement.

* Too many children remained in long-term foster care who should have been permanently placed through adoptions.[8]

In response to these criticisms, the federal government enacted the Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272), which required states to enact specific reforms in order to continue receiving federal funds related to foster care. In 1982, California assimilated the required federal changes into state law through the enactment of Chapter 978 (SB 14, Presley).[9] This legislation established four separate child welfare services programs:

1. *Emergency Response* - Under this program, county welfare departments provide in-person response, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The program's primary goals are crisis intervention and referral to other services as needed. State law requires that the services provided in this program include initial intake, crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter care and transportation.

2. *Family Maintenance* - This program requires counties to provide temporary protective services to prevent or remedy neglect, abuse, or exploitation, for the purpose of preventing the separation of children from their families. The counties provide the services to children (and their families) who have been identified through the Emergency Response Program as victims, or potential victims, of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The primary goal of this program is to allow children to remain with their families under safe conditions, thereby eliminating *unnecessary* placement in foster care. Among the services provided through this program are social worker case management and supportive services such as

counseling, emergency shelter care, temporary in-home caretakers, out-of-home respite care, instruction in homemaking abilities and parenting, and transportation. Families may receive family maintenance services for no more than one year.

3. *Family Reunification* - This program provides temporary foster care services to prevent or remedy the neglect, abuse or exploitation of children who have been temporarily removed from families when the children cannot safely remain at home and while services are provided to reunite the family. The program also provides services to the families of these children, and its primary goal is to safely reunify the children with their families. Social worker case management and supportive services -- such as counseling, emergency shelter care, instruction in homemaking abilities and parenting, and transportation -- are included in the services provided through this program. Children can remain in the Family Reunification Program for no longer than 18 months. After that time, the child must either be returned to the family or transferred to the Permanent Placement Program.

4. *Permanent Placement* - Under this program, counties are required to provide case management services and an alternate, permanent family placement to children in foster care who are unlikely ever to be returned to their families. The primary goal of the program is to ensure that these children are placed in the most family-like and stable setting available, with adoption being the placement of first choice.[10]

The major goals that Chapter 978, Statutes of 1982 attempted to accomplish through these four programs were to:

* provide treatment services to families to reduce *unnecessary* placement in foster care;

* safely reunite more foster care children with their families;

* increase the stability of foster care placements; and

* place more adoptable foster care children in permanent homes.[11]

When counties do remove children from their homes, they have an array of possible placement facilities from which to select, depending on the children's needs, including:

* **Foster family homes licensed by the State or, as is the case in 46 of the 58 counties,[12] by the county through a contract with the State** - The majority of children are placed in this type of home, which comes as close as possible to a "regular" family's home. These homes, run by foster parents, can take up to six children and are not provided professional support. Further, the foster parents may or may not be relatives and/or guardians of the children placed in the homes.

* **Foster family homes certified by State-licensed foster family agencies** - These homes are similar to foster family homes licensed by the county or State except that the foster family agencies -- which are private, not-for-profit organizations or individuals -- provide an additional layer of administration. The agencies are responsible for recruiting, certifying, training and providing professional support to foster parents in whose homes foster children are placed.

* **Group homes** - These homes, which are licensed by the State and classified as residential care facilities, can take seven or more children depending on each home's capacity specified by its licenses. Further, the homes can be operated by organizations or individuals either on a profit or not-for-profit basis, are staffed 24 hours a day, and provide some form of treatment and support services. The licensee resides outside the group home.

* **Small family homes** - These homes also are licensed by the State and classified as residential care facilities for children. The licensee provides 24-hour care for six or fewer children who are mentally disordered, developmentally disabled or physically handicapped and who require special care and supervision as a result of such disabilities. Care is provided in the licensee's family residence.

* **County shelters or receiving homes** - These facilities generally are used only for emergency shelter care, but sometimes are used for longer periods when suitable, alternate placement facilities cannot be found.

* **Medical facilities** - These facilities are used when a child's medical needs are so severe they cannot be met in alternate facilities, or when other facilities are not available.

It should also be noted that children who are placed in foster family homes or licensed small family homes, and who require additional care because of a health and/or behavior problem, are eligible for specialized care to be provided by a qualified care giver.

There has been recent and intense focus on Child Welfare Services in general and foster care in particular. But the topic is not a new one for the Little Hoover Commission. In 1987, the Commission completed a wide-ranging report on the delivery of children's services in the State of California.[13] The report topics included child care, runaway/homeless youths and abused/neglected children, and the report's primary general recommendation was for the State to establish a Children's Czar or a Commission on Children and Youth to provide better coordination of all services to children. Under the topic of abused/neglected children, the report included an analysis of foster care and the State's Child Welfare Services Program, and contained six related findings and 11 related recommendations:

Findings:

1. Increased number of reports of child abuse and neglect have contributed to workload problems.

2. Current approaches for abuse and neglect may prove damaging to families and children.

3. There is a lack of comprehensive training for child welfare professionals, foster parents and mandated reporters.

4. The court system is experiencing difficulties in dealing with cases of abuse and neglect.

5. Lack of emphasis on prevention of abuse and neglect is resulting in long-term problems for children and increased cost to the State.

6. There is a shortage of services and placement resources for abused and neglected children and their families.

Recommendations:

1. Give priority to programs that prevent child abuse and neglect.

2. Ensure that services to aid family reunification, prompt investigations, counseling and other resources are fully funded.

3. Evaluate and develop funding streams that promote interagency cooperation and coordination.

4. Require the use of court mediators, where appropriate.

5. Require that all counties develop and implement an administrative review process for children in out-of-home care who have had a permanency planning hearing.

6. Require the use of video or audio tapes in investigations of child abuse and neglect.

7. Encourage continuous case management for abused and neglected children after the emergency response.

8. Encourage the statewide use of multi-disciplinary teams.

9. Establish a State-supported, multi-faceted interdisciplinary training program.

10. Require certification for caseworkers.

11. Ensure that health needs of children in out-of-home care arrangements are adequately met.

In the time since the Commission's report, there have been few indications that the foster care system has improved; indeed, all signs point to a worsening of conditions. In October 1990, the State Department of Social Services terminated its contract with Los Angeles County and took over the function of licensing foster family homes because of serious problems in the county's licensing and placement activities. (This situation is discussed in greater detail in **Finding #4**.)

Because roughly 41 percent of all the State's children receiving these services are in Los Angeles,[14] the focus on that county's problems does not represent a singling out of one geographical area. The size of the program makes any issue in Los Angeles, in effect, a statewide issue.

Largely motivated by the Los Angeles situation, a series of reports looked at Child Welfare Services late in 1990 and early in 1991. The following are brief synopses of the reports' findings.

* **The Legislative Analyst found that:** the Child Welfare Services program has grown substantially; despite substantial funding increases, the program has had only limited success in meeting its goals; staffing levels are not the primary reason for the program's problems; and there is a substantial shortage of treatment services for Child Welfare Services clients.[15]

* **The Auditor General found that:** Los Angeles County was not complying with visitation and medical history requirements; the county may be placing more children in foster care that the law allows; the State's oversight of Los Angeles County's foster care program and its process for revoking foster home licenses need to be improved; and the State's foster care program could lose an estimated $156 million in federal funds for all 58 counties.[16]

* **The Senate Office of Research concluded that:** new ways need to be found to encourage families to provide foster care; some foster parents need to be elevated to a professional status; quicker termination of family ties need to be made when reunification is not a good prospect; and expanded efforts to qualify older youths for emancipated status are needed.[17]

In addition to the above studies, the State Department of Social Services for the past two years has chaired a Child Welfare Strategic Planning Commission to produce a long-term strategic approach to Child Welfare Services. The commission, which was composed of 34 individuals representing a broad cross-section of those who deal with abused and neglected children, completed a report in November 1991 that identified the myriad needs of children and outlined general strategies to meet those needs.

Finally, an event that occurred in 1991 and that has potential for a significant impact on the State's foster care system was the state-county "realignment" package of bills

that was enacted as part of the 1991-92 budget. In general, the package:

* transfers responsibility for financing indigent health, public health, and mental health programs and services from the State to the counties;

* results in a net shift of $521 million in General Fund costs for social services programs to the counties;

* allocates two new revenues -- increases in vehicle license fees and an added half-cent sales -- to counties to enable them to assume increased health, mental health and social service responsibilities;

* allows counties to shift a limited amount of sales tax revenues between social services and health services; and

* makes other changes in realignment programs. (The specific provisions of realignment concerning foster care are discussed in greater detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report.)

The realignment package is aimed at: reversing a pattern of yearly cutbacks in state funding for health, mental health and social services; providing a source of funding expected to grow yearly by seven or eight percent; and increasing county flexibility, discretion and effectiveness. The State's role in the realigned programs is supposed to be one of oversight and assessment.[18]

Scope and Methodology

The Commission initiated its study of child welfare services in California in July 1991. Its focus was to follow up on the foster care portions of its 1987 report on the delivery of children's services and to identify and review any recent issues related to foster care.

To assist in framing potential issues for this study and to review the concepts and direction of this report, the Commission established an advisory committee on foster care. The committee included representatives of the State, county welfare departments, county probation departments, a county mental health department, education, county social workers, a research group and a group home operator. (Please see **Appendix A** for a list of the Commission's Foster Care Advisory Committee.) It should be noted that the composition of the advisory committee reflects only those parties who accepted the Commission's invitation to participate; the Commission also invited representatives from many other groups interested in child welfare services.

The Commission held two public hearings on foster care; the first hearing was held November 20, 1991 in San Francisco and the second was held January 22, 1992 in Los Angeles. Both hearings addressed the issues presented in this report and elicited testimony from foster youths, parents of foster youths, foster parents, child advocates, special interest groups, a juvenile court judge, and representatives of the State Department of Social Services, county welfare departments, a county probation department, group homes, and a foster family agency. (Please see **Appendix B** for a list of witnesses providing testimony for the Commission's two hearings.)

In addition to the public hearings, Commission staff conducted extensive fieldwork by reviewing literature, publications and statistics related to children's services in general and foster care in particular. In addition, the Commission and its staff toured county facilities, foster family homes and group homes in San Francisco, and interviewed numerous individuals throughout the State.

Report Format

In addition to the Executive Summary, this report is presented in nine sections, the first of which is this introduction. The next five sections contain the study's five major findings and their corresponding recommendations, and the seventh section presents the Commission's overall conclusions. The eighth section includes appendices containing detailed information related to the study, and the ninth and final section contains the report's endnotes.

FAMILY PRESERVATION

Finding #1 — The State's foster care system runs contrary to the preservation of families.

Despite the fact that children are best served by remaining with their own families, California continues to remove an increasing number of children from their homes. Moreover, the children in the foster care system are staying in the system longer. As a result of government's failure to invest in less-expensive services that focus on removing the problems from dysfunctional families rather than removing the children, the State's costs continue to skyrocket and children continue to be harmed by the removal from their families.

Generally, It Is Best for Children to Remain with Their Families

Tragically, not all children can stay in their own homes safely; nor can all children who are placed in out-of-home care return to their natural parents. It is a sad fact of life that some families are so dysfunctional that the children are better off by being removed permanently from their parents and placed in other homes. Few people would argue, for example, that it would be in the best interest of an 11-year-old girl to keep her in a family in which she was repeatedly molested by her stepfather while her mother refused to believe her, ignored her pleas for help, and continues to disbelieve the child even after a court determined that the stepfather was guilty. Nor would it be wise to return a 5-year-old boy to a family in which each parent would periodically beat and/or torture him by burning his buttocks with the end of a lit cigarette. These types of children clearly need the love, care and specialized services not available in their own families.

In general, however, children do best when they grow up with their own families. Some professionals estimate that between 35 percent and 70 percent of children who end up in foster care should not be there and can be severely

damaged psychologically by the experience. According to a former chief of research and evaluation of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

> *Research over the past 40 years says that if you remove the child from home, you traumatize the child more than he is already hurt. You inflict a subsequent injury, especially on a young child who can't understand why he's been removed from his family. They feel they did something bad, and that it is their fault, or they view it as a kidnapping.*[19]

One psychologist, in speaking of the dynamics of removing a child from his or her family, stated, "Once a child is placed outside his home, something basic changes. A family is a bit like a spider's web. It's a finely drawn, interconnecting set of relationships. Once a spider's web is broken, you cannot put it back together again."[20]

As an example, consider the effect such a break-up had on a 17-year-old girl who testified at the Commission's November public hearing. The girl told of how she and her 11-year-old sister were removed from her alcoholic mother's care only to drift from one foster home to another and be serviced by five different social workers. The girl said she received nothing but discouragement from the social workers and counselors she came in contact with and, despite her and her sister's pleas to have her family reunited, she was told she could not go home because no services were available to treat her mother. Prior to being removed from her home, the girl was an honors student in school and had a 3.8 grade point average; since being placed in foster care her grade point average has plummeted to 2.0. The girl also spoke of now living in shame because she felt that, without knowing where she might be moved to next, she could not even give out her address.[21]

An alternative to removing children from their homes is to remove the problems from the homes. Placement prevention programs provide such an alternative through family preservation services to children and their families. Through intensive support and supervision, such services help many troubled families whose children are at imminent risk of removal to remain safely together in their homes. Beginning in 1988, California has seen a total of 13 counties that have implemented, or have specific plans to implement, family preservation programs.[22]

Across the nation, as well as in California, the programs share some basic service characteristics in addition to the fundamental goal of protecting children while preventing their removal from home. Most often, specialized

staff provide services to the family as a unit, generally in the home. Programs frequently have social workers on-call 24 hours a day. Funds are generally available for the purchase of marketed goods and services, like a housing deposit, the purchase of a playpen, or car repair. Services are intensive and time-limited. Small caseloads allow staff to devote many hours a week to help families make the changes necessary to avoid out-of-home placement. Linkage to community resources is provided to help when the short-term service delivery period ends.[23]

Some case examples further help to illustrate the mechanics of the programs:

* A Solano County woman's two daughters, ages six and eight, were placed in foster care after the woman, an alcoholic, came to pick up her oldest daughter at school smelling of alcohol. The girl explained the situation to school authorities, who then called the police.

  After the incident, "I went home and just started drinking. That's how I dealt with all my problems," said the woman. "I was in denial for a long time. I blamed all my problems on everybody else. I wasn't willing to take responsibility for myself."

  The first priority of the social worker from Solano County's family-preservation unit was to get the woman to stop drinking. At first the woman did not think too highly of the worker. "I thought she was being too hard on me, that she wanted me to do all this stuff by myself, and I wanted her to do it for me," said the woman. But she acknowledged that the social worker focused on her strengths, showing her that she could take control of her life. "I talked to that lady (social worker) on the phone almost every day for the last nine months. She has been my support." Now the woman has her children back, and the future looks considerably brighter.

* The Birthing Project, a community-based volunteer organization that has established itself as a community resource for African-American maternal and child health in Sacramento, operates a 12-month child abuse prevention program (called "IMANI," which is Swahili for "faith") for pregnant women (including teens) who are at risk of abusing or neglecting their children. The risk exists not because the women are classical "child abusers," but because: they do not have the

basic resources necessary to maintain a safe and nurturing home for their children; they may be substance abusers; or they may, themselves, be in an abusive family situation.

Through IMANI, a counselor works with each woman to identify and appropriate immediate services such as housing, financial assistance, drug counseling and medical services. Other services include: development of long-term (one year) plans, including education and employment goals and support services necessary to maintain them; enrollment in parenting and personal growth and development classes; and provision of emotional and practical support, direction and advocacy. Moreover, the IMANI counselor identifies and coordinates services using a group of community agencies and resources that has been convened by the Birthing Project.

Success cases of the program include a mother of a minor in foster care who was allowed by the court to reside as a boarder in the foster home. Also, in a precedent-setting decision, the court allowed one young mother to maintain supervised custody of her infant on the condition that she "volunteer" at the IMANI office and receive on-the-job parenting instruction and supervision from IMANI's staff.[24]

* A woman in Detroit, the mother of ten and grandmother of five, was perilously close to having her children removed. The living conditions in the overcrowded home were squalid: Everything in the house (including the walls) was black and grimy from years of dirt, fleas and flies were everywhere, and plates of rotting food and piles of dirty laundry covered the floors. The family's pets, a menagerie of cats and dogs, relieved themselves wherever they wished, adding to the fetid atmosphere. In addition, the mother was dangerously overweight and plagued by medical problems.

The social worker assigned to the case had the family prioritize their goals, the first of which was to find a new place to live. Within days, the social worker found an appropriate house four blocks away, arranged a lease and put down a security deposit. Next, the family gave up all but one of their pets to

friends and relatives. Then the kids were taken shopping to purchase desperately needed clothes and new bunk beds, and the mother bought a stove and a washing machine. The state and Families First, the family preservation agency involved in the case, paid all the bills. Finally, the social worker helped the family devise a chore chart and encouraged the mother to enforce the rules.

In total, the social worker spent four weeks with the family, making herself available to them day and night, whenever they had a problem. Both the mother and the social worker now feel the family will succeed in staying together.

Further, although the cash expenditures may seem extravagant, the program does save money in the long run. The average Families First intervention, which lasts four to six weeks, costs about $4,500 per family; traditional family foster care placement in Michigan typically runs between $10,000 and $14,000 per year per child.[25]

By investing in the "up-front services" of a placement prevention program, the government accomplishes two important goals. First, by providing in-home services as an alternative to out-of-home placement, children can avoid the traumatic experience of being separated from their families and their homes.[26] An early round of studies conducted by the founders of Tacoma, Washington's Homebuilders, the nation's first family preservation program, showed remarkable success rates: 94 percent of the children had avoided foster placement three months after receiving the family preservation services, and 88 percent had avoided placement at the end of a year. Programs using different models had similar outcomes. Maryland's Intensive Family Services claims that 95 percent of families it served avoided placement 90 days after services were provided, and that 90 percent had still avoided placement after two years.[27] According to Contra Costa County officials, that county's program has kept 83 percent of families together for at least one year.[28] Other programs boast that between 61 percent and 97 percent of placements were avoided one year after the programs began.[29]

Critics of these studies claim that they were conducted without control groups to provide an accurate comparison to families not receiving family preservation services and that such high rates are inflated. Some feel that a more accurate percentage of placement avoidance is closer to 10 percent. Studies that did contain control

groups, however, showed clear advantages of family preservation services. (Please see **Appendix C** for a brief discussion of the results of such studies.)

A second goal that can be accomplished through placement prevention programs is the reduction of the growing cost of out-of-home care by helping many troubled families whose children are at imminent risk of removal remain together safely in their homes.[30] A 1990 evaluation of the initial three family preservation projects in California concluded that, after only the first pilot year of the projects, the projects resulted in savings of more than $1 million in direct costs of placing children out of their homes.[31] In Contra Costa County, officials estimate that for every $1,000 spent on a child in the family preservation program, it would cost $3,000 to keep the child in a foster home for the same amount of time and as much as $5,000 to put the child in a juvenile camp, which has very close supervision.[32] Another 1990 study projected that an investment of $106 million in placement prevention programs in California over four years would reduce the direct costs of placing children out of their homes by $347 million over that same period.[33] It should be noted that these studies did not contain control groups.

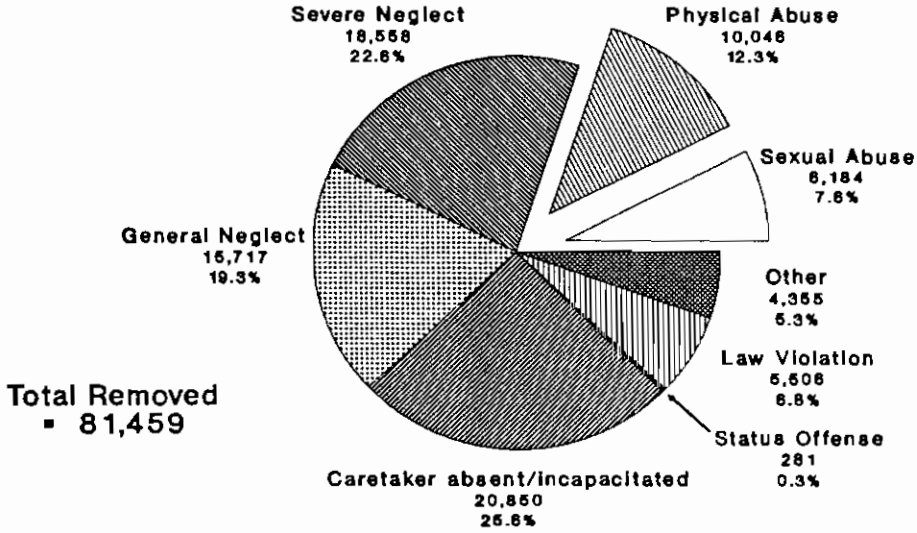
Family Preservation Is Not Always Appropriate

A very real danger associated with placement prevention and family preservation programs is that they are not appropriate for every dysfunctional family in need of child welfare services. When physical violence or sexual abuse is endemic to a family, there is no choice but to remove victimized children from their home. For these children, such crimes are so threatening that home preservation is not an option.[34]

From that perspective, it is fortunate that only a minority of the children placed in out-of-home care are removed from their homes for reasons of physical or sexual abuse. On the following page, **Figure 1** shows the reasons for the removal of all children who were placed out-of-home during calendar year 1991. (Please see **Appendix D** for definitions of the reasons for removal.)

Figure 1

Reasons for Removing Children from Their Homes Calendar Year 1991



Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As **Figure 1** shows, of all the children removed from their homes during calendar year 1991, only 19.9 percent were removed because of physical or sexual abuse. The remaining 80.1 percent were removed for other reasons, such as neglect by the children's caretakers or violation of the law by the children.[35] Some reasons included in the 80.1 percent figure, such as the death of a child's caretaker, would preclude family preservation services. For the vast majority of cases, however, reasons other than physical and sexual abuse would allow children to remain in their homes under a placement prevention program.

It is also interesting to note that physical and sexual abuse have constituted a decreasing percentage of all reasons for removal in recent years. During fiscal year 1988-89, they were the reasons of removal in 22.5 percent of the cases; in fiscal year 1989-90 they decreased to 20.9 percent of all reasons. And in fiscal year 1990-91, physical and sexual abuse were the reasons for removal in only 20.3 percent of all cases.[36]

Meanwhile, the reasons for removal that are most directly related to parental substance abuse -- specifically, endangerment due to parental neglect, incapacity or absence

-- have increased.[37] The fallout of substance abuse as felt by the foster care system is discussed more fully in **Finding #2**.

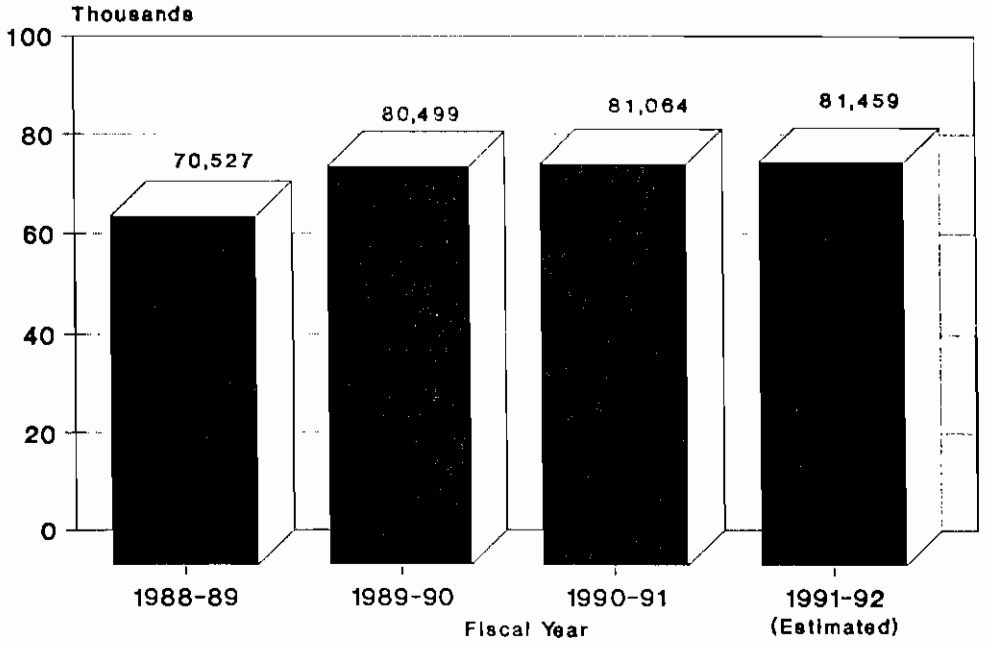
Out-of-Home Placements & Associated Costs Are Increasing

As stated earlier, placement prevention programs exist in California in only 13 counties. Moreover, the 13 counties in which the programs exist account for only 30.5 percent of all children placed in out-of-home care.[38] It is safe to say that, at this point in time, family preservation programs are the exception rather than the norm.

Instead, California children continue to be removed from their homes in increasing numbers. **Figure 2** shows the increase in the number of children placed in out-of-home care.

Figure 2

Number of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care
Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1991-92



Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

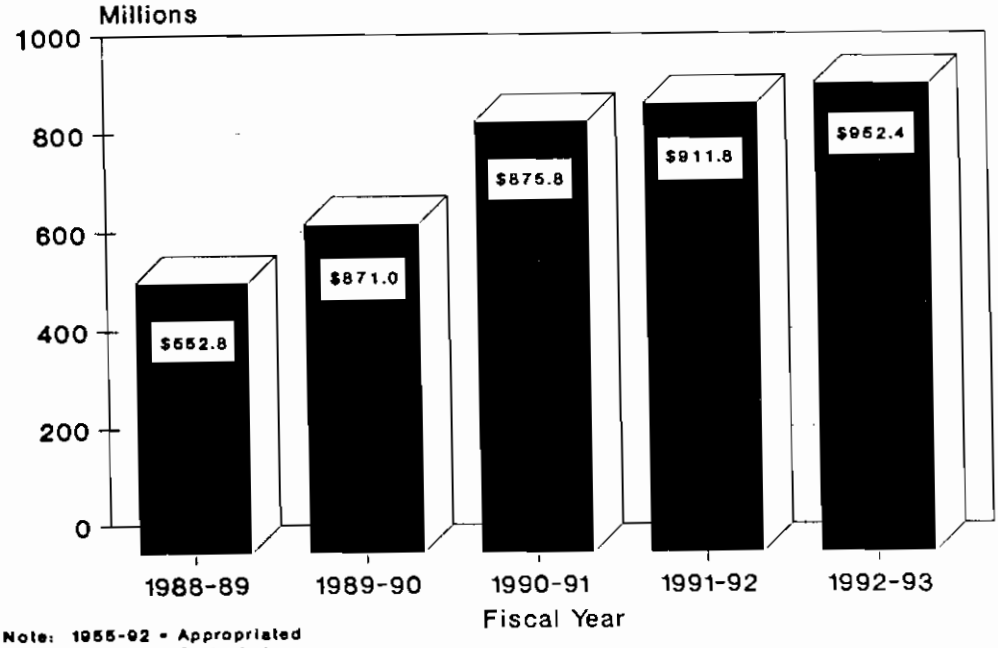
As **Figure 2** illustrates, the number of children removed from their homes increased by nearly 11,000 (15.5 percent) over the four-year period, going from 70,527 in fiscal year 1988-89 to an estimated 81,459 in fiscal year 1991-92.[39]

In 1991, the California Legislative Analyst compared California's placement rate with two other large industrial states -- New York and Michigan -- and with the nation as a whole. The comparison showed that, once population increases were accounted for, the rate was higher in California than the rates in New York and Michigan and almost double the national average.[40] Another 1991 study had similar findings: Not only did foster care placement rates increase in more than three-quarters of California's counties, but of the 46 counties large enough to rank, 30 counties have rates higher than the national average and 4 counties have rates double the national average.[41]

As one might expect, the costs associated with out-of-home placements have increased likewise. **Figure 3** presents out-of-home placement costs for a five-year period.

Figure 3

Out-of-Home Placement Costs
Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1992-93



Note: 1988-92 = Appropriated
1992-93 = Budgeted
Source: Estimates Branch, State Department of Social Services

As described in **Figure 3**, the cost of placing children in out-of-home care has increased nearly $400 million (72.3 percent) over the five-year period, increasing from approximately $553 million in fiscal year 1988-89 to a budgeted $952 million in fiscal year 1992-93.[42]

An even more striking view of the increase in placement costs is achieved when one considers that such

costs amounted to only $150 million in 1981-82, the last fiscal year before the Child Welfare Services Program was restructured.[43] In the 11 years since that time, the cost of placing children out of their homes has increased more than $800 million, or approximately 535 percent.

It is important to recognize that the cost figures discussed above represent only the costs directly associated with placing children out of their homes and in facilities such as foster family homes, group homes and special homes for seriously emotionally disturbed children; these costs primarily are made up of basic caseload costs and grants to maintain the children in the homes. The other portion of the Child Welfare Services Program -- counties' provision of child welfare services -- are not included, but have increased as well. In fact, child welfare services costs have increased from nearly $392 million in fiscal year 1988-89 to a budgeted $512 million in fiscal year 1992-93, an increase of about $120 million (30.6 percent).[44] The substantial growth rate of child welfare services costs is magnified when one considers that such costs have nearly quadrupled since fiscal year 1981-82.[45]

In projecting caseload and placement costs to the future, the 1990 study, "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," concluded that, "[i]n the absence of an investment in strategies which keep families safely together and prevent the need for out-of-home care, by 1994 California's foster care caseload will grow to 90,000 children and costs will double to $1.8 billion."[46] It is interesting to note, however, that these projections, which were made in 1990, included caseload estimates that were lower than actual figures. For example, the report's projection for caseload in fiscal year 1990-91 was 62,800;[47] actual caseload for that year was 81,064.[48] Thus, the report's projections actually may be understated and the future costs of out-of-home placements could be even higher than previously thought.

Children Are Staying Longer in Foster Care

Despite rhetoric about family preservation and reunification, children are spending more time in foster care after they are removed from their homes.

The 1990 study, "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," revealed that children entering foster care in January 1988 left care more slowly than children entering in January 1985. For each 100 children entering foster care, 40 of the children entering in 1988 were still in care 18 months later, as compared to 28 of the children who entered in 1985. Over the three-year period, there was a 42.9 percent increase in the proportion of children who remained in foster care at the end of 18 months.[49]

More recent statistics also indicate an increase in the length of stay for children in foster care. A review of the

children who have left the foster care system revealed that the percentage of children in foster care 18 months or longer increased between fiscal years 1988-89 and 1991-92. **Table 1** shows the length of stay for children exiting the foster care system.

Table 1

Percent of Children Leaving Foster Care That Stayed Longer Than 18 Months - Fiscal Years 1988-89 through 1991-92

Fiscal Year 1988-89	Fiscal Year 1989-90	Fiscal Year 1990-91	Fiscal Year 1991-92 *
27.5%	28.7%	29.6%	30.8%

* Note: Figure for fiscal year 1991-92 is estimated based on data for 12 months ending December 1991.
Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As shown in **Table 1**, of the children who left the foster care system in fiscal year 1988-89, 27.5 percent had been in the system longer than 18 months; an estimated 30.8 percent of the children leaving foster care in fiscal year 1991-92 will have stayed in the system 18 months or longer.[50]

In further reviewing the data, it was also revealed that an estimated 13.4 percent of the children leaving foster care during fiscal year 1991-92 will have been in the system longer than three years, compared to only 10.8 percent of the children who left during fiscal year 1988-89.[51]

Another indication that children are not being returned to their natural homes comes from the caseload statistics for the Permanent Placement component of the Child Welfare Services Program. State law requires county social service agencies to find permanent alternative homes (through adoption, guardianship or permanent foster care) for children who cannot return to their parents after 18 months of reunification efforts. Thus, an increase in the Permanent Placement caseload would be the result of a growing proportion of children who remain in foster care at the end of 18 months. In fact, between fiscal years 1985-86 and 1989-90 there was a sharp increase in the number of children needing alternative homes; Permanent Placement caseloads increased approximately 148 percent during the period (from 14,300 cases to 35,400 cases).[52] That upward trend has continued, as the estimated caseload for the Permanent Placement program in fiscal year 1991-92 is 41,756, which represents an increase of 18 percent.[53]

Unfortunately, the number of adoptive placements grew only at a slightly higher rate (19.5 percent) between fiscal years 1988-89 to 1991-92 (from 3113 placements to 3721 placements). Thus, very large numbers of children continue to languish in foster care, uncertain about their future.

In contrast to the increase in the Permanent Placement caseload, there has been a decrease in the caseload for the Family Maintenance program, which has the primary goal of allowing children to remain with their families under safe conditions (thereby eliminating unnecessary placement in foster care). Between fiscal years 1985-86 and 1989-90, the Family Maintenance caseload declined from 31,600 to 29,800 (a 5.7 percent decrease).[54] The caseload continues to decline; in fiscal year 1991-92, the Family Maintenance program will serve an estimated 27,036 (which represents an additional drop of 9.3 percent).[55]

The following statement in the report, "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," is as applicable today as it was in 1990:

> *The Permanent Placement caseload statistics and foster care length of stay statistics are deeply troubling. They reveal that fewer children are returning to their natural homes despite the efforts of county social service agencies. As fewer children return home there is substantial pressure on the system to find permanent alternative homes. As a consequence, child welfare resources are increasingly needed at the "back-end" of the system for both the social work staff who locate alternative homes for children as well as the costs of adoption assistance and long-term foster care payments. A growing use of resources at the back-end of the system indicates that service strategies in California are not adequately proactive. They do not focus on the needs of children after they cannot return to their natural homes.*
>
> ***Tragically, the absence of a serious, proactive investment in "front-end" placement prevention and family preservation strategies has led to the increase in Permanent Placement and foster care caseloads.*** *Until a serious investment in these front-end services is made, out-of-home care caseloads will continue to grow and more and more children will be denied the opportunity to grow within their natural families.*[56]

Bleak Future for Foster Care Graduates

Once a child's term in foster care is completed, his or her life does not necessarily take a turn for the better. Whether it is the effects of the foster care system itself or the predisposition of the children who enter it, many of those who leave foster care are destined for less-than-desirable futures.

For example, a recent nationwide study of runaway youths has found that more than a third of the youths had been in foster care in the year before they took to the streets. In California, the percentage was even higher, topping the nation with 45 percent of the youths saying they had been in foster care in the preceding 12 months. This situation should be viewed as gravely serious given that runaways who become street kids are subject to a wide variety of medical problems and health-compromising behaviors, including suicide, depression, prostitution and substance abuse.[57]

In addition, a recent study of foster care graduates in California shows that many are poorly educated and cannot afford adequate housing. They suffer from chronic illnesses and drug and alcohol abuse, and are more likely to run afoul of the law. Other studies confirm that disproportionate numbers of children who stumble through foster care tend to end up on the streets or in prison.[58]

Reasons for Increase in Out-of-Home Placements and Associated Costs

One of the reasons that family preservation has not become the norm is that out-of-home placements have become a tradition that is hard to break. Over the years, child welfare reform has been focused around removal first, then reunification. To change this philosophy has been difficult, to say the least. An apt description of the attempts to change was given at the Commission's November hearing by the assistant general manager of the San Francisco Department of Social Services:

> *Think of this as a very big steamship that was steaming [one] way and we are now trying to have it turn around and go [another] way. ...We're changing a system that functioned one way; it was a 'child-rescuing' system. It took the children out of [one] famil[y], put them in another family, and moved on to the next crisis. ...We're now asking staff to look at the biological family and put the same level of energy and resources into the biological family. But we have to move the resources to the front-end of the system, and that's going to take some significant time.*[59]

As a consequence of relying on the traditional system of foster care, funding has not been primarily targeted at family preservation. One perspective on this occurrence is

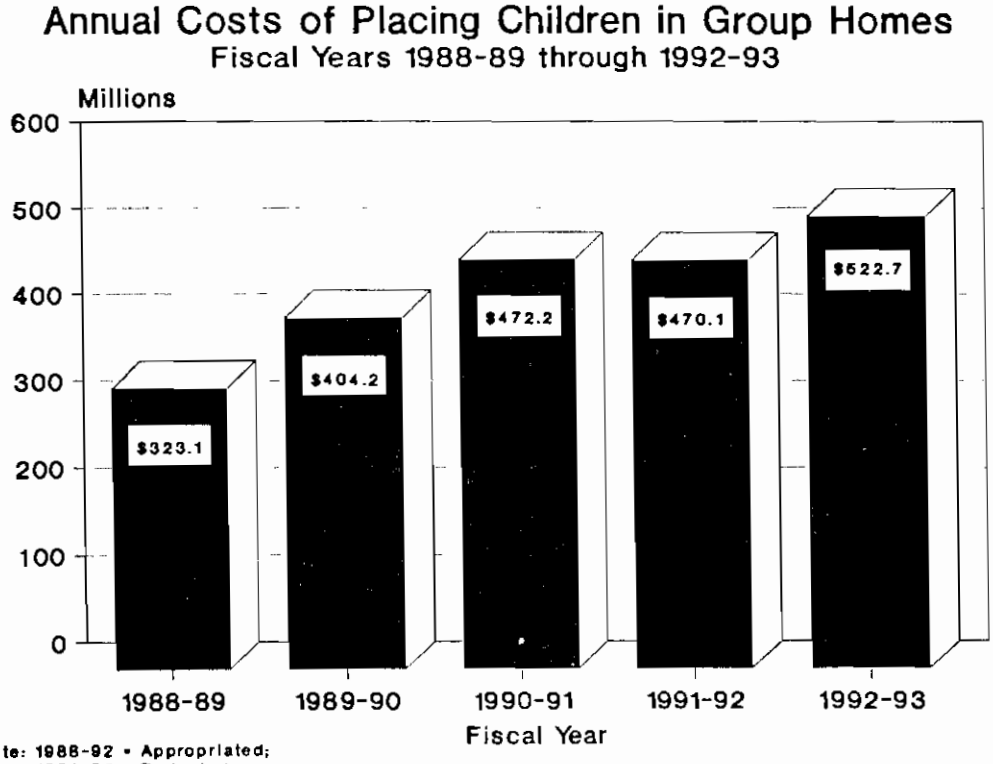
presented in a 1991 report by the National Commission on Family Foster Care:

> *Funding patterns reflect our country's historical preference for crisis intervention and out-of-home care, as state studies document that six to ten times as much money is allocated for out-of-home care placements as for child abuse and neglect prevention. On the federal level, funding for preventive services for families at risk of separation decreased (when adjusted for inflation) in the 1980s.*[60]

The same can be said of funding patterns in California. For example, in fiscal year 1988-89, the State spent nearly $10 on out-of-home placement and related casework costs for every $1 spent on services to keep children and their families together.[61] With the advent of family preservation programs in additional counties, more funds are being directed to keeping children in their homes; but, as shown earlier, funding of out-of-home placements continue to increase at startling rates.

While the overall costs of out-of-home placement have continued to increase, it is the cost of group homes that stands out. On the following page, **Figure 4** displays the annual costs of placing children in group homes for fiscal year 1988-89 through 1992-93.

Figure 4



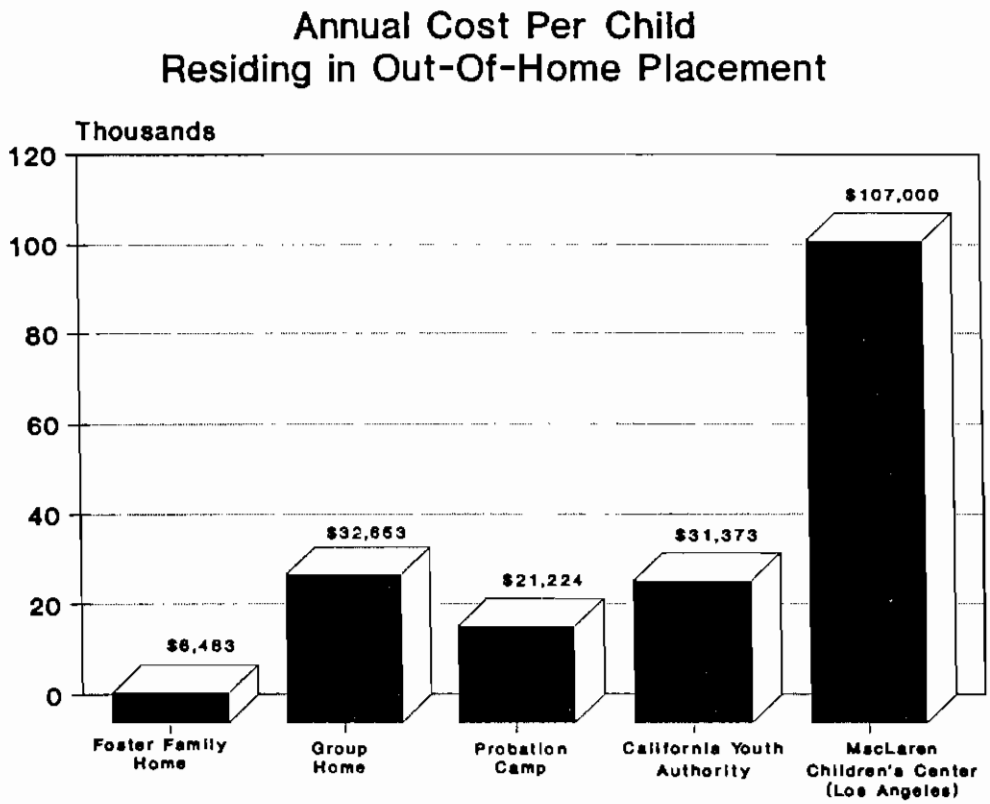
Note: 1988-92 = Appropriated;
1992-93 = Budgeted
Source: Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services

As exhibited in **Figure 4**, the cost of out-of-home placement in group homes has escalated from $323,141 in fiscal year 1988-89 to a budgeted $522,685 in fiscal year 1992-93, an increase of $199,544 (61.8 percent).[62] (The decrease in costs in fiscal year 1991-92 is due to a freeze in group home rates.)

During this same period, the cost of placing children in foster family homes rose only $128,926 (from $220,649 to $349,575), a 58.4 percent increase.[63] However, the cost of group homes represents nearly 60 percent of basic caseload and grants costs for all out-of-home placements. Therefore, the increase in the cost of group homes is a major factor in the increase in the cost of placements.[64]

Another way to view the high cost of group homes is to compare it against the cost of other types of out-of-home placements. On the next page, **Figure 5** shows such a comparison in terms of the annual cost per child residing in out-of-home placement.

Figure 5



Note: Figures represent most recent information available from various sources and may not necessarily be reflective of the same period. For example, the costs of foster family homes and group homes are for calendar year 1991; the other facilities are for fiscal year 1991-92.

Source: State Department of Social Services, State Department of Finance, Probation Business Manager's Association, Legislative Analyst's Office, and Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services

As **Figure 5** shows, the least expensive placement is in a foster family home where, on average, it costs approximately $6,500 per year per child. By contrast, the average cost of placing a child in a group home is nearly $33,000.[65] Only the county-run MacLaren Children's Center in Los Angeles has a higher per-child placement cost than group homes, and that facility is used as a placement of last resort for children who have severe behavioral problems, who are developmentally delayed, or who were not able to function well in group homes.[66]

Concern over the high cost of group homes is not to say that group homes do not have a position in the continuum of placement facilities available to counties. In fact, group homes really are the only logical choice for some children and youths that require higher levels of care. For example, the Commission received testimony from one county's chief probation officer who stated, "In Alameda County, few of the minors referred to us are able to tolerate the closeness of a normal family setting and because of the

severity of their delinquency, few can be maintained in a minimally structured, community setting."[67]

The chief probation officer went on to point out:

The State's resources for serving delinquent children have been directed to the most expensive types of care -- out-of-home placement in group homes and the California Youth Authority.

Between 1985 and 1989, out-of-home placement of court wards increased 11% in group homes, 15 percent in California Youth Authority institutions and 9 percent in county camps. While these three out-of-home care settings had comparable monthly costs in 1985, by 1989 this picture had changed substantially:

* *California Youth Authority monthly cost per child increased 15 percent despite the fact that increased overcrowding at Youth Authority institutions offset cost increases. In 1989, total California Youth Authority placement costs for children under the age of 18 was $59 million.*

* *The average monthly group home placement cost increased over 43 percent. In 1989, total placement costs for court wards in group homes was $140 million.*

* *County camps, which are funded entirely by county funds showed less than a 2 percent increase in monthly costs per child. Total county camp expenditures in 1989 amounted to $76 million.*

Now, let me give you a case in point of how the continual erosion of probation dollars is costing the taxpayer more in the long run. I just told you that county camps are funded entirely by county funds. We all know counties have been hurting since 1978 when Proposition 13 passed. So it shouldn't surprise many that from 1985 to 1989, monthly costs per child only rose 2 percent. As a result, group homes in 1989 cost 50 percent more per month than camps.

Now, can you guess what I had to do three months ago because of reductions in my budget? I had to close a less-costly 94-bed camp so that now, in order to meet out-of-home placement needs, I must use a more-costly group home or California Youth Authority.

Prior to committing a youth to the California Youth Authority, the juvenile court is required by law to exhaust less restrictive treatment options. If state law makes this demand, shouldn't the State be doing more to promote alternatives to group home and California Youth Authority placements for court wards?[68]

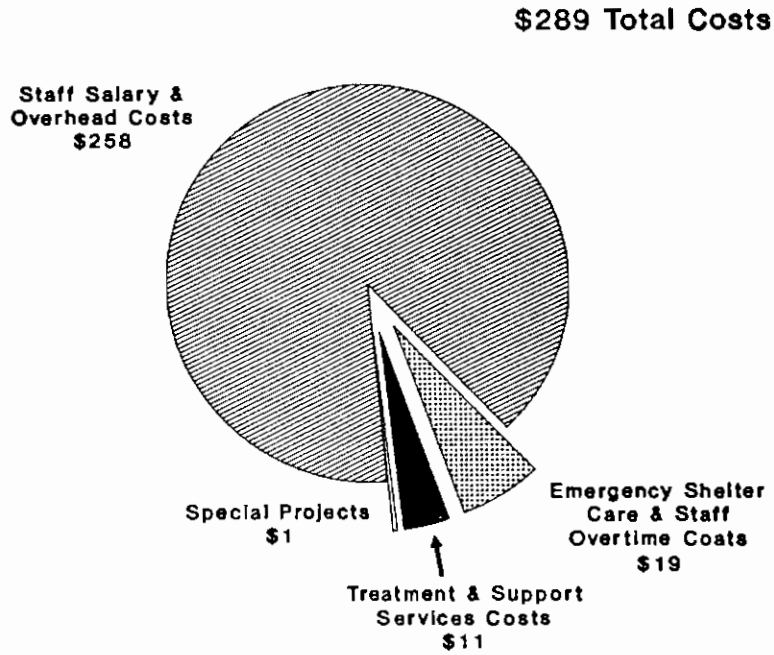
Another cause for reliance on out-of-home placement is the State's lack of an adequate system of support services for foster children and their families. This complaint is not a new one; in response to a survey conducted by the Legislative Analyst's Office in September 1989, most social workers indicated that treatment or support services were often not available. For example, 42 percent of the social workers surveyed indicated that they had, on at least one occasion, placed a child in foster care because they were unable to find appropriate services that would have allowed the child to remain in the home.[69] This is particularly distressing in light of the fact that these services are an essential tool in achieving one of the primary goals of the Child Welfare Services Program: minimizing the use of foster care.

Further, 64 percent of the workers surveyed cited a need for additional services in the Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, or Family Reunification Programs. Workers in all three programs believed that additional services were needed most in the areas of in-home services, mental health counseling, parenting classes, and substance abuse treatment and counseling.[70] Obviously, if some of these additional services were provided, the need for out-of-home placement could be mitigated.

The data regarding the supply of services support the social workers' perceptions that there is an overall lack of services available to families served by the Child Welfare Services Program. For example, the Legislative Analyst reported that of the $439 million counties spent on child welfare services in fiscal year 1989-90, $392 million was used for staff and overhead costs, and $46 million was used for "direct costs."[71] On average, the counties spent $289 monthly for each child welfare services case in 1989-90. On the following page, **Figure 6** shows a breakdown of the average monthly costs per child.

Figure 6

Average Monthly Cost Per Child for Child Welfare Services
Fiscal Year 1989-90



Source: California Legislative Analyst's Office

As shown in **Figure 6**, only $11 (3.9 percent) of the $289 in average monthly costs per child supported the purchase of treatment and support services.[72] The majority of the money is spent on staff salary and overhead costs.

In the absence of services being rendered through external providers, the social workers themselves provide some of the services, usually through their case management activities and face-to-face contacts with families. These contacts alone, however, probably are not sufficient to ensure the effective provision of services. First, the contacts are too infrequent. Most workers indicate that they make face-to-face contact with families at about the minimum frequency allowed by law: emergency response workers about once every two weeks, and family maintenance workers about once every 25 days.

A second reason why face-to-face contacts are not sufficient for effectively providing services is that the primary

purpose of the contacts is to accomplish tasks such as ensuring that the child is safe, making referrals to treatment and support services providers, and assisting the parent(s) in understanding court orders. Once these types of case management tasks are completed, there is not sufficient time remaining for the social worker to effectively provide treatment services to the child or the family.[73]

As indicated earlier, mental health services were among the services cited as lacking by social workers. According to at least one study, the lack of an adequate mental health system has forced placement in the most intensive and expensive foster care group homes - psychological and psychiatric programs. The study's report, "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," stated that the "average" group home placement in fiscal year 1989-90 was a psychological/psychiatric placement at a cost of $31,100 per year.[74] This trend appears to have continued given that, as shown earlier in **Figure 5**, the average group home placement in calendar year 1991 cost $32,653. Further, the upward spiral of group home costs, as discussed earlier also, suggests that such costly placements continue to be made.

The report also indicated that the State's foster care grants to group homes do not reflect the total cost of services to all children in group homes. It stated that county mental health departments report that approximately seven percent of the children in group homes received a supplemental payment, a "treatment patch," for mental health services in 1989 and approximately 10 percent of all children in out-of-home care received services by a local mental health department.[75]

Yet one more reason for the State's unwillingness to provide extra funding for family preservation programs is the perennial problem of scarce resources. This condition is particularly true given the current budget difficulties the State is experiencing. There is a glimmer of hope on the horizon, however. Pending federal legislation, the Child Welfare and Preventive Services Act (S. 4, Bentsen) and the Family Preservation Act of 1991 (H.R. 2571, Downey), would make significant programmatic and funding improvements for children, youths and families in the child welfare system, including an emphasis on family preservation. The legislation promises a much-needed infusion of $3 billion to $6 billion in federal spending for child welfare over the next five years. With the new funds, it may be possible to begin to rebuild the present foster care system, as well as develop and expand a range of workable alternatives to the system.

Another possible source of improvements in the foster care system is the state-county "realignment" package of bills enacted as part of the 1991-92 budget. In addition to the

revenue enhancing features of realignment already outlined in the introduction section of this report, specific realignment provisions relating to social services include:

* increasing the county share of non-federal costs of foster care from 5 percent to 60 percent.

* increasing the county share of non-federal costs of the Child Welfare Services Program to 30 percent; previously, the county share was fixed at 1982-83 levels plus specified cost-of-living adjustments.

* authorizing the counties to supplement, at county expense, the rates paid to foster parents and foster family agencies within the county, as well as supplements for specialized care, clothing allowances, and infant supplements.

* expanding the family preservation program to allow all counties, upon approval of the State Department of Social Services, to operate family preservation programs.

* until January 1, 1997, requiring specified data to be reported annually by the Health and Welfare Agency and the Youth and Correctional Agency; the data are intended to monitor counties' maintenance of effort in child welfare, mental health and probation programs, and to avoid inappropriate reliance on institutional care.

* requiring the California Youth Authority to convene a task force to identify ways to better coordinate the continuum of services for youthful offenders, including innovative local alternatives to placement in the Youth Authority.

* Requires counties that reduce the capacity of their county juvenile homes, ranches or camps in 1991-92 to pay the State for the cost of increased Youth Authority commitments over the current fiscal year.[76]

Clearly, the intent of these provisions revolves around providing counties the opportunity to invest in family preservation programs as alternatives to foster care. They also encourage placing children in foster care only because the children specifically need out-of-home placement to address their particular situation and assure their protection

-- not because other more appropriate placement prevention services do not exist.

Whether realignment will have its intended effect, however, is subject to conjecture. The Commission received information from numerous witnesses and interviewees who speculated as to the possible effects of realignment. Some indicated that realignment will, in fact, offer more flexibility to counties and will encourage more investment in family preservation services because of the increase in the counties' share of costs; others suggested that realignment will do nothing to truly reform the system and, instead, will continue to perpetuate existing problems. All, however, agreed that it was too early to tell exactly what the final effects of realignment will be.

Summary

Generally, it is best for children to remain with their natural families and, thus, it is most appropriate for government to invest in "front-end" services that work at removing the problems from families rather than removing the children. To date, however, California has not provided such an investment and, instead, has continued to rely on out-of-home placements. As a result, the numbers of children removed from their homes and the associated costs have spiraled upward. Further, children are staying in the system longer once they are removed from their homes.

Recommendations

1. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that would ensure that greater emphasis is focused on placement prevention programs and associated family preservation services for those families whose problems do not stem from sexual or physical abuse. Such programs and services must focus on ensuring the safety and well-being of the child, however, and not mindlessly concentrate on preserving families at any cost.

   Legislation should include, but not be limited to, increased funding for home- and community-based family preservation and placement prevention services so that local agencies have the ability to address the problems of families without having to resort to out-of-home placement.

   Funding in addition to current levels could be made available only to the extent that savings are expected to be realized through a decrease in out-of-home placements, and only with a commensurate decrease in funding for those placements.

2. The Legislature should enact a resolution stating California's support for federal

legislation that would provide additional federal funding for family preservation services.

3. The Governor and the Legislature should continue to re-examine and monitor the effects of state-county realignment and enact any legislation necessary to ensure the realization of realignment's intended effect of encouraging counties to invest in family preservation programs and place children out of their homes only when warranted.

FOSTER PARENTS

Finding #2 **Training, support services, screening and rates of reimbursement are woefully inadequate for the State's foster parents.**

Individuals who elect to be foster parents have a critical need for comprehensive training to develop the skills necessary to cope with today's troubled foster children and youths. In addition, prospective foster parents should be evaluated for their suitability for the task at hand. Further, foster parents should be adequately compensated for the responsibility of parenting these victims of abuse and neglect. Because of a lack of sufficient training for foster parents, however, foster children and youths do not receive even the minimal necessities, such as the nurturing and guidance they need to overcome their disadvantages and become productive, law-abiding adults. Even worse, they may be exposed to potentially abusive situations. Moreover, the lack of adequate training, support services and compensation results in a shortage of qualified foster parents in the State and a consequent reliance on more costly types of placement facilities.

Today's Troubled Foster Children Require Skilled Foster Parents

The volumes of literature available on the subject of effective parenting enumerate the myriad skills necessary to successfully guide any "ordinary" child through his or her development into a well-adjusted adult. By definition, foster children have problems not experienced by "ordinary" children who have not suffered abuse or neglect. The trauma associated with being abused or neglected usually manifests itself in physical, emotional, psychological and/or developmental impairment. Thus, it stands to reason that effective parenting of foster children requires even greater skill than for "ordinary" children.

Despite this logic, historically there has been an assumption that foster parents do not require special skills.

Only in recent years has there been a gradual shift in what is expected of foster parents; foster parents have evolved from merely being a substitute parent to playing a major role in the treatment support of very troubled children and youths and for supporting the goals of permanency planning.

Since the passage of Chapter 978 (SB 14, Presley) in 1982, the population of children who remain in foster care has changed dramatically. Children who are the most severely abused or neglected -- thus, those who exhibit the most serious physical, emotional, psychological and/or developmental damage -- are the children least likely to be candidates for family reunification or to be adopted. Instead, these are the children most likely to become permanent foster care or group home placements.

Moreover, the demands placed on foster parents have escalated given that the types of children entering the foster care system today are more "damaged" than children who have entered the system in the past. The Commission received substantial testimony at both of its public hearings asserting the deterioration of the emotional, behavioral, developmental, physical and psychological condition of children and youths entering foster care. For example, an assistant general manager at the San Francisco Department of Social Services attested, "The challenges facing foster parents have changed dramatically in the 18 years I have been a child welfare professional. Due to a variety of systemic ills such as unemployment, substance abuse and the lack of affordable housing, children are coming to foster care in record numbers with increasingly severe problems."[77] This conviction was echoed by a deputy director at the State Department of Social Services who stated:

> *The characteristics of children in foster care have changed in recent years and the population now consists of more severely disturbed children, including drug-addicted, drug-exposed and HIV-infected children and children with AIDS. The majority of these youth require some degree of specialized care and the role of the foster parent has changed from one of providing a normal family environment and basic board and care for a child to one which requires specialized skills and training.*[78]

In addition, many of the documents reviewed during the course of this study's fieldwork commented on the increasing instability of those entering the foster care system. Consider the declaration of the National Commission on Family Foster Care:

> *[T]he needs of infants, children, and youths in foster care have become more complex and*

perplexing. Historically, children in care were classified in two groups: those who were primarily dependent and neglected, and those with special emotional, behavioral, and medical needs. Today, family foster care must respond to the developmental needs of youngsters who have been traumatized by poverty and homelessness, emotional maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol and other drug exposure, HIV infection, and -- the worst fear of all children -- the inability of their parents to take care of them. Today, most infants, children, and youths needing family foster care have some kind of special needs; the remainder have what can only be termed extraordinary needs. These children and youths need a level of service that traditional foster care and child welfare services were not designed to address.[79]

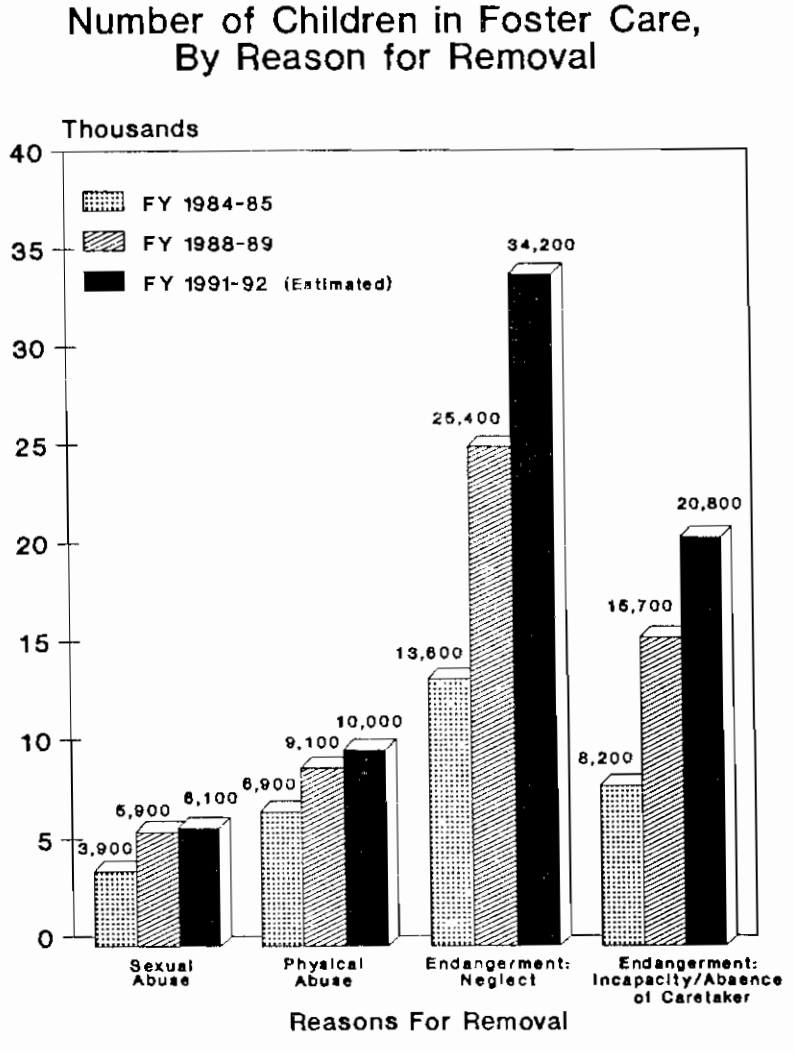
Drugs Are A Major Factor in Troubled Families

As can be seen from the above quotations, the increase in substance abuse in our society often is named as the culprit for this condition. The percentage of foster care cases that are drug-related is astronomically high. At the Commission's November 20 hearing, the assistant general manager of the San Francisco Department of Social Services testified, "Eighty percent of these children are in foster care because of parental substance abuse and many of them have complex physical, emotional and developmental problems due to substance exposure in utero." One juvenile court judge from San Diego testified at the Commission's January 22 hearing that 90 percent of the cases that come before her are involved with drugs. She went on further to state that substance abuse was not an ethnic minority problem and that the cases that come before her "are roughly mirroring the community."[80] At the same hearing, the director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services stated that the number of children in his county's foster care system has swelled mostly because "crack cocaine came ripping into this community like wildfire." He went on to indicate that drugs are a problem in four out of five families whose children are in foster care.[81]

The State's statistics on the reasons for removing children from their homes corroborate the concern that substance abuse has become an increasing problem. Endangerment resulting from parental neglect, incapacity or absence are the principal findings used by the juvenile court to place children in foster care when a parent with a drug problem cannot provide appropriate care and supervision.[82] For the foster children supervised by county welfare departments, (rather than county probation departments, which would not be reflective of substance abuse problems

with families), these types of endangerment also are the primary reasons the children have been removed from their homes. Below, **Figure 7** provides a comparison of the numbers of welfare department-supervised children, by specific reason for removal, for the fiscal years 1984-84, 1988-89 and 1991-92.

Figure 7



Note: Figures represent average monthly number of children in foster care.
Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services.

As **Figure 7** shows, in each of the fiscal years, more children were removed from their homes because of endangerment due to parental neglect, incapacity or absence than for sexual or physical abuse. Further analysis of **Figure 7** reveals that, for fiscal year 1991-92, the estimated number of welfare department-supervised children who will have entered foster care for endangerment reasons closely tied to

parental substance abuse (55,000) was 3.4 times as large as the combined number of these children entering the system because of sexual and physical abuse (16,100).[83]

In addition to the increases in absolute numbers, the proportion of these children has been growing in the foster care system. Consider that in fiscal year 1984-85, children (supervised by county welfare departments) who were in foster care because of endangerment due to parental neglect, incapacity or absence constituted 60 percent of all children in foster care; by fiscal year 1988-89 that percentage increased to 70 percent. And for fiscal year 1991-92, those children will have accounted for an estimated 72.7 percent of all welfare department-supervised children in foster care.[84]

In perhaps the saddest statistical corroboration of the drug problem, California is witnessing an increase in the number of infants being placed in foster care as a result of parental drug abuse. A 1990 California Senate Office of Research survey regarding drug-exposed infants documents the linkage of substance abuse by a parent and child welfare interventions.[85] Thirty-five counties (accounting for approximately 80 percent of live births in California) responding to the survey reported that 6,358 drug-exposed newborns were referred to county child welfare services during fiscal year 1988-89. This figure translates into 7,920 referrals for all 58 counties.[86] Thirty-four of the 35 counties provided detailed information on 5,219 cases that were referred. The outcomes of these referrals are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Outcomes for Drug-Exposed Infants - Fiscal Year 1988-89

Number of Cases Referred Due to Positive Toxicology	Number of Dependency Petitions Filed	Percent of Children Declared Dependents	Percent of Dependents Placed in Out-of-Home Care
5,219	3,685	86%	68%

Note: Only 34 counties reported detail on referrals, only 29 counties reported on juvenile court actions, and only 26 counties reported on placement outcomes (for 2,783 cases).
Source: Senate Office of Research

As shown in Table 2, in 86 percent of the 3,685 cases in which dependency petitions were filed by counties, the child was declared a dependent of the court. Further, of the 2,783 cases for which information was provided by 26 counties, 68 percent resulted in the child being placed in out-of-home care.[87]

As further evidence of the growing problem of drug-exposed babies, the advocacy group Children Now reported in 1991 that experts estimate that between 72,000 and 85,000 babies are born exposed to drugs or alcohol in California -- between 13 percent and 15 percent of babies born each year. The report adds that public hospitals in Los Angeles, Oakland and San Francisco report between 10 percent and 25 percent of births show positive urine toxicology screens for illicit substances, and that survey information from throughout the State shows that the problem is increasing.[88] At the Commission's January hearing, the director of Los Angeles County's Department of Children's Services confirmed this report, stating, "We have indications that 10 percent of the babies born in Los Angeles are drug-addicted."[89]

But drug-exposed babies are only one part of the new wave of problem-plagued children and youths entering the foster care system. Consider the following case examples of recent removals that are unlikely to have occurred 20 years ago:

* As part of running a crack house, a three-year-old girl negotiated a street sale with undercover police at the direction of her mother and grandmother under detailed instructions from the mother's imprisoned husband. When police went to arrest the offending adults later that evening, they found the little girl alone in the house with three younger siblings, including an infant less than a month old. The living conditions of the crack house were wretched; no running water, human waste in every room, the toilet backed up and overflowing, the infant lying on a urine-soaked bed, an infestation of roaches, and rotten food everywhere.[90]

* Three little girls -- ages 2, 4 and 6 -- were found living amid garbage and filth in a low income residence. Thirty-three marijuana plants were growing in the backyard and, inside the house, a machine used to cook marijuana plants into hash oil and a marijuana pipe also were found. When discovered living in the squalor, the girls were dirty with matted hair and could not communicate except by grunting and pointing. The girls' mother had lost two sons to adoption in the early 1980s because the boys nearly starved to death under her care; she was later convicted on charges of neglect similar to those she faces now.[91]

* An 11-year-old boy, who had been under the guardianship of his older sister since his mother died of a drug overdose, waved down a passing patrol car to say that his 23-year-old uncle had forced him to sell crack cocaine from the bathroom window of his home. The police were skeptical until the boy said, "I got drugs on me" and showed them a plastic bottle containing 16 rocks of crack. The youth told child abuse investigators that his uncle had taught him to load several weapons, including shotguns and handguns, and how to sell crack. The boy said he was forced to wait up all night and sell crack to anyone who came up and said, "Milt sent me." The boy further said that his night work caused him to miss a lot of school, and that his uncle beat him with electrical cords, switches and fists and threatened to shoot him if he did not sell the drugs.[92]

To Gain Skills, Foster Parents Need Training

It is painfully clear that children entering the system today require skilled care from foster parents. No longer does foster parenting require only maternal or paternal instincts and having one's heart in the right place. Effective foster parenting now requires that foster parents be capable, multi-skilled and able to perform a number of different functions. One social worker explains the requirements of foster parenting:

> *Caring for other people's children is only one part of the foster parent's role and function. Foster parents are expected to be able to work with agency staff, the courts, and various human service professionals, including doctors, school guidance counselors, probation officers and family therapists. Further, they often have an active role in reunifying birth families, smoothing children's transitions to adoptive homes, and preparing adolescents to live independently. They can often be expected to act as counselor, physical therapist, medical technician, tutor, and taxi driver -- all in the same day.*[93]

Obviously, the types of skills and knowledge required of foster parents are not inborn; nor are they likely to be attained based on "regular" parenting experience. Rather, the specialized skills needed to deal with the troubled foster children of today can only be acquired through training.

The types of training needed by foster parents begins with basic information on the goals and activities of foster care services and the rules, regulations, policies and expectations of the county agency supervising the foster

children. Other prerequisites that are basic to effective foster parenting include: understanding of human behavior; familiarity with normal and exceptional child development; and practical parenting and behavior management skills.[94] Further, the training may be "pre-service," (before the licensure of a foster parent), or "in-service," usually on an annual basis.

In testimony delivered at the Commission's January hearing, one foster parent told of how she had been invited to take training and how, once she received the training, she could not understand why she had not been required to take it. She further spoke of some of the issues covered in her training in which she had no previous education and which she felt should have to be addressed as prerequisites to becoming a foster parent, such as: abandonment, loss and grief on the part of the foster child; discipline; and birth parents and reunification.[95]

The director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services went one step further: He not only recommended that training be required as a prerequisite to the licensure of foster parents, he suggested that there be psychological testing for potential foster parents prior to licensure so as to identify foster parents particularly vulnerable to the stresses of foster parenting.[96]

At both of the Commission's public hearings, every witness who testified regarding training for foster parents indicated that more training was necessary. Included in this group was the president of the California State Foster Parent Association, who stated:

> *California must commit itself to providing the very best specialized training for care providers. Currently, the Community Colleges Foster Care Education and Independent Living Programs offer excellent instruction to foster parents. But these programs are underfunded and are plagued with the risk of reduced funding or elimination altogether. Many counties are recognizing the need for ongoing, in-service training for foster parents. And while counties are contemplating requiring foster parents to participate in ongoing instruction, funds for those programs have not kept up with the increasing demand but have remained constant, and have even been reduced in some cases.*[97]

Training Is Not Mandated

Despite the obvious need for training, there are no state statutory or regulatory requirements for the training of foster parents in California. In fact, according to the most recent (1988) national survey conducted by the National Foster Parent Association on

training, California was one of only five states that reported not having statewide pre-service training either on a voluntary or mandatory basis. Of the 34 responding states, 25 provided statewide mandatory pre-service training for prospective foster parents; 4 states provided training on a voluntary basis. In the 25 states where pre-service training is mandated, the required number of training hours averaged 14.8, ranging from 6 hours to 30 hours.[98]

In the same survey, California was not among either the 14 states that reported providing mandatory in-service training for foster parents, or the 12 states that reported providing voluntary training.[99]

Instead of statewide training in California, training may be required at the county level. A total of 38 counties require pre-service training prior to licensure, and 28 of those counties also require in-service training as a condition of continued licensure. Twenty counties, including Los Angeles, do not require foster parent training of any kind. **Table 3** shows the amount of hours required by counties in both pre-service and in-service training.

Table 3

Amount of Foster Parent Training Required by Counties

	Number of Hours Required by Counties								
	None	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-16	17-20	21-24	25 or more
Pre-service Number of Counties	20	11	9	5	7	2	1	0	3
In-service Number of Counties	30	0	3	6	7	1	7	2	2

Note: Figures are subject to consistency and accuracy of data reported by counties.
Source: Unpublished document provided by Independent Living Program, California Community Colleges

As shown in **Table 3**, of the 38 counties that mandate pre-service training, only 6 require more than 12 hours of such training. Further, of the 28 counties that mandate in-service training, only 12 require more than 12 hours of such training.

To put the amount of county-required training into statewide perspective:

* Only 10.3 percent (6 of 58) require more than 12 hours of pre-service training as a

prerequisite to being licensed as a foster parent;

* Only 20.7 percent (12 of 58) require more than 12 hours of in-service training as a condition of continued licensure as a foster parent; and

* 34.5 percent (20 of 58) of all counties do not require foster parent training of any kind.

To give an idea as to how much training should be required, the coordinator for foster parent training at one California community college recommended that foster parents receive 30 hours of pre-service training and 30 hours of in-service training annually.[100]

Thus, based on the lack of statewide training mandates and the relatively few hours of training, if any, required by the vast majority of counties, it is fair to say that foster parent training has not received a high priority in California. This conclusion is drawn despite the obvious need for such training.

Need for Screening of Foster Parents Exists

Another area that cries out for greater attention is the screening of prospective foster parents. The only statutory or regulatory requirements related to the qualifications of foster parents are that foster parents cannot have criminal records; they must have enough income to meet their own needs; they must be over 18 years of age; they must pass a health screening; and they must have no substantiated allegation of child abuse on file.[101] In determining whether an individual is qualified to be a foster parent, there are no criteria regarding the individual's parenting abilities or experience, behavior management skills, or suitability for the provision of the care, nurturing and guidance needed by foster children and youths. Likewise, there are no standards for an individual's psychological well-being and emotional stability, including vulnerability to stress.

Instead, as some children's advocates say, "the state pays too much attention to the physical conditions of the homes, and not enough on whether the parents are emotionally capable of raising children who often have psychological problems."[102] "They are not looking at what the foster parents know and what kind of people they are," said the executive director of the Association of Children's Services Agencies. "They look at, 'Do we have an extra bed?' and that kind of thing."[103]

Although Necessary, Support Services Are Lacking

As indicated earlier, foster parenting is not the same as parenting one's own children. Given that today's foster children and youths exhibit much higher rates of physical and emotional illness and developmental and emotional problems than non-placed children of the same

age,[104] it is no surprise that foster parents endure a greater amount of stress than what is generally experienced by "ordinary" parents. Thus, foster parents need certain support services if they are going to succeed at being effective foster parents.

Among the services needed are support and consultation from skilled social workers, respite care, day care, and immediate response to crisis situations.[105] In addition, foster parents who provide treatment or specialized foster care need weekly and sometimes daily consultation with qualified social work staff, professional development, and partnership in problem-solving and evaluation as part of an interdisciplinary team.[106] Further, because of the stress involved with the job, support groups are needed for all foster parents.

Unfortunately, according to a number of the witnesses that testified at the Commission's public hearings, such necessary support is not routinely available to foster parents. And, as is often the case regarding other aspects of the foster care system, limited resources and overburdened social workers are cited as the cause.

The lack of adequate support services is particularly evident when relatives are used as foster parents. And the use of relatives as foster parents is not an infrequent occurrence. When out-of-home placement of a child is required because of abuse or neglect, state law directs that the first priority for placement shall be with a relative of the child, so long as such placement is in the best interests of the child.[107]

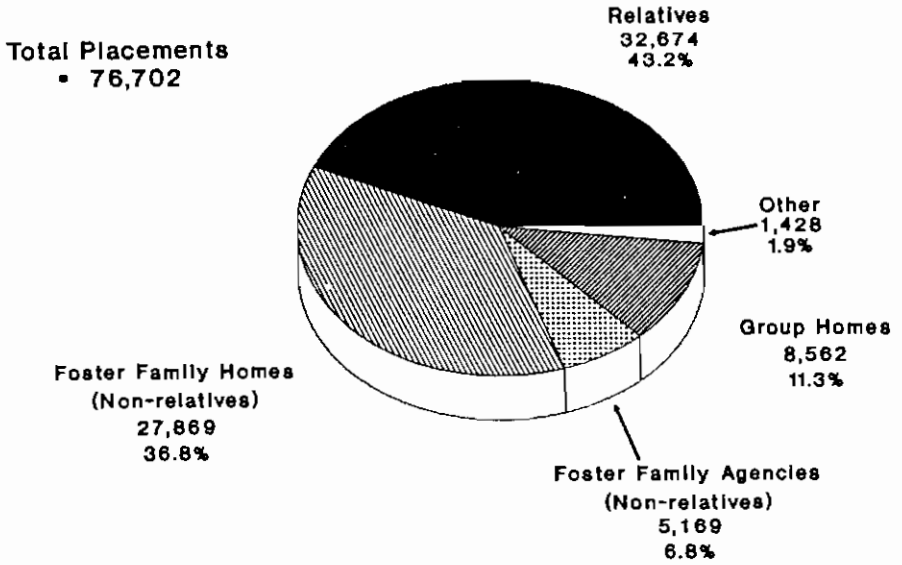
Not surprisingly, after the enactment of the law, placements with relatives increased dramatically. The 1990 study, "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," states that "[a] comparison of the location of placements in 1985 and 1989 indicates that county social service agencies are substantially pursuing this policy goal. While total out-of-home placements increased 81.4 percent during this time period, placements in the home of a relative/guardian increased over 200 percent."[108]

Recent data indicate that county welfare departments continue to make placement with a relative the first priority. On the following page, **Figure 8** displays the types of placements made by county welfare departments during calendar year 1991.

Figure 8

Types of Placements Made by County Welfare Departments

Calendar Year 1991



Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As **Figure 8** illustrates, 43.2 percent of the placements made by county welfare departments during calendar year 1991 were with relatives of the children being placed.[109] Relative placements represent an increasing proportion of all placements when compared to: fiscal year 1984-85, when placements with relatives constituted only 27.1 percent of all placements;[110] and fiscal year 1988-89, when such placements made up 39.9 percent of all placements.

Maintaining the ties of children with their families through placement in a relative's home should be pursued as part of a broader effort to promote extended-family preservation. Like non-related foster parents, extended families that care for related children play an important role in the family reunification effort and they need training and agency support services to assist them with that role.[111] But training and support services are even more scarce when it comes to relative foster parents. Often, the limited services that are extended to non-relative foster parents are not available at all to relative foster parents.

Reasons for Lack of Training and Support Services

Of the reasons for the inadequacy of training and support services for foster parents, costliness is paramount. The establishment of a statewide program for pre-service and in-service training would be a costly undertaking, indeed. As an indication of the potential

cost, training for prospective adoptive parents in Los Angeles County runs about $3,000 per person. On a statewide basis, such costs for pre-service foster parent training would appear substantial. In attempting to obtain more funding, the State Department of Social Services estimated that it would cost $17 million to provide training statewide.[112]

Such costs, however, pale by comparison to the consequences of ill-trained or untrained foster parents. As the director of Los Angeles County's Department of Children's Services said, "You start to project that [training cost] to a statewide basis and it is pretty significant. But on the other side of the coin, taking risks with children is intolerable and if this can minimize the risk, I think it is well worth it."[113]

Also, the costs of such an endeavor could be mitigated, in large part, by taking maximum advantage of federal funds that are available for training foster parents. Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act is a program that provides federal cost-sharing for, among other things, training and administrative costs associated with managing child welfare activities. By participating in the program, counties can get federal matching funds to cover 75 percent of their training costs. For example, the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services uses Title IV-E matching funds to contract with a consortium of three universities' Schools of Social Work to provide core and enrichment training programs for the department's social workers.[114]

There is concern, however, that not all counties are making full use of this opportunity. Further, it is not clear to what extent the State has provided counties the direction to take maximum advantage of federal funding. In fact, the California Legislature recently passed legislation (AB 840, Hannigan) that, among other things, would have required the State Department of Social Services to seek the maximum federal reimbursement possible for services provided under the AFDC foster care program and Child Welfare Services Program, and required the Health and Welfare Agency to explore ways to maximize federal funding for these programs. The Governor, however, vetoed the bill, stating in his veto message: "Because of the well-recognized fiscal exigencies, the [Health and Welfare] Agency and its departments are already aggressively maximizing federal financial participation for all federal programs. Allocating staff to research, study, and make recommendations to the Legislature would only redirect resources from other important program priorities."

Another concern contributing tc counties' unwillingness to require more training is that fewer people will want to become foster parents. Additional requirements could be perceived as more burdensome "red tape," a disincentive to potential foster parents. Addressing this concern at the Commission's January hearing, the president

of the California State Foster Parent Association indicated that the concern is unwarranted and that the benefits outweigh the costs, stating:

> *We have found in Sacramento County, that when we first instituted the requirement for in-service training, many foster parents gave up their license. However, not long afterward, we saw an increase in the numbers of people interested in fostering and have watched a steady increase [in] licensing and retention of foster parents in the county.*[115]

A downside to mandating a substantial number of hours of pre-service training was experienced in one county. San Francisco previously required 30 hours of pre-service training as a prerequisite to licensure. At one point, however, the county also was implementing a major effort to recruit more ethnic minority foster parents. What the city and county found was that the length of time it took to train the prospective foster parents "logjammed" the process of making more foster parents available to take placements. To remedy the situation, San Francisco reduced its pre-service training requirement to 20 hours.

Regardless of the cause for inadequate training and support services for foster parents, the need for the training and services is so great that the consequences of "doing without" are enormous.

High Price to Pay for Lack of Training, Screening and Support Services

Effective parenting is difficult enough to achieve even when children and youths have not been abused or neglected. Without proper training, foster parents are ill-equipped to deal with today's troubled children and youths. In regard to the foster parents, the adverse effects are found in high rates of attrition. Frustration, burnout, and abandoning one's role as a foster parent occur more frequently when foster parents are repeatedly required to perform tasks and assume responsibilities that are (or are perceived to be) beyond their capabilities.[116]

But it is the effect on foster children that is of even greater concern. At a minimum, the children and youths are not getting the appropriate guidance needed to overcome the circumstances that landed them in foster care. In the most severe cases, the stress felt by foster parents who cannot handle troubled children results in the parents' taking out their frustrations on the children. This was the apparent reason for the following tragedies:

* In a recent case in Los Angeles, a woman was arrested for the beating death of her 23-month-old foster son. Allegedly, the trouble occurred because of problems with toilet-training the boy.[117]

* In another recent case in Los Angeles, a woman was charged with the attempted murder of her 19-month-old foster daughter after a two-month investigation that began when the woman called paramedics to her home to report that her foster daughter was experiencing convulsions. The woman told the paramedics that the toddler had fallen from a jungle gym an hour earlier. After performing emergency surgery on the girl to relieve pressure on her brain, the doctors called sheriff deputies because they believed the injuries "were not consistent with those reported by the foster mother." The girl sustained severe head injuries that could result in blindness and other medical problems.

  At the time of the incident, four other foster children -- all under the age of 2 -- were under the woman's care.[118]

* A Sacramento woman who was injured in a car accident and could no longer care for her daughter voluntarily put the child in foster care. During one of the girl's frequent temper tantrums, an employee at the facility in which the girl was placed wrapped the girl in a blanket like a mummy and squatted on her until she was subdued. Later that evening, the employee discovered that the girl was not breathing.

  "No parent should have to go through what I've been through. I've never abused my children, and never have and never will," the girl's mother said. "All I was doing was seeking help, and it cost me my child's life."

  Since then, the State has taken action to prevent the facility from caring for children ever again.[119]

In testimony at the Commission's January public hearing, the vice president of the Los Angeles County Foster Parents Association stated that abuse occurs in foster homes where parents are not trained and do not know how to deal with the foster children's issues.[120]

As a result of not screening prospective foster parents, there is a greater likelihood that unqualified individuals will be caring for abused and neglected children. Consider the tale related by a former foster youth, who, at the age of 14, was forced by his foster father at gunpoint to

have sex with his foster mother. The foster father beat him and other children in the home; the foster mother punished bad behavior by dipping the wrongdoer's fingertips in scalding water. "They need to screen places a lot better," said the former foster youth, who now lives in a downtown residential hotel.[121]

Some would argue that such horror stories occur in only a minority of cases which command significant publicity. In fact, a State Department of Social Services official testified at the Commission's November public hearing that problems occur only in an estimated 10 percent of the State-licensed facilities in California and speculated that a similar percentage of foster family homes have problems.[122] Even if 10 percent strikes some as being rather low, the lives and well-being of the children and youths in those "problem homes" dictate that any percentage greater than zero is far too material to be ignored.

Better Reimbursement Is Needed for Foster Parents

Given the difficulty of dealing with today's troubled children and youths, it is only fair to adequately reimburse foster parents for the costs they incur. The reimbursement paid by the State to foster parents, however, does not cover food and other basics it is intended to cover. For example, **Table 4** displays the State's current reimbursement rates:

Table 4

Statewide Basic Rates for Foster Care Effective Since July 1990

	Age of Child				
	0-4	5-8	9-12	12-14	15-18
Basic Monthly Rate	$345	$375	$400	$444	$484

Source: Foster Care Program Bureau, State Department of Social Services

As seen in **Table 4**, the current reimbursement rate for a preschooler is $345 per month, and for a primary-grade child is $375. According to a 1990 California Senate Office of Research report, however, these reimbursement rates fall short of the cost for raising a child. The report quotes an Urban Institute economist who estimated that middle- and lower-income parents spend between $464 and $625 per month for each of two children and between $391 and $510 per month on each child if they have three children.[123] The report also cited a U.S. Department of Agriculture estimate that the cost of raising urban, primary-grade children in the western states in June of 1989 was $496 per month (not

including medical costs, which are supposed to be covered by Medi-Cal for a foster child).[124] Clearly, the State's reimbursement rates do not meet even the basic costs of raising a typical child, much less a child that may have experienced trauma after being removed from his or her home and family.

As a point of interest, California's reimbursement rates, as inadequate as they may be, compare favorably with the national average. In 1989, the national average monthly foster care reimbursement rate was only $268 for children at or near age two; $292 for children at or near age nine; and $338 for youths at or near age 16.[125] Until 1990, comparable rates in California for the same ages were $294, $340 and $412, respectively.[126]

The inadequacy of the reimbursement rates becomes even more acute in regard to foster parents who are relatives of the foster children under their care. As indicated earlier, placement with relatives is increasing in accordance with state law. These foster parents, however, may receive basic rate reimbursement only to the extent that the children are eligible for federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Foster Care (AFDC-FC, which is a program that provides money for needy children in foster care). Otherwise, as is usually the case, the relative foster parents may receive only a lesser state AFDC-Family Group (AFDC-FG) payment.

The issue of discrimination against foster parents who are relatives is a national one. Pending federal legislation, if enacted, would make all foster children federally eligible. Until such a measure passes, relative foster parents are receiving substantially less than their non-relative counterparts. For example, in a state that pays a foster care rate of $371 per month for a child under five, the monthly AFDC rate for that same child is $109. In a year, a non-relative providing care or one who adopts with a subsidy can receive $4,737; a mother on AFDC or a relative care giver with a guardianship arrangement for that same child would receive only $1,308 to help in raising the child.[127]

Certainly, an increase in the State's reimbursement rates would be costly. The State Department of Social Services estimates that for every increase of $100 in the reimbursement rates, the total costs of the reimbursement program would grow by more than $50 million.[128]

Under a plan envisioned by the California Senate Office of Research in 1990, however, the State could actually save money by increasing the reimbursement rates. The Senate Office of Research recommended establishing a new category of "professional foster parent" that would include the following aspects:

* Provision of specialized care for high-risk infants and young children, particularly those likely to remain in long-term foster placement;

* Provision of care to children who otherwise would be placed in group homes;

* Provision for placement of two or possibly three children in a home;

* Requirements that foster parents possess appropriate education, especially in child development or nursing; and

* Payments of $2,000 or more per month per child.[129]

The goals of such an approach are several: to place the youngest dependent children in homes instead of institutions, to develop a cadre of foster parents with expertise in raising infants at risk of developmental disabilities or health problems, and to focus government's resources on improving the qualities of the care giver rather than maintaining organizational structure of the agency.[130]

Now consider that there are increasing numbers of infants and young children at high risk of disabling health problems, and that, because there is a general shortage of foster parents to care for these children, group homes have been used more frequently. In calendar year 1985, 274 children under the age of four were placed in group homes; in calendar year 1991, that figure soared to 1,156 -- an increase of nearly 322 percent.

With group home rates averaging more than $2,700 per month for these infants and young children -- with some as high as $5,013 per month -- if even one-third were placed with professional foster parents, California will have taken a step forward in care and in cost savings.[131]

San Francisco has a model program based on the criteria of the professional foster parent. The city and county licenses "therapeutic foster homes" in which severely emotionally disturbed children reside and the foster parents, who have experience and education in child development, are paid up to $2,059 per month more than the base rate for regular foster parents.[132]

Current law expresses legislative intent to increase General Fund support for such specialized family homes by five percent in the current fiscal year. Specifically, Chapter 1294/89 states the funds should be used to:

* increase foster family home grants to foster parents who care for children with special needs;

* recruit and train foster parents to care for the children; and

* develop county programs to encourage the placement of the children in foster family homes.

The Department of Social Services estimates that it would cost $12.7 million from the General Fund to support these activities in 1991-92. To the extent that these activities are effective at increasing the number of children placed in foster family homes, rather than in more expensive group homes, these activities could have resulted in net savings to the foster care program in 1991-92. The Governor's budget, however, did not include funding for these programs.[133]

Another concept to consider as an alternative to the present system is one of changing the role of county welfare departments to be more like a foster family agency -- to be responsible for recruiting, certifying (licensing), training, and providing professional support to foster parents. This role should not be unfamiliar to the welfare departments since it was their role before they gave up those responsibilities to foster family agencies. The counties relinquished that role in an effort to fill a void in service delivery; the counties were having difficulty finding a sufficient number of foster family homes that would take children and youth difficult to care for because the counties were not providing sufficient support services, yet to place those children and youth in group homes was prohibitively expensive.

Under this approach, counties would receive the rates now paid to foster family agencies, which are several times the statewide basic foster care rates. The counties should be able to fulfill the above-mentioned responsibilities efficiently because they already have an administrative structure in place. Such efficiencies should allow a higher payment to the foster homes, and the higher payments would attract the educated, qualified foster parents needed.

Another concern about increasing the basic rates for foster care is expressed by those who believe that the current modest reimbursements help assure that a child will be welcomed into a family "for love, not money."[134] In testimony for the Commission's November public hearing, the State Department of Social Services warned that consideration should be given to the impact that increasing reimbursement rates would have on the motivation of some prospective foster parents: "Foster parents should be primarily motivated by a strong desire to provide safe, stable, and loving homes for abused children. We must

avoid incentives to treat foster parenting as just a business."[135] (As an aside, the Commission notes that the concept of using foster family homes certified by foster family agencies very much treats foster parenting as a business; yet, this concept is embraced fully by the State.)

Others, such as the director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, dismiss this notion, believing, "If you want good quality foster parents, you have to pay them accordingly."[136] Further, one school of thought suggests that increasing reimbursement rates would increase both the quality and the availability of foster parents by attracting qualified persons who might not otherwise be able to afford being foster parents. For example, such an increase would be attractive to educated, middle-income persons who feel a social responsibility to foster children but who cannot afford day care for the children while they work. Such a potential pool of foster parents, in which both parents work, should not be taken lightly. In 1990, 58 percent of mothers with children under age six were working or looking for work outside their homes. Further, 74 percent of women whose youngest child was between the ages of 6 and 13 were working or looking for paid work.[137]

As it is, however, the rate of reimbursement for foster parents can hardly be considered an attraction at all -- in fact, it is a disincentive. As indicated earlier, a paltry $345 per month is not enough to cover basic costs; it does not even begin to cover child care expenses, which can amount to $350 per month. Foster parents historically have subsidized the child welfare system through their volunteer time and out-of-pocket expenses for child care. The increasingly difficult role of the foster parent may no longer be attractive to and appropriate for the volunteer.[138] In fact, numerous witnesses testifying at the Commission's public hearings decried the current rates of reimbursement.

Inadequate Reimbursement Has Adverse Effects

Without adequate reimbursement for foster parents, a number of adverse effects occur, primarily resulting in an insufficient pool of qualified foster parents and an increased reliance on more costly types of placement facilities.

In a 1991 report, the National Commission on Family Foster Care states:

> *Given the current and projected economy and workforce picture, foster parent recruitment and retention will continue to be adversely affected until foster parents are recognized and compensated for the services they provide, whether those services are general or more specialized. Agencies and communities must assist and support foster*

> *parents as they fulfill their enormous challenges, for the value of family living is compelling. Without attention to this issue, children and youths are at risk for inappropriate and multiple placements, insufficient care, more rejection, and further harm.*[139]

The lack of adequate reimbursement negatively affects foster parents' self-esteem and fails to afford them appropriate standing in the hierarchy of skilled jobs. It is a contradiction to entrust such lowly compensated individuals with the noble and critically important responsibility of parenting abused and neglected children. It is little wonder that high attrition rates have made recruitment of new homes a constant priority for supervising county agencies and foster family agencies alike.

Summary

Although foster parents need training, support services and adequate reimbursement, the provision of such is lacking in California. Further, the State lacks a policy to screen prospective foster parents for their suitability to parent abused and neglected children. As a result, foster children are exposed to potentially abusive situations and are not provided the help needed to overcome their disadvantages. In addition, high attrition occurs among foster parents, leading to an insufficient supply of qualified foster homes and an increased reliance on more costly types of placement facilities.

Recommendations

4. Despite budget constraints, the Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that makes training and a psychological evaluation a prerequisite to the licensure of foster parents.

   The training should include basic information on the goals and activities of foster care services and the rules, regulations, policies and expectations of the county agency supervising the foster children. Other topics covered should include, but not be limited to: understanding of human behavior; familiarity with normal and exceptional child development; and practical parenting and behavior management skills.

   The psychological evaluation should be comprehensive enough to provide an indication of the suitability of individuals for use as foster parents.

5. The State Department of Social Services should provide the leadership necessary to encourage counties to maximize the use of

federal Title IV-E funds for the purposes of training foster parents.

6. The Governor and the Legislature should provide additional funding for the Foster Parent Training Program administered through the California Community Colleges.

7. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation that increases the statewide basic foster care rates of reimbursement to adequately cover the costs of raising foster children. The increase could be established only to the extent reliance on group homes and foster family agencies can be reduced.

8. The Governor and the Legislature should aggressively lobby Congress and the President to enact legislation that would make all foster children federally eligible for AFDC-Foster Care.

ETHNIC PLACEMENTS

Finding #3 **More attention needs to be paid to the needs of ethnic minority children in foster care.**

Even though state law requires that foster children be placed with relatives or families of the same racial or ethnic background to preserve the children's cultural identities, the disproportionate share of some ethnic minority children in foster care outnumbers the available "culturally competent" placement settings. Possible causes for this situation include racism and insufficient recruitment. In addition, those ethnic minority children who are placed with relatives may be at a disadvantage because of an inequitable reimbursement rate structure.

Racial, Ethnic Background Must Be Considered in Placement

Chapter 1581, Statutes of 1990 (AB 548, Moore) requires:

> *With full consideration for the proximity of the natural parents to the placement so as to facilitate visitation and family reunification, whenever a child is being considered for placement in foster care, the following order of placement preference regarding racial or ethnic background shall be used, except where application of these priorities would not be in the best interests of the child:*
>
> *(a) ...in the home of a relative...*
>
> *(b) ...with a foster parent with the same racial or ethnic identification as the child...*
>
> *(c) ...with a family of a different racial background or ethnic identification where there is evidence of sensitivity to the child's*

> *race, ethnicity, and culture. The child's religious background shall also be considered....*[140]

In only a few exceptional circumstances -- such as a request by the child's parent or parents, the extraordinary physical or emotional needs of the child, or the unavailability of suitable parents after a diligent search has been completed for families meeting the preference criteria -- can a child be placed in a setting not in accordance with the above preference criteria.[141]

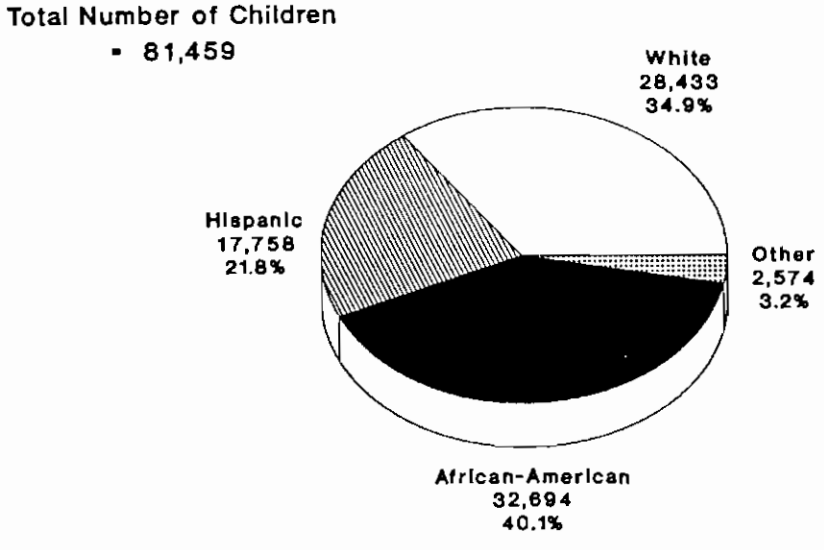
The law's intent is clear: to the extent possible, transracial foster care placements must be minimized. The importance of raising children in an environment that is sensitive to their cultural needs is paramount.

Most Children in Foster Care Are Ethnic Minorities

The condition that spawned this 1990 legislation still exists today: the majority of the State's foster children are ethnic minorities. **Figure 9** displays the ethnic breakdown of children in foster care during calendar year 1991.

Figure 9

Ethnicity of Foster Children
Calendar Year 1991



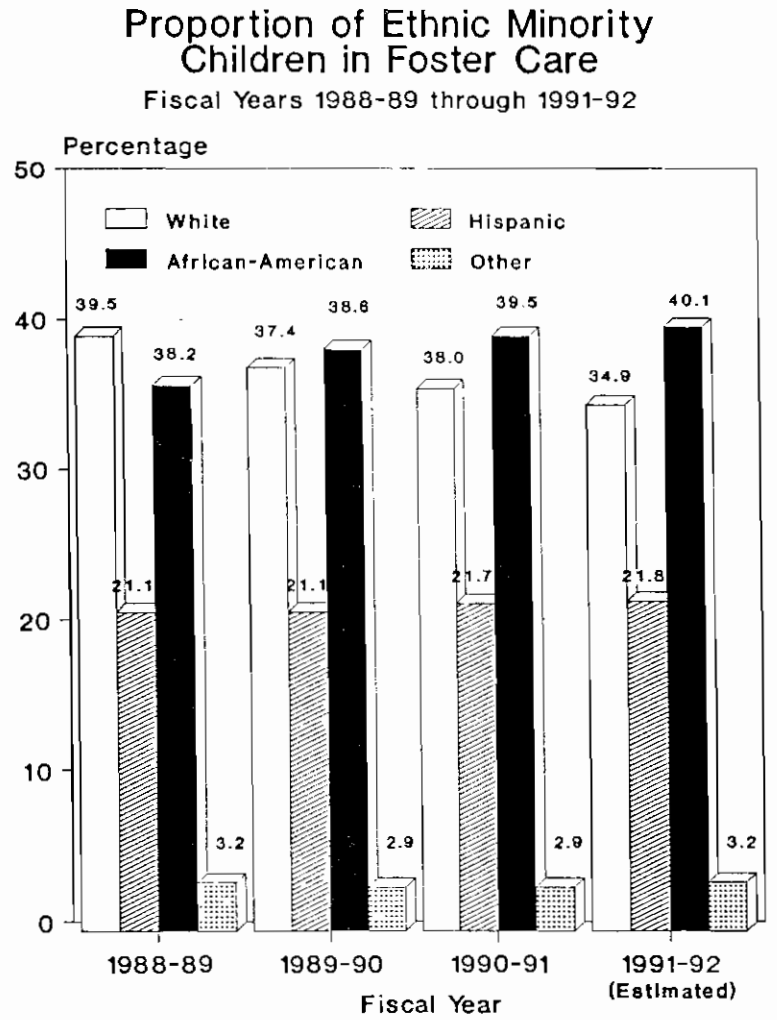
Note: The category "Other" is composed of Native American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, non-specific Asian, Pacific Islander, and other ethnic groups.

Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As **Figure 9** shows, ethnic minorities represent 65.1 percent of all children in foster care. The proportion of all

foster children made up by ethnic minorities has been increasing, as can be seen in **Figure 10**, which shows such proportions for fiscal years 1988-89 through 1991-92.

Figure 10

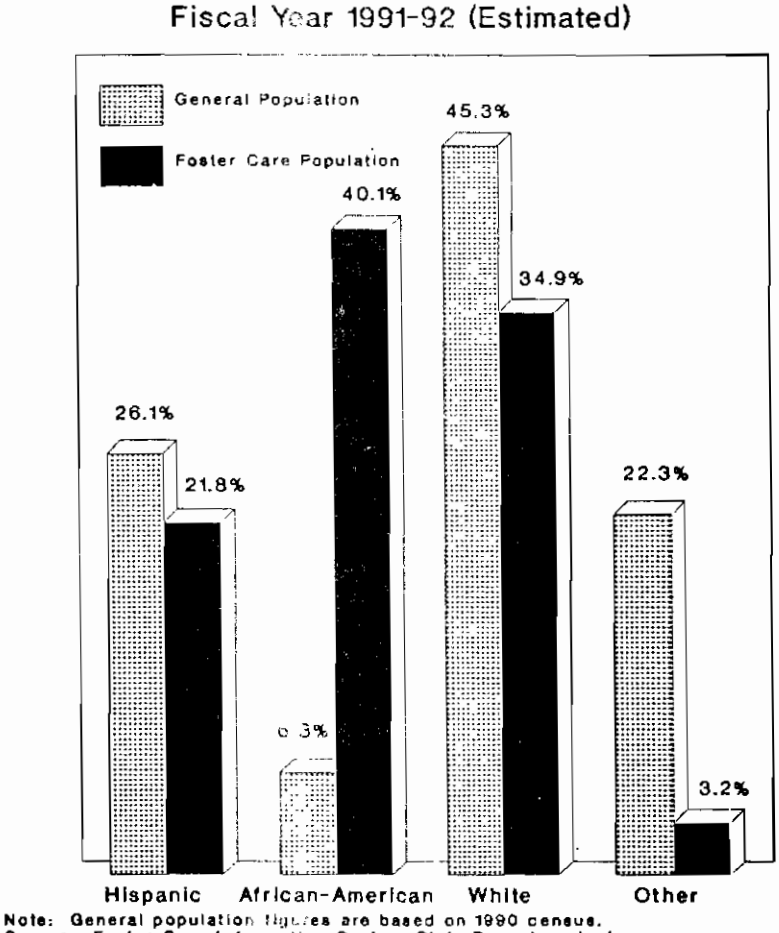


Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As **Figure 10** illustrates, the percentage of all children in out-of-home care that is composed of ethnic minorities has steadily increased. In fiscal year 1988-89, ethnic minority children represented 60.5 percent of all foster care children; this figure jumps to an estimated 65.1 percent for fiscal year 1991-92.[142]

The mere fact that ethnic minorities constitute a majority of foster care children points to the disproportionate representation of these ethnic groups in the population of abused and neglected children. On the following page, **Figure 11** compares the percentage of foster care children who are ethnic minorities with the percentage of the general population of California's children who are ethnic minorities.

Figure 11



Note: General population figures are based on 1990 census.
Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services, and State Department of Finance

As can be seen in **Figure 11**, perhaps the most glaring disproportionate representation exists with African-American children, who, while constituting only 6.3 percent of the State's population of children, make up 40.1 percent of all children placed out of their homes.[143]

What makes this situation even more compelling is the apparent paucity of African-American foster family homes and group homes licensed in California. Although statistics on the ethnicity of licensed homes are scarce, the Commission received adequate anecdotal evidence to verify that there is not a sufficient number of available ethnic minority homes. Further, statistics relating to ethnicity of group home employees who work day-to-day with foster children corroborate the presumption that "culturally competent" placement settings are sparse. For example, a study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley

indicated that the ratio of ethnic minority child care workers and social workers to foster children in group homes is lower for ethnic minorities than for whites.[144] Thus, despite the intent of the law, there are many ethnic minority children being placed in homes that are not racially or ethnically compatible with the children.

Better Recruitment Is Suggested

Some argue that this practice is the result of racism. In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers called transracial placement of African-American children "cultural genocide."[145] More recent criticisms include testimony submitted to the Commission by a representative of a group home and the African American Foster-Group Home Association indicating that there was a concerted effort by his county's administration to ignore the law: "White staff finds this new law very difficult to ignore; yet they do ignore it, trivialize it, or pretend that they have always obeyed its spirit. Unfortunately, this is not the case."

A consultant with the National Association of Black Social Workers echoed this concern, saying his association is receiving complaints that many California counties are making no effort to place children with families of their own race. "Black folks have a tradition of caring for their young. Most agencies have not made an effort to find them," he stated.[146]

For the State's part, however, the Department of Social Services did acknowledge the problem of a shortage of ethnic minority foster parents and attempted to address it by creating a Minority Home Recruitment Program. Until the Department recently eliminated state-level staff for the program, its features included:

* a contracted public relations program aimed at African-Americans and Hispanics;
* television programs (such as "California's Waiting Children");
* recruitment efforts at fairs, conventions and similar gatherings statewide;
* a speakers bureau that trains community groups to make recruitment efforts;
* an adoption exchange;
* a toll-free telephone number to refer prospective parents to local agencies; and
* seed money for the start-up of two minority adoptive agencies in the Los Angeles area and the rejuvenation of another in San Francisco's East Bay Area.

Although the state-level staff have been eliminated, the "California's Waiting Children" television program and the Minority Adoption Exchange will continue with $574,000 in state funds to be used at the local level.[147]

County activities include local public relations programs, speakers bureaus, recruiting at community events and through community organizations such as churches, Parent/Teacher Associations and civic groups, and highly publicized fairs that attract prospective foster and adoptive parents.[148]

Still, one line of reasoning suggests that more recruitment is possible. Given that the population of African-Americans aged 18 years or greater numbers more than 1.5 million in California,[149] it would appear that there exists a large, mostly untapped pool of prospective foster parents. As with the population of any ethnicity, not each of the 1.5 million can be considered a prospective parent; but certainly a sufficient number might be available to provide homes for that portion of the population of African-American foster children in need of "culturally competent" placement.

Without greater recruitment efforts, it is clear that many ethnic minority children will continue to grow up in an environment that does little to preserve their cultural identity. Also, it is critical to note that the importance of "culturally competent" placement applies to all ethnic minority children, not only to African-American children as exemplified in this finding.

Transracial Placements: Always A Bad Idea?

To provide a well-rounded perspective, the placement of children only in families of the same race must be viewed in the context of the children's total needs. If, for example, an ethnic minority child requires particular services not available in a placement of similar ethnicity, should the child go without the needed services in favor of being placed in a culturally appropriate environment? The law is clear in requiring that the "best interests of the child" be fully considered. Therefore, a transracial placement may be the best alternative, once all things are considered.

State officials are concerned, however, about reported complaints from across the State that the law's intent for preferential placement in families of the same race as the child are being interpreted too strictly by some social workers. The chief of the Adoptions Branch in the State Department of Social Services said some workers so strongly oppose transracial placements that they are interpreting the law as prohibiting them. The chief's interpretation is that the law only strengthens race as one factor in the placement decision, and he said that an advisory letter will be sent to clarify that such placements are not prohibited.[150]

Voicing additional concerns about the law are groups such as the National Coalition to End Racism In America's Child Care System, which fears that children are being denied homes because of the unavailability of homes of the same race. "Children do not deserve to be denied a family on the basis of race," the coalition's executive director said. "How long do you want them to wait while they are traumatized by the very system that is supposed to come to their aid?"[151]

Similar laws nationwide have prompted much controversy and have resulted In custody battles, lawsuits and federal civil rights investigations, according to a Sacramento Bee newspaper article:

> *Michigan state officials found that black foster children languished in institutions because workers refused to place them until a black family could be found. Federal officials found the regulations biased against minority children.*
>
> *Lawsuits have been filed in several states seeking damages after children have been hurt because they were put into dangerous situations after foster homes were chosen solely on race.*[152]

As with any law, legislative intent is important In the interpretation of the law. In its capacity as the statewide administrator of the Child Welfare Services Program, the State Department of Social Services carries the responsibility of ensuring that counties appropriately interpret the law regarding placement preference.

Placements with Relatives Present Unique Problem

To the degree that the intent of the law is carried out and ethnic minority foster children are placed in "culturally competent" settings, a large percentage of the children are placed with relatives. **Table 5** displays, by ethnic category, the percentage of foster children placed with their relatives during calendar year 1991.

Table 5

Percentage of Foster Children Placed With Relatives Calendar Year 1991

	White	Hispanic	African-American	Other
As % of all out-of-home placements	30.0%	41.8%	49.2%	30.6%

Note: The category "Other" is composed of Native American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, non-specific Asian, Pacific Islander, and other ethnic groups.

Source: Foster Care Information System, State Department of Social Services

As seen in **Table 5**, ethnic minority children are placed with relatives a greater percentage of the time than are white children. The highest percentage of relative placements occur among African-American children, who are placed with relatives 49.2 percent of the time.

This placement pattern presents a unique problem, however, because, as presented in **Finding #2**, foster parents who care for relatives generally receive a smaller amount of reimbursement than do non-relative foster parents.

Legislative attempts to rectify the inequity of reimbursing relative foster parents have failed. The most recent attempt occurred in 1987 when AB 1221 (Arelas) declared the legislative finding "that the current policy of disparate payments to relatives and nonrelatives is not in the best interests of the foster child." In general, the measure would have allowed relatives to receive the same benefits as non-relatives. AB 1221 was passed by the Legislature but vetoed by then-Governor George Deukmejian, who stated in his veto message that the current, lower reimbursement rates extended to relatives are "adequate to provide [the children's] basic needs and has served to mitigate financial problems of their relatives. Public funds available for foster care are limited and the higher benefits should be reserved to induce nonrelated persons to become foster parents."

Proponents of equal reimbursements decried the former Governor's veto. For example, in testimony submitted for the Commission's November hearing, an assistant general manager of the San Francisco Department of Social Services stated:

> *Repeated legislative efforts to stop this discriminatory practice have failed, ostensibly because of concerns about the cost of*

extending foster care payments to relative caretakers. But, we also believe there is something ugly at work here in the form of a belief that relatives should not expect financial assistance to care for their medically fragile, substance-exposed grandchildren. In fact, in his veto message to the bill extending foster care payments to relatives, former Governor Deukmejian said as much. He claimed that in times of scarce resources, the State would have to depend on family members' generosity towards these children and the knowledge that they would not be able to bring themselves to surrender the care of the children to strangers.

Just as the State is struggling financially, so are most California families. It is a cruel fantasy to believe that the average relative caretaker has the financial resources to meet the medical and emotional needs of children placed with them. Yes, the cost of extending foster care benefits to relatives is high; but the future costs of untreated medical, emotional, educational and developmental problems, while incalculable, are absolutely going to be higher.

It is important to realize that the inequitable rate structure affects not only the foster parent, but ultimately the foster children as well.

Summary

Despite the statutory requirement that foster children be placed with relatives or families of the same racial or ethnic background, the disproportionate share of ethnic minority children in foster care, coupled with a scarcity of available ethnic minority homes, indicates that many ethnic minority children are in placements that do little to preserve the children's cultural identities. The reasons for this situation include racism and inadequate recruitment. In addition, ethnic minority children who are placed with relatives may be adversely affected because of an inequitable reimbursement rate structure.

Recommendations

9. The State Department of Social Services should reinstate funding for its Minority Home Recruitment Program and concentrate its recruitment efforts on ethnic minority foster parents. The Department should, to the extent possible, emphasize working with counties to utilize methods that have proven to be effective in particular areas of the State or in other states, and that can be replicated statewide.

10. The State Department of Social Services should monitor counties' administration of the foster care program to ensure the counties are making placements in accordance with the law.

STATE OVERSIGHT

Finding #4 **The State's foster care system suffers from inadequate monitoring and oversight.**

Because of problems inherent in the foster care system, there is a potential that children could languish in intolerable situations when counties do not take appropriate action against inadequate homes. These problems include the counties' conflict of interest in performing both licensing and placement functions, and the lack of an independent reporting mechanism for complaints regarding the system. Further, the State may not establish performance standards in accordance with timelines set by law, and there has been no bona fide longitudinal study of the foster care system and its clients. These circumstances render the State's decision makers uninformed regarding the effectiveness of the foster care program.

State and County Responsibilities

As stated in the introduction section of this report, the foster care system in California is part of the Child Welfare Services Program, which falls under the authority of the State Department of Social Services (Department) but is administered at the county level. In general, the Department is responsible for ensuring that counties properly administer the foster care program.

Among the specific responsibilities of the Department is the licensing of foster family homes and the investigation of complaints against foster parents, but the Department can contract with counties to perform these functions. In fact, as of December 16, 1991, the Department contracted with all but 12 of the 58 counties to perform the licensing functions.[153]

Counties, in turn, are responsible for determining in which foster family homes children should be placed and for monitoring the children, such as through periodic visits.

Problems Inherent in the System

In the 12 counties in which the licensing and placement functions are split between the Department and the counties, there is a system of "checks and balances." If a problem arises in a foster family home, the Department investigates the complaint. Unlike the county, the Department does not rely on the home for the placement of children and, thus, can act with a certain amount of independence.

In the vast majority of counties, however, it is the county welfare department that acts as both a placement agency and a licensing agency. A conflict of interest exists when, for example, a problem arises in a home that a county has come to rely on for the placement of children who are difficult to handle. On one hand, the county has the responsibility to fully investigate the problem in an unbiased manner and take action against the home, if warranted. On the other hand, the county has developed a relationship with the home that has benefitted the county. Such a relationship could impair the county's perspective as to the home's culpability and/or suitability for continued licensure in a situation that may be dangerous for the children who have been placed in the home.

Continuing with this scenario, if a problem did exist in the foster family home and the county did not take the appropriate action against the home, the State may not ever become aware of the problem. According to testimony given by the Department's chief counsel at the Commission's November hearing, the Department becomes aware of a problem in a home only if the county reports the problem to the Department.[154] Under the above scenario, it is highly unlikely that the county would report to the State a situation that the county inappropriately ignored or dismissed.

Effects of System Problems

This lack of a reporting mechanism not only prevents the Department from finding out about problems in foster family homes, it also precludes a readily available avenue of recourse for individuals who perceive a problem with the foster care system. For example, at its November public hearing, the Commission heard testimony from two families who experienced problems with the foster homes in which their natural children had been placed.

In one case, a 15-year-old girl had been voluntarily placed in a foster family home after her mother requested help from the county's welfare department. The mother had gone to the county because she and her daughter had experienced severe emotional problems as a result of the deaths of several close family members from cancer, and the sexual molestation of the girl by her stepfather. They both were grieving for their lost relatives and feeling stress while the stepfather was being prosecuted and a divorce was looming. When the daughter began acting out as a result

of the molestation and other stress, the mother felt unable to handle her and asked the county to intervene.

The girl was placed in a home that took in emotionally troubled adolescent girls and remained there for three months. During that time, the mother and daughter claim, the girls in the home and the foster mother dressed in skimpy nightwear and posed for suggestive photographs, and the owners of the home frequently told explicit sexual jokes and made comments about their own and the girls' sex lives.

The home's owners subsequently were investigated by the county welfare department, sheriff's office and district attorney's office, but they were not prosecuted or disciplined. In addition, a county superior court judge held a hearing on the foster home and concluded that there had been no wrongdoing.

Since then, the mother and daughter have filed a $1.8 million claim against the county and the owners of the home. Also, as a result of the information brought out in the Commission's public hearing, the State has launched an investigation into the matter. Further, the home's owners have relinquished their license.

In the second case presented at the Commission's November hearing, a father, mother and two daughters testified that the girls had been removed from their parents (and a younger brother) on allegations that the father had physically abused them. Although the girls eventually were returned to their natural home after the charges were determined to be unfounded, the family is pursuing legal recourse against the county because of the problems experienced by the girls while they were in out-of-home placement.

The 15-year-old daughter had been placed in the same foster home described in the preceding case, and the same problems were alleged to have occurred. The 14-year-old daughter was placed in a home certified by a foster family agency. While there, her father testified, the foster father sexually molested her one evening. Fearing for her safety, the girl escaped from the home and wandered back roads through the foggy night until she was picked up by a motorist and driven to the police station.

The ensuing investigations by the county welfare department, sheriff's office and district attorney's office resulted in the girl being removed from the home but no prosecution of the foster father.

Regardless of future determinations as to the veracity of the above-described cases, they both illuminate the lack of a readily available procedure by which individuals, such as

the natural parents of foster children, can pursue situations that they perceive as problems.

As stated in **Finding #2**, the Department testified in the Commission's November public hearing that problems occur only in an estimated 10 percent of the State-licensed facilities in California and speculated that a similar percentage of foster family homes have problems.[155] Not only does the Commission maintain that even 10 percent represents too great a number, but it believes the estimate may be understated given that it is based on the number of cases *reported* to the Department; such an estimate is a highly suspect figure given the lack of a good, unbiased reporting mechanism.

Reporting Mechanism for Complaints

To a point, an analogy can be drawn between the foster care system and the system that is in place to care for California's elderly who reside in nursing homes or residential care facilities. Both systems have the characteristic of a vulnerable population placed out-of-home in facilities that are monitored by government entities. The parallel ends, however, with foster care's lack of a reporting mechanism for concerned individuals who have a complaint against the system. The elderly have a State Ombudsman whose office contracts with independent agencies in the counties to receive and follow up on complaints against facilities. The independent agency in each county uses volunteers to perform the work needed to resolve problems in facilities.

Such a system could work in foster care, as well, particularly since there already exists a network of volunteers in a highly successful program designed to advocate for children in court: the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. The CASA program's goal is "to provide the child with a long-term, consistent and supportive relationship; to advocate for the child in the child welfare system; and to improve the quality of information presented to the juvenile court on behalf of the child."[156] The advocates are trained volunteers who work one-on-one with foster children and become officers of the court in order to advise judges on their placements.[157]

There are approximately 1,500 volunteers working in 14 CASA programs throughout the State. Funding for the program can come from a variety of sources; for example, the $100,000 budget for the Sacramento program is being paid by the county, the State Judicial Commission, the Junior League of Sacramento, the Stuart Foundation and the Children's Trust Fund. An official with the National CASA Association said there are 452 programs operating in 48 states, and that studies have documented county savings and better service delivery to children. One study in Seattle found that the program saves the county about $2 million a year in attorney fees.[158]

A foster care ombudsman established in each county could work in conjunction with a CASA program in that county. Such a cooperative effort could result in improved service delivery not only to the children but to other interested parties, such as foster parents and natural parents.

Takeover of Los Angeles County & the State's Monitoring of Counties

Irrespective of whether the State or the county perform the licensing function, an ombudsman program also could be effective in assisting in monitoring counties' performance of placement functions. One cannot help but consider the effect such a program might have had concerning the abominable situation that existed in Los Angeles County.

For several years, the Department had serious concerns about the administration of the Child Welfare Services Program and the delivery of program services to the children and families in Los Angeles County.[159] According to the Department, repeated efforts to determine the causes of problems and implement solutions were frustrated by the assertion of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services (County) that inadequate funding was the sole problem and that, until funding reached adequate levels, no discussion of service delivery was appropriate.[160]

Beginning in October 1989 and finishing five months later, the Department conducted an audit to verify the County's claims of inadequate funding and found that:

> *[t]hroughout the County there are deficiencies in the accuracy of the caseload information reported to [the County's Children's Information System (which tracks and reports to the Department the County's Child Welfare Services' cases upon which the County's state funding allocation is based)]. There are also serious system and performance deficiencies and inefficiencies which contribute to and result in inaccurate caseload reports. The audit procedures used by [LA] are inadequate in identifying and ensuring continued accuracy of caseload information.*[161]

The Department's audit found that of the 4,040 cases investigated, 1,462 cases (36 percent) were incorrectly reported.[162] Examples of the incorrectly reported cases include:

- a case in which the review child was 23 years old;

- a case in which the court at least nine months earlier had terminated jurisdiction on

the case because the review child was released to the father in North Carolina;

- a case in which the review child had died, possibly more than four and one-half years earlier;

- duplicate (two) cases in which the review child, who was living with his father in Oklahoma since 1988 and should not have been counted at all, was counted as receiving services in California; and

- a case in which a police referral was received on the review child's sibling, but the review child was included on the referral (as receiving services) even though the child lived in Arkansas.[163]

The Department's audit findings resulted in a $7.5 million net reduction of LA's 1990-91 budget allocation, which was reduced to a figure that was $30.8 million less than what LA's allocation would have been if the DSS had accepted LA's claims of a caseload increase.[164]

Also during the course of the audit, the Department identified numerous instances in which the County failed to protect children in foster care from substandard conditions and physical and sexual abuse, including:

* A case in which the County discovered 10 children sleeping on the floor of a garage while 10 more youngsters were living in one bedroom upstairs. Although three of the children had been abused, two of them severely, the County waited five months before reporting the case to the Department for license revocation. When the home was finally closed (six months after the discovery of the problem), the County removed five children who were still in placement. Based on a medical examination, one of the children was determined to have been physically abused, resulting in a skull fracture and two broken limbs.[165]

* A case in which the County discovered a home in which only one person was looking after 20 infants who were sleeping in 10 cribs. Although the home was licensed for only four children, the County failed to report the conditions to the Department, pending a coroner's report on the death of a baby who had been living at the home. The County removed the 20 children only after the

> Department had learned of the conditions through "an independent source" and informed the County that 20 infants in a foster family home licensed for 4 placements was grounds in and of itself to suspend the home's license and remove all of the children.
>
> When the infants finally were removed from the home (more than a month after the County initially discovered the conditions), the County's children's service workers were so ill-informed that they had to rely on the home's operator to identify the children and to help find their placement workers. In several instances, "[t]he wrong children were given to the placement workers because the staff person at the facility and some of the placement workers did not know which child was which."
>
> As if the situation were not bad enough, once all of the original 20 infants were removed from the home, another County placement worker placed a child in the same home over the succeeding weekend.[166]

It also was during the period of the audit that the Department's legal division discovered a "secret room" containing 15 file cabinets holding approximately 3,000 case files on facilities that experienced problems but that were not referred to the Department for administrative action. After its discovery, the Department confiscated all of the files.[167]

In June 1990, the Health, Human Services and Labor Subcommittee of the Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee adopted language to reduce the County's allocation, and a joint Senate/Assembly hearing was conducted to investigate problems occurring in the County. Subsequently, budget language was enacted requiring the Department to determine the County's propriety and issue a formal statement of non-compliance if necessary.

The Department issued the formal statement of non-compliance and on October 1, 1990, the Department officially took over the licensing function of the County. Further, the County was required to submit a detailed corrective action plan for many of the placement problems previously identified by the Department.

The Department now is required to periodically report to the Legislature on the County's progress in implementing its corrective action plan. At the Little Hoover Commission's January 1992 public hearing on foster care, representatives from both the Department and the County testified that the County had made substantial improvements in correcting

many of the problems identified during the Department's audit.[168]

One question repeatedly asked of the Department by Commissioners at the January public hearing was, "How can you be sure that similar situations do not exist in other counties throughout the State?"

As part of its responsibility for oversight of county program operations, the Department has implemented a review and corrective action process for the Child Welfare Services Program to determine the degree to which each county welfare department is in compliance with the most important statutory and regulatory requirements.[169] The Department states that it is reviewing one fourth of the Child Welfare Services caseload annually, and that when a county is found to be out of compliance, the Department monitors the county's corrective action plan on a semiannual basis.[170] The Department does acknowledge that, although this review process determines whether basic safety and due process standards are met, it does not evaluate the appropriateness of caseworker decisions, the quality of the services being offered or case outcomes.[171]

Given recent budget cuts and the chronic problem of insufficient staff for monitoring, it remains to be seen whether the Department's review process will be sufficient to ensure that a situation like Los Angeles County's does not occur elsewhere in the State. As it is, even when the Department determines that there is a serious problem in a county, it takes years to correct the problem, as evidenced by the protracted efforts to clean up Los Angeles County. The danger in such a prolonged period, of course, is that children could languish in unspeakable situations.

Effectiveness of Foster Care System Still Unknown

As mentioned above, the Department's review process does not evaluate the effectiveness of a county's program. This deficiency should change in the future, though, as Chapter 1294, Statutes of 1989 (SB 370, Presley) requires the Department to develop performance standards for the Child Welfare Services Program by 1993. As the deadline for the establishment of the standards looms closer, however, there is concern whether the Department will be able to meet the deadline. If such standards are not developed, the effectiveness of each county's administration of the Child Welfare Services Program will continue to go unassessed and the State's decision makers will continue to operate without knowing whether funds are being put to good use.

Also lacking is a bona fide longitudinal study of the foster care system and its effects on the children who have gone through it. Without such a study, the State is unable to determine the long-term effectiveness of the system and its ability to provide abused and neglected children the

safety, stability, nurturing and guidance necessary for them to be able to grow up into productive, well-adjusted adult members of society.

Recommendations

11. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation establishing a statewide foster care ombudsman program. The foster care ombudsman program should be patterned after the ombudsman program for the elderly in that it should be administered under contract by regional agencies under the control of a State Ombudsman. The regional agencies should utilize a network of volunteers operating at the county level. Further, to the extent possible, the ombudsman program should work in conjunction with existing Court Appointed Special Advocate programs.

12. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation eliminating the ability of the State Department of Social Services to contract with counties to perform the licensing functions in the foster care system, thus making the Department solely responsible for those functions.

13. The State Department of Social Services should complete the foster care performance standards in accordance with Chapter 1294, Statutes of 1989. Once the standards are developed, the Department should monitor counties' adherence to the standards, while allowing counties discretion in how to meet those standards.

14. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation requiring a bona fide longitudinal study of California's foster care system and its clients to determine the long-range effectiveness of the system.

COORDINATED SERVICES

Finding #5 **Counties lack sufficient interagency screening of children coming into the foster care system.**

Despite the foster care system's goal to protect abused and neglected children, a "re-abuse" of these children occurs when counties lack sufficient interagency coordination to protect the children from the trauma of being shuffled from agency to agency for multiple screenings. Counties that promote such coordination have more success in mitigating further trauma to the children and reducing duplication of effort.

Re-abuse of Foster Children

As explained earlier, one of the foster care system's mandates is to protect children who have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect. Unfortunately, the very process of removal can be traumatic; the events following a report of abuse can be frightening, troubling and confusing for the child victims and their families. The child may be subjected to a number of investigatory interviews, displaced from familiar surroundings and sometimes involved in court proceedings against the offender.

Many counties have intake and processing procedures that can involve as many as 22 child welfare professionals, each of whom must interview and review a child's case separately.[172] This extended process is not only duplicative, but it also can be very damaging to the welfare of the child and can result in great frustration and psychological damage as a child is forced to recall accounts of pain and suffering.

Examples of Interagency Coordination

To mitigate further trauma, some counties have designed interagency programs and procedures to ensure that abused and neglected children and their families receive the assistance they need in a manner that avoids duplication of effort, promotes more effective

cooperation among staff serving children and families, and promotes care of children in the least restrictive settings. Some examples include:

San Francisco: Child Protection Center

One model of interagency screening can be found in San Francisco's Child Protection Center (CPC). The CPC is considered the gateway to the foster care system in San Francisco. Upon being removed from a family by either law enforcement officials or social workers, a child is brought to the CPC, located in San Francisco General Hospital, where a medical screening is performed and physical and mental health needs are assessed. Further, through the use of an automated data base, the CPC determines where the most appropriate placement is for that child according to his or her particular circumstances.

If the child brought to the CPC has been sexually abused, he or she is referred to the Child and Adolescent Sexual Abuse Resource Center (CASARC), which is located next to the CPC in San Francisco General Hospital. The CASARC utilizes a trained multi-disciplinary staff (through a 24-hour crisis intervention program) to provide prompt medical examination and treatment, to offer immediate psychological support, and to collect evidence for the court at the time the molestation is reported. Part of the evidence collection occurs during an initial interview, conducted by sexual abuse specialists, which is viewed through a two-way mirror by staff from the social services department, the district attorney's office and the police. In addition, the CASARC provides follow-up counseling for the child and family.[173]

Programs similar to the CASARC model exist in Orange County and Sacramento County.[174]

San Bernardino: The Children's Network

The San Bernardino County Children's Network coordinates the efforts of the various agencies serving children in the county. An interagency protocol specifies the responsibilities of and services offered by the Sheriff's Office, the Social Services, Probation, Public Health and Mental Health Departments, the schools and the agency serving developmentally disabled children. The Network agreement provides for the exchange of information to facilitate the provision of comprehensive services in the least restrictive environment to children at risk and their families. An annual conference promotes interagency communication and cross-training. The protocol states, "Services to children must be undertaken in a purposeful, coordinated, integrated, fair and cost-effective manner."[175]

Placer: The SMART Program

Placer County's Probation, Mental Health, Health and Medical Services, and Social Services Departments and the County Superior Court have established a Special Multi-Disciplinary Assessment and Referral Team (SMART). The program has four objectives:

* to encourage families to resolve problems without public intervention;
* to help children in trouble;
* to intercede before children enter the court system; and
* to identify unmet needs of problem youngsters.

Children referred to SMART are assigned to a lead agency for case management, but have their histories reviewed by the multi-agency Assessment and Referral Team for a determination of the service needs of the child and family.[176]

Orange: A School-Based Program of Mental Health Services

Orange County's system provides treatment to children with diverse mental health problems who are referred by police, hospitals, the County Social Services and Probation Departments and the schools. At the heart of the model is a school-based treatment program that integrates community volunteers, in-home supportive services, special education classrooms, and interagency coordination to form a comprehensive approach. The program is targeted to those severely disturbed minors who may require mental health services to benefit from special education and those who run the greatest risk of hospitalization or group home placement.[177]

The "Ventura Model" and the Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Services Act

Ventura County was the first county authorized to establish an interagency system of local mental health services for seriously emotionally disturbed minors at risk of out-of-home placement. The approach utilizes intensive family services as part of a comprehensive coordinated system of care for specific court wards and dependents with serious mental health treatment needs. Between 1985 and 1989, the number of children in group homes increased 58 percent statewide; in Ventura County it increased only 24 percent.

The Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Services Act established an interagency, comprehensive system of care

for seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth. Building upon the concepts tested in Ventura County, the "system of care" is designed to coordinate mental health and other necessary services to meet the needs of severely emotionally disturbed children and their families. Keys to the "system of care" approach include developing and providing services that are less restrictive, more normative, culturally appropriate and individualized to the child and family. Case management is the hub of the system, including outreach and early intervention. Through collaborative planning, resource identification and case management, the mental health, educational, substance abuse, health, social services, developmental and vocational service agencies are brought together to meet the needs of each child. Programs are operating in Riverside, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Ventura counties. While each county system has been organized to meet unique local conditions, each county has implemented outcome objectives to measure the impact of the services provided to each child.[178]

San Mateo: Human Services Agency

San Mateo County plans to achieve interagency screening through a departmental reorganization that would create a single Human Services Agency. The county's new program will consist of a 24-hour phone line and emergency response capability plus a multi-disciplinary assessment team composed of professionals with expertise in public health, mental health, child protective services, drug and alcohol services and special education. Among the county's anticipated benefits:

* Develop a single in-take system for dysfunctional families/children at-risk;

* Provide a single point of contact with the county regarding children and family issues;

* Broker services from other systems (e.g., medical, psychiatric, etc.);

* Develop a comprehensive system of services for at-risk children and families; and

* Serve more clients at less cost before a problem becomes acute, thereby reducing the percentage increase in abuse/neglect cases.[179]

Interagency Coordination Could Be Supported by the State

To mitigate the re-abuse of children in the foster care system, the State should support counties in their efforts to establish systems of interagency coordination for the screening of children coming into the system. One vehicle by which the State could accomplish that was envisioned by the Commission in 1987, when it recommended the establishment of a Commission on

Children and Youth or a Children's Czar. The Czar would have been appointed by the Governor to oversee and direct the activities in state government related to services for children and youth.[180]

There currently exists an ideal opportunity to create the vehicle through which State leadership could be provided in the area of interagency coordination: State legislation (SB 479, Morgan) is pending that would establish the Child Development and Education Agency. At the direction of the Secretary for Child Development and Education, a position which was created by the Governor in 1991 through Executive Order W-1-91, this cabinet-level agency would transcend departmental boundaries to most effectively encourage interagency coordination at both the state and county government levels.

Without interagency screening and cooperation at the county level, children are traumatized twice: once by their situations at home and once by the system that supposedly is designed to protect them. Further, without interagency coordination, a county's inefficiencies result in costly duplication of effort.

Recommendations

15. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation to establish the Child Development and Education Agency.

16. The Governor and the Legislature should enact legislation providing start-up funds for counties to establish systems that institute interagency coordination. The legislation should also allow counties flexibility in using the funds.

CONCLUSIONS

When government intervenes and takes over the responsibility of parenting children, it should be held to the same standards as the children's parents. That is to say, it is not enough for the State and counties administering the foster care system to be responsible only for the immediate safety and well-being of the children under their charge; rather, these governmental bodies are accountable for the growth and development of these children into productive, well-adjusted adult members of society. It does not matter that these victims of abuse and neglect came to the government at a disadvantage; the success or failure of these children's lives are the measurements by which the government should be judged.

Without any good indication of the long-term effectiveness of the foster care system, it is not practical to assess the success of the system. But even in light of the system's short-term goals of eliminating the unnecessary removal of children from their homes and ensuring the safety of all children removed by necessity, the system has failed miserably.

The Commission finds that the State's foster care system runs contrary to the preservation of families by unnecessarily removing an increasing number of children from their homes each year. Moreover, the children in the foster care system are staying in the system longer. As a result, the State's costs continue to skyrocket and children continue to be harmed by the removal from their families.

To rectify these circumstances, the Commission recommends that, so long as the safety of children is not compromised, the State emphasize investment in less-

expensive services that focus on removing the problems from dysfunctional families rather than removing the children.

The Commission also finds that training, screening, support services and rates of reimbursement are woefully inadequate for the State's foster parents. Because of the lack of comprehensive training needed to develop the foster parenting skills and the lack of accompanying support services, both of which are necessary to cope with today's very troubled foster children, the children do not receive the nurturing and guidance they need to overcome their disadvantages. Further, because prospective foster parents are not screened, children sometimes are placed in dangerous situations. In addition, the inadequate level of reimbursement results in a shortage of qualified foster parents.

As a remedy to these shortcomings in the foster care system, the Commission recommends that training be a prerequisite to licensure as a foster parent and that available federal funding be maximized for use in training foster parents. Further, to the extent that the State can reduce its reliance on group homes and other more costly types of out-of-home placement, the State should increase the statewide basic care rates of reimbursement so as to adequately cover the costs of raising foster children.

Another finding of the Commission is that more attention needs to be paid to the needs of ethnic minority children in foster care. Even though state law requires that foster children be placed with relatives or families of the same racial or ethnic background to preserve the children's cultural identities, the disproportionate share of ethnic minority children in foster care outnumbers the available "culturally competent" placements. In addition, those ethnic minority children who are placed with relatives may be at a disadvantage because of an inequitable reimbursement rate structure.

To address these problems, the Commission recommends that the State Department of Social Services reinstate funding for its Minority Home Recruitment Program and work with counties to emphasize recruitment of ethnic minority foster parents. Also, the Department should monitor counties' administration of the foster care program to ensure the counties are making placements in accordance with the law.

The Commission further finds that the State's foster care system suffers from inadequate monitoring and oversight. Because of problems inherent in the foster care system -- such as the counties' conflict of interest in performing both licensing and placement functions, and the lack of an independent reporting mechanism for complaints regarding the system -- there is a potential that children

could languish in intolerable situations because counties do not take actions against inadequate homes. Further, the State may not establish performance standards in accordance with timelines set by law. Furthermore, the State has not evaluated the long-term effects of the foster care system on children who have been through the system. Consequently, the State's decision makers are rendered uninformed as to the effectiveness of the foster care program.

What the Commission feels is needed in this instance is a foster care ombudsman program patterned after the ombudsman program for the elderly. As an added measure, the State Department of Social Services should not contract with counties to perform the licensing functions in the foster care system; instead, the Department should be solely responsible for those functions. In addition, the Department should complete the performance standards in accordance with the law, and a bona fide longitudinal study of California's foster care system and its clients should be conducted to determine the long-range effectiveness of the system.

Finally, the Commission finds that counties still lack sufficient interagency screening of children coming into the foster care system. Despite the foster care system's goal to protect abused and neglected children, a "re-abuse" of these children occurs when counties lack sufficient interagency coordination to protect the children from the trauma of being shuffled from agency to agency for multiple screenings. Counties that promote such coordination have more success in mitigating further trauma to the children.

To provide the vehicle through which State leadership could encourage interagency coordination, the Commission recommends that the Child Development and Education Agency be established. Further, the State should provide start-up funds for counties to establish systems that institute interagency coordination.

The Commission's findings in this report, as well as its 1987 report, point to one simple truth: All too often, California's Child Welfare Services Program simply does not fulfill the promises made by the reform legislation of the early 1980s. Specifically, unnecessary placement in foster care has not been reduced, the stability of foster care placements has not been increased, and the safety and best interests of children have not been ensured. To achieve these goals, emphasis will have to be placed on keeping families together and, when that cannot be accomplished, working to place children in environments that are most likely to benefit them in the long term. Only through these actions can government prevent the "re-abuse" of foster children.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Members of the Little Hoover Commission's Foster Care Advisory Committee

Appendix B - List of Persons Providing Testimony for the Little Hoover Commission's Public Hearings on Foster Care

Appendix C - Brief Discussion of Results of Studies Related to Family Preservation Projects

Appendix D - Definitions of Reasons for Removing Children from Their Homes

APPENDIX A

Members of the Little Hoover Commission's
Foster Care Advisory Committee

Gwen Albert, Northern Regional V.P.
S.E.I.U. Local 535

Richard Barth, Ph.D.
Family Welfare Research Group
School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley

Charlene Chase, Director
Santa Barbara County
Department of Social Services

Dean Conklin, Executive Director
McKinley Home for Boys

Mary Hayes, Director
Out-of-home Placements
Department of Children's Services
County of Los Angeles

Randall Feltman, Director
Ventura County Mental Health

Dennis P. Handis
Chief Probation Officer
San Joaquin County

Don Hogner
Chief Probation Officer
Alameda County

Michael Jett
Program Supervisor
Attorney General's Office
Crime Prevention Center

Thomas F. Kubasak
Associate Director
California Association of
Services for Children

Ray Merz, Director
Placer County Welfare Department

Marilee Monagan, Executive Officer
State Social Services Advisory Board

David Neves, Director
Child Welfare and Attendance
Elk Grove School District

Sylvia Pizzini, Director
Santa Clara County Department of
Family and Children's Services

Tracy Russell, Director
Amador County Department of
Social Services

Loren D. Suter, Deputy Director
Adult and Family Services Division
Department of Social Services

Lesley D. Wimberly, President
VOCAL, Inc. of California

Christopher Wu, Director
Legal Services for Children

APPENDIX B

Persons Providing Testimony for the Little Hoover Commission's
November 1991 and January 1992 Public Hearings on Foster Care

November 20, 1991, San Francisco

Theresa Cote, Program Manager
Independent Living Program, California Community Colleges

Michelle and T.J.
Panel of foster youth

Marleen K. and daughter; Duane P. and daughters
Panel of parents and youth experiencing problems with foster care system

Frances L. Munroe, Social Work Supervisor
Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services

Ann O'Rielly, Assistant General Manager
San Francisco Department of Social Services

Don Hogner, Chief Probation Officer
Jane Jennings, Director
Juvenile Division
Alameda County Probation Department

Loren D. Suter, Deputy Director
Adult and Family Services Division
Fred W. Miller
Community Care Licensing Division
Lawrence B. Bolton, Deputy Director/Chief Counsel
Legal Division
State Department of Social Services

Alfred C. Simmons, Co-Chair
African American Foster-Group Home Association

January 22, 1992, Los Angeles

Jennifer, Sonya and Jason
Foster Youth Connection

LaVerne Adolfo, President
California State Foster Parent Association

Loren D. Suter, Deputy Director
Adult and Family Services Division

(Continued on next page)

Donna Mandelstam, LA Regional Manager
Community Care Licensing Division
Lawrence B. Bolton, Deputy Director/Chief Counsel
Legal Division
State Department of Social Services

G. Peter Digre, Director
Mary Hayes, Director
Out-of-home Placements
Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services

Michael D. Bowman
Capitol Resource Institute

Kevin M. Aslanian, Executive Director
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

Greg H. Wessels, Director
Guadalupe Home for Boys

David C. Wesson, Assistant Executive Director
Southern California
Koinonia Foster Homes

Elizabeth Kutzner, Judge
San Diego Juvenile Court

Cindy Hart, Training Coordinator/Foster Parent
Pasadena City College Training Program

Lupe Ross, Vice President
LA County Foster Parents Association

Zorah W. Snedden, President
Medical Foster Care Network

John E. Crow
Adoptive Placement Parent

Ella Washington
Mid-City Providers Association

Tina Robinson
Teens Homes

Gary Wilson, Manager
LKM Group Home

Robert C. Fellmeth, Executive Director
Children's Advocacy Institute

APPENDIX C

Brief Discussion of Results of Studies Related to Family Preservation Projects

Critics of studies that conclude family preservation projects result in lowering placement rates claim that the studies were conducted without control groups and that such high rates reflect basic flaws in the process by which children are classified as being at imminent risk of foster placement -- the primary requirement for referral. The critics further contend that 80 percent of children so classified are not even placed in foster care, with or without family preservation. A former chief of research and evaluation of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that family preservation is effective in avoiding foster placement for half of the remaining 20 percent of children who truly are at high risk.[181] This figure represents about 10 percent of all children referred.

In fact, there have been mixed results of studies that compared groups of families receiving family preservation services with control groups of families that did not receive family preservation services. One such study in 1987 showed only minimal differences in total number of placements between the two groups. The same study, however, also showed that adolescents from families receiving in-home services had shorter average length of care than did adolescents in the control group.[182] One 1990 study showed no differences at all between a family preservation project group and a control group,[183] while another 1990 study showed a family preservation project group having significantly higher success in reducing out-of-home placement of children.[184]

Another 1990 report, reviewing projects in California, showed no significant differences in placement rates between a family preservation project group and the comparison group for which no family preservation services were delivered. The report did point out, however, that although the expectation regarding a difference in placement rate was not met, the family preservation projects had several other important results, such as an improvement in families' ability to parent their children and to understand and address the problems confronting them. Other positive results included: an increase in social worker knowledge about the dynamics of multi-problem families; the provision of more detailed assessments of families, leading to better targeting of services; and the identification of certain barriers to service implementation.[185]

Some critics also maintain that studies showing great cost savings from family preservation projects did not use control groups and, therefore, do not prove the projects' cost savings. Once again, it is important to point out the results of the above-mentioned 1990 study that compared a control group to a group of California family preservation projects. In fact, the study showed little difference in overall placement costs for children placed from either group. The total placement costs for the family preservation projects group were only $4,013 less than the control group.[186] The study did qualify its conclusions, however, by stating that the placement cost figures were for an eight-month period only, and that "[i]f the difference in the number of days in care (was) found to be reflective of actual days saved and not just days postponed, the type of placement utilized would affect the cost impact of such services."[187] Further, the report acknowledged that ten of the children in the family preservation projects group were placed within three or less days of being referred and accepted into the group for study purposes; if these children were not included in the comparison of costs, the placement costs for

children in the family preservation projects group would be an additional $19,499 less.[188]

Thus, it is fair to say that, at best, the studies including control groups have mixed results related to the performance of family preservation projects.

APPENDIX D

Definitions of Reasons for Removing Children from Their Homes

Sexual abuse - the victimization of a child by sexual activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, molestation, indecent exposure, fondling, rape and incest.

Physical abuse - a physical injury which is inflicted by other than accidental means on a child by a caretaker or other individual living at the same residence as the child. Physical abuse includes willful cruelty, unjustifiable punishment or corporal punishment, any of which result in injury to a child.

Severe neglect - the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to protect the child from severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed non-organic failure to thrive. "Severe neglect" also means those situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or allows the child to be placed in a situation where his/her person or health is endangered. This would include, but not be limited to, prenatal drug abuse causing a child to be born addicted or the intentional failure to provide necessary medical care, adequate food, clothing or shelter.

General neglect - the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred.

Emotional abuse - nonphysical mistreatment, the results of which may be characterized by disturbed behavior on the part of the child, such as severe withdrawal, regression, bizarre behavior, hyperactivity or dangerous acting-out behavior. Emotional abuse includes willfully causing or permitting any child to suffer, inflicting mental suffering or endangering a child's emotional well-being.

Exploitation - the act of forcing or coercing a child into performing activities for the benefit of the caretaker that are beyond the child's capabilities or capacities or that are illegal or degrading. Includes forcing workloads on a child in or outside the home so as to interfere with the health, education and well-being of the child.

Caretaker absence or incapacity - the absence of the caretaker due to hospitalization, incarceration or death; incapacity of the caretaker to provide adequate care for the child due to physical or emotional illness, disabling condition or compulsive use of alcohol or narcotics.

Child's disability/handicap - the child has special care and/or supervision needs resulting from one or more of the following: developmental disability; mental/emotional disorder; learning disability; hearing, speech, or sight impairment; physical disability or handicap. These needs cannot be met by provision of services in the child's own home.

Relinquishment - the child has been relinquished for adoption by one or all parent(s) to a public or private adoption agency.

Disrupted adoptive placement - the child has been returned to the jurisdiction of a public or private adoption agency prior to finalization on an adoptive placement.

Voluntary placement - a signed voluntary agreement has been entered into by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child and the placement agency.

Status offense - the child exhibits out-of-control behavior as described in the Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 601, 601.1 and 601.2.

Law violation - the child has violated a law as described in the Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 602.

ENDNOTES

1. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 9.*

2. *"The Vision for the Children of California," California Child Welfare Strategic Planning Commission, November 1991, p. 2.*

3. *"Analysis of the 1991-92 Budget Bill," Legislative Analyst's Office, February 27, 1991, p. 771.*

4. *Calculations based on comparison of figures from:*

   "Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Three Consecutive Years," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 5, 1992; and

   "Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies or Probation Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Four Consecutive Periods," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 13, 1992.

5. *"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1992-93 Governor's Budget to 1991-92 November Estimate -- Run #15," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, December 31, 1991.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 10.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid., pp. 9-10;*

"Analysis of the 1991-92 Budget Bill," Legislative Analyst's Office, February 27, 1991, p. 807; and

"Los Angeles County Needs to Improve Its Services to Foster Children and the State Needs to Improve Its Oversight of the County's Foster Care Program," Office of the Auditor General, December 1990, pp. 2-3.

11. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 10.*

12. *"Foster Family Home and Family Day Care Licensing Agencies, by County, FY 1991-92," Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services.*

13. *"The Children's Services Delivery System in California - Final Report," Little Hoover Commission, October 1987.*

14. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies or Probation Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Four Consecutive Periods," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 13, 1992.*

15. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991.*

16. *"Los Angeles County Needs to Improve Its Services to Foster Children and the State Needs to Improve its Oversight of the County's Foster Care Program," Office of the Auditor General, December 1990.*

17. *"Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990.*

18. *"For Your Insight," Senate Office of Research, July 10, 1991, p. 85.*

19. *Charles P. Gershenson, former chief of research and evaluation of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, quoted in "Saving Families Fosters Hope for America's Troubled Youth," Daniel Kagan, Insight, April 29, 1991, p. 16.*

20. *David Haapala, co-founder of Homebuilders (the first family preservation program), quoted in "Foster Care at the Crossroads," by Jean Callahan, Parenting, February 1992, p. 68.*

21. *Michelle, in testimony given at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco.*

22. *"Family Preservation Program Status - December 16, 1991," provided by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, State Department of Social Services, on February 14, 1992. Counties listed:*

    Original Family Preservation Counties = Alameda, Napa & Solano;

    Counties That Implemented Family Preservation (MOU) in FY 1990-91 = Contra Costa, San Diego, Santa Clara & Stanislaus; and

    Counties That Will Implement Family Preservation in FY 1991-92 = Mendocino, Sacramento, Kings, Merced, Riverside & Yolo.

23. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 35.*

24. *From materials provided by Melisa A. Adams, Program Coordinator for IMANI, The Birthing Project.*

25. *"Foster Care at the Crossroads," Jean Callahan, Parenting, February 1992, p. 72.*

26. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 34.*

27. *"Saving Families Fosters Hope for America's Troubled Youth," Daniel Kagan, Insight, April 29, 1991, p. 19.*

28. *"The new foster care: Keep families intact," Edward N. Albro, Alameda Times Star, November 24, 1991, p. B2.*

29. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 35.*

30. *Ibid., p. 34.*

31. *"Report on Family Preservation Pilot Projects," State Department of Social Services, September 1990, p. 6.*

32. *"The new foster care: Keep families intact," Edward N. Albro, Alameda Times Star, November 24, 1991, p. B1.*

33. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 34.*

34. *Sandra Baker, L.C.S.W., Executive Director, Child and Family Institute, telephone conversation on February 18, 1992.*

35. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies or Probation Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Four Consecutive Periods," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 13, 1992.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 15.*

41. *"What's Happening to Our Children - A County by County Guide 1991," Children Now, 1991, p. 16.*

42. *"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1988-89 May Estimate to 1988-89 Appropriations -- Run #11," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, April 14, 1989;*

    "July Detail Tables, May 1989 Subvention," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, July 7, 1989;

    "July Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1990-91 Appropriations to 1990-91 May Estimate -- Run #4," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, August 14, 1990;

    "July Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1991-92 Appropriations to 1991-92 May Estimate -- Run #2," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, July 31, 1991; and

    "Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1992-93 Governor's Budget to 1991-92 November Estimate -- Run #15," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, December 31, 1991.

43. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 11.*

44. *"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1988-89 May Estimate to 1988-89 Appropriations -- Run #11," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, April 14, 1989; and*

    "Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1992-93 Governor's Budget to 1991-92 November Estimate -- Run #15," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, December 31, 1991.

45. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 11.*

46. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 26.*

47. *Ibid., p. 27.*

48. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies or Probation Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Four Consecutive Periods," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 13, 1992.*

49. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 14.*

50. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare or Probation , Placement Length by Ethnicity and Removal Reason for Cases Terminated During 12 Months Ended June 1989 [1990, 1991, December 1991]," (Special printouts of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030F), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 14, 1992.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 14.*

53. *"FM/FR/PP Begin of Month, Starts, Terms, End and Average Case Months - FR/PP for September 1991, FM for September 1991 Including 60-Day or Less F.R. Trial Visit Cases Reflecting Los Angeles System Change," State Department of Social Services' Foster Care Information System, FCI561.*

54. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 14.*

55. *"FM/FR/PP Begin of Month, Starts, Terms, End and Average Case Months - FR/PP for September 1991, FM for September 1991 Including 60-Day or Less F.R. Trial Visit Cases Reflecting Los Angeles System Change," State Department of Social Services' Foster Care Information System, FCI561.*

56. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 14.*

57. *Study conducted by the National Association of Social Workers with a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, quoted in "Foster Care to Streets: A Beaten Path, Study Finds," Jennifer Toth, Los Angeles Times, January 1, 1992, p. A5*

58. *"Foster Care at the Crossroads," Jean Callahan, Parenting, February 1992, p. 70.*

59. *Ann O'Rielly, assistant general manager at the San Francisco Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1992, San Francisco.*

60. *"A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 25.*

61. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 26.*

62. *"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1988-89 May Estimate to 1988-89 Appropriations -- Run #11," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, April 14, 1989;*

"July Detail Tables, May 1989 Subvention," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, July 7, 1989;

"July Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1990-91 Appropriations to 1990-91 May Estimate -- Run #4," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, August 14, 1990;

"July Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1991-92 Appropriations to 1991-92 May Estimate -- Run #2," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, July 31, 1991; and

"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1992-93 Governor's Budget to 1991-92 November Estimate -- Run #15," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, December 31, 1991.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *"Detail Tables, Cost Comparison of 1992-93 Governor's Budget to 1991-92 November Estimate -- Run #15," Estimates Branch of the State Department of Social Services, December 31, 1991.*

65. *Annual costs per child residing in out-of-home placement were derived from information provided by: the Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services (foster family homes and group homes); the State Department of Finance in the Governor's Budget for fiscal year 1992-93 (California Youth Authority); the Probation Business Manager's Association and the Legislative Analyst's Office in "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association, Spring 1990, p. 21 (Note: The figure for probation camps is estimated at a two percent annual increase since fiscal year 1988-89.); and MacLaren Children's Center, Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services.*

66. *Helen Maxwell, L.C.S.W., director of MacLaren Children's Center, Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in telephone conversation, February 25, 1992.*

67. *Don Hogner, Alameda County Chief Probation Officer, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1992, San Francisco.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 36.*

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Direct costs consist of any service that the county purchases, or that it bills directly to the program. It is also important to note that only counties provide treatment and support services; thus, only the county expenditures are presented.*

72. *"Child Abuse and Neglect in California - A Review of the Child Welfare Services Program," Legislative Analyst's Office, January 1991, p. 37.*

73. *Ibid. p. 39.*

74. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 22.*

75. *Ibid.*

76. *AB 948 (Bronzan) as summarized in "For Your Insight," Senate Office of Research, July 10, 1991, pp. 92-93.*

77. *Ann O'Rielly, assistant general manager at the San Francisco Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1992, San Francisco.*

78. *State Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco, p. 1.*

79. *"A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, pp. 2-3.*

80. *Judge Elizabeth Kutzner, San Diego Juvenile Court, in testimony at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

81. *"Children's Services chief gives foster home licensing low status," City News Service, Long Beach Press Telegram, January 23, 1992.*

82. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 16.*

83. *"SDSS FCIS Report FCI584-2," July 19, 1989 and July 25, 1985, cited as source for Table 5.1 in "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association, Spring 1990, p. 17; and*

Calculations based on comparison of figures from:

"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Three Consecutive Years," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 5, 1992.

84. *"SDSS FCIS Report FCI584-2," July 19, 1989 and July 25, 1985, cited as source for Table 5.1 in "10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association, Spring 1990, p. 17; and*

Calculations based on comparison of figures from:

"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Three Consecutive Years," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 5, 1992.

85. *"California's Drug-Exposed Babies - Undiscovered, Unreported, Underserved," California Senate Office of Research, July 1990.*

86. *Ibid., p. 10.*

87. *Ibid., pp. 12-13.*

88. *"What's Happening to Our Children - A County by County Guide 1991," Children Now, 1991.*

89. *G. Peter Digre, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in testimony at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

90. *"Startled Police Find Girl, 3, Running Texas Crack House," J. Michael Kennedy, Los Angeles Times, September 13, 1991, p. A1.*

91. *"State asks why 3 kids neglected," Gretchen Kell, Sacramento Bee, July 10, 1991; and "Husband Charged with Child Neglect," wire reports, Sacramento Bee, August 7, 1991.*

92. *"Uncle's Beatings Forced Him to Sell Drugs, 11 Year Old Says," by Knight Ridder Newspapers, Sacramento Bee, December 7, 1991.*

93. *"Why Mandate Training?," Susan Melstner, MSW, Foster Care Journal, 1991.*

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Cindy Hart, foster parent and coordinator for the Pasadena City College Training Program, in testimony at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

96. *G. Peter Digre, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in testimony at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

97. *LaVerne Adolfo, president of the California State Foster Parents Association, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

98. *National Foster Parent Association, internal memorandum from Heather L. Craig-Oldsen and Donna Gillespie, co-chairs of the Education Committee, to the board of directors, (memo not dated).*

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Cindy Hart, foster parent and coordinator for the Pasadena City College Training Program, in testimony at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

101. *"Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990, p. 6; and Mary Hayes, director of out-of-home placements for the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in a Foster Care Advisory Committee meeting, February 24, 1992.*

102. *"Child Welfare Head Wants Foster Parents Tested, Trained," Sheryl Stolberg, Los Angeles times, December 24, 1991, p. B1.*

103. *Sharon Watson, executive director of the Association of Children's Services Agencies (which represents 24 private nonprofit child welfare agencies in Los Angeles County, quoted in "Child Welfare Head Wants Foster Parents Tested, Trained," Sheryl Stolberg, Los Angeles times, December 24, 1991, p. B1.*

104. *"A White Paper on the Health Care of Children in Family Foster Care: Summary of a Colloquium on the Health Care of Children in Foster Homes," Child Welfare League of America and American Academy of Pediatrics, 1987, cited in "A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, pp. 36-37.*

105. *"A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 41.*

106. *"Training and Supporting Treatment Parents," P. Meadowcroft & E.M. Greaish, Troubled Youth in Treatment Homes: A Handbook of Therapeutic Foster Care, 1990, p. 64, cited in "A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 40.*

107. *California Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 361.3 and 281.5.*

108. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 24.*

109. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Three Consecutive Years," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 5, 1992.*

110. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 25.*

111. *Ibid., p. 24.*

112. *Loren D. Suter, deputy director for the Adult and Family Services Division of the State Department of Social Services, in a Foster Care Advisory Committee meeting, February 24, 1992.*

113. *G. Peter Digre, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, quoted in "Child Welfare Head Wants Foster Parents Tested, Trained," Sheryl Stolberg, Los Angeles Times, December 24, 1991, p. B1.*

114. *G. Peter Digre, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

115. *LaVerne Adolfo, president of the California State Foster Parents Association, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

116. *"Why Mandate Training?," Susan Meistner, MSW, Foster Care Journal, 1991.*

117. *"Child Welfare Head Wants Foster Parents Tested, Trained," Sheryl Stolberg, Los Angeles times, December 24, 1991, p. B1.*

118. *"Foster Mother Held in Abuse of Toddler," Sheryl Stolberg, Los Angeles Times, December 17, 1991, p. B3.*

119. *"Orphans of the Living," Eric Mattson, Sacramento Bee, September 15, 1991, p. A1.*

120. *Lupe Ross, vice president of the Los Angeles County Foster Parents Association, In testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

121. *"Orphans of the Living," Eric Mattson, Sacramento Bee, September 15, 1991, p. A1.*

122. *Fred W. Miller, deputy director of the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services, in testimony given at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 11, 1991, San Francisco.*

123. *"Investing in Children: New Estimates of Parental Expenditures," Thomas J. Espenshade, Washington D.C., Urban Institute Press, 1984, quoted in "Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990, p. 6.*

124. *"Updated Estimates of the Cost of Raising a Child," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Family Economics Review, 2, 4 (November 1989), pp. 30-31, cited in "Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990, p. 6.*

125. *"A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 40.*

126. *"Basic Rates for Foster Care," an unpublished document provided by the Foster Care Program Bureau, State Department of Social Services.*

127. *"Kinship Foster Care: The Double-Edged Dilemma," Task Force on Permanency Planning for Foster Children, Inc., 1990, p. 18, cited in "A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 101.*

128. *State Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco, p. 2.*

129. *"Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990, p. 7.*

130. *Ibid.*

131. *Ibid.*

132. *Unpublished document provided by the Foster Care Program Bureau, State Department of Social Services.*

133. *"Analysis of the 1991-92 Budget Bill," Legislative Analyst's Office, February 27, 1991, p. 773.*

134. *"Tackling California's Demand for Foster Care," Senate Office of Research, December 1990, p. 6.*

135. *State Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco, p. 2.*

136. *G. Peter Digre, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, interview on December 17, 1991.*

137. *"Beyond Rhetoric - A New American Agenda for Children and Families," Final Report of the National Commission on Children, 1991, pp. 21-22.*

138. *"The Elusive Continuum of Child Welfare Services: Implications for Minority Children and Youth," S. Stehno, CHILD WELFARE LXIX, 6 (November-December 1990), pp. 551-562, quoted in "A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 41.*

139. *"A Blueprint for Fostering Infants, Children, and Youths in the 1990s," National Commission on Family Foster Care, published by the Child Welfare League of America in collaboration with the National Foster Parent Association, 1991, p. 41.*

140. *California Civil Code, Section 275.*

141. *California Civil Code, Section 275.1.*

142. *"Foster Care Children Supervised by Welfare Agencies or Probation Agencies, Supervising Counties, Ethnicity, Facility Types, Removal Reasons and Most Recent Placement, at End of Four Consecutive Periods," (Special printout of the Foster Care Information System, #92-030), Statistical Services Bureau, State Department of Social Services, February 13, 1992.*

143. *Ibid.; and*

"State Census Data Center, Source: 1990 Census of Population & Housing - Summary Tape File 1A," State Department of Finance, p. 1.

144. *Jill Duerr Berrick, Senior Research Associate and Lecturer, Family Research Group, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, in a telephone conversation on March 9, 1992.*

145. *Reference in "Rule on foster kin debated," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 3, 1991, p. B1; and "The Part Race Plays in Adoption," Claude Lewis (Knight Ridder Newspapers), Sacramento Bee, November 30, 1991.*

146. *Wesley Jones, consultant to the National Association of Black Social Workers, quoted in "Rule on foster kin debated," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 3, 1991, p. B1 and B8.*

147. *State Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco, pp. 3-5.*

148. *Ibid., p. 4.*

149. *"State Census Data Center, Source: 1990 Census of Population & Housing - Summary Tape File 1A," State Department of Finance, p. 1.*

150. *Jim Brown, chief of the Adoptions Branch in the State Department of Social Services, quoted in "Rule on foster kin debated," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 3, 1991, p. B8.*

151. *Carol Coccia, executive director of the National Coalition to End Racism in America's Child Care System, quoted in "Rule on foster kin debated," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 3, 1991, p. B8.*

152. *"Rule on foster kin debated," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 3, 1991, p. B1.*

153. *"Foster Family Home and Family Day Care Licensing Agencies, By County, FY 1991-92," provided by Fred W. Miller, deputy director of the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services, December 16, 1991.*

The counties with which the State does not contract to perform licensing functions are:

1. *Alpine*
2. *Amador*
3. *Colusa*
4. *Humboldt*
5. *Lake*
6. *Lassen*
7. *Los Angeles*
8. *Modoc*
9. *Mono*
10. *Nevada*
11. *Plumas*
12. *San Benito*

154. *Lawrence B. Bolton, chief counsel and deputy director of the Legal Division of the State Department of Social Services, in testimony given at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 11, 1991, San Francisco.*

155. *Fred W. Miller, deputy director of the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services, in testimony given at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 11, 1991, San Francisco.*

156. *"A child's voice in court," editorial, Sacramento Bee, November 27, 1991.*

157. *Ibid.*

158. *"Abused Kids to Gain 'Voice' in Courtroom," Nancy Weaver, Sacramento Bee, November 25, 1991; CASA official quoted is Rebecca Heartz.*

159. *Testimony submitted by the State Department of Social Services for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care in California, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles, p. 1.*

160. *Ibid.*

161. *"A Study of the Accuracy of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services Children's Information System," State Department of Social Services, Adult and Family Services Division, November 1990, p. vi.*

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Ibid., pp. vii-viii.*

164. *Ibid., pp. xi-xii.*

165. *Testimony submitted by the State Department of Social Services for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care in California, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles, p. 6.*

166. *Ibid.*

167. *"Child Care Records Are Seized," John Hurst and John Kendall, Los Angeles Times, June 9, 1990, p. B1.*

168. *Loren D. Suter, deputy director of the Adult and Family Services Division of the State Department of Social Services, and G. Peter Digre, director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, in testimony given at the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, January 22, 1992, Los Angeles.*

169. *State Department of Social Services, in testimony submitted for the Little Hoover Commission's public hearing on foster care, November 20, 1991, San Francisco, p. 5.*

170. *Ibid.*

171. *Ibid.*

172. *Wilsey, Kermit and members of the Child and Family Coalition in testimony to the California Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth's hearing on child abuse reporting laws and dependency statutes, December 4, 1986, cited in "The Children's Services Delivery System in California - Final Report," Little Hoover Commission, October 1987, p. 91.*

173. *Based on information gathered during tours of facilities and interviews with Ann O'Rielly, assistant general manager of the San Francisco Department of Social Services, October 23, 1991 and November 19, 1991.*

174. *Michael Jett, program supervisor at the Crime Prevention Center in the California Attorney General's Office, December 5, 1991.*

175. *"10 Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," County Welfare Directors Association of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California and California Mental Health Directors Association; Spring 1990; p. 33.*

176. *Ibid.*

177. *Ibid.*

178. *Ibid., pp. 32-33.*

179. *Interdepartmental Correspondence (Subject: Reorganization of Human Services Functions) from John L. Maltbie, county manager for San Mateo County, to the county board of supervisors, July 29, 1991.*

180. *"The Children's Services Delivery System in California - Final Report," Little Hoover Commission, October 1987, p. 123.*

181. *Charles P. Gershenson, former chief of research and evaluation of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, quoted in "Saving Families Fosters Hope for America's Troubled Youth," Daniel Kagan, Insight, April 29, 1991, p. 19.*

182. *"An evaluation of the effectiveness of intensive home-based services as an alternative to placement for adolescents and their families," P. AuClaire & I.M. Schwartz, Minneapolis: Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, cited in "Evaluation of AB 1562 In-Home Care Demonstration Projects - Volume I: Final Report," prepared by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. for the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, State Department of Social Services, May 1990, p. 7.1.*

183. *"The Bronx Homebuilders program: An evaluation of the first 45 families," C. Mitchell, P. Tovar & J. Knitzer, Bank Street College of Education, 1990, cited in "Evaluation of AB 1562 In-Home Care Demonstration Projects - Volume I: Final Report," prepared by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. for the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, State Department of Social Services, May 1990, p. 7.2.*

184. *"Placement outcomes: Did treatment affect placement rates?," M.W. Fraser, P.J. Pecora, R.B. Bennett & D.A. Haapala (In Press), in "Families in crisis: Findings from the family-based intensive treatment project," M.W. Fraser, P.J. Pecora & D.A. Haapala, (Eds.), cited in "Evaluation of AB 1562 In-Home Care Demonstration Projects - Volume I: Final Report," prepared by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. for the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, State Department of Social Services, May 1990, p. 7.2.*

185. *"Evaluation of AB 1562 In-Home Care Demonstration Projects - Volume I: Final Report," prepared by Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. for the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, State Department of Social Services, May 1990, p. vi-vii.*

186. *Ibid., p. 6.18.*

187. *Ibid., p. 6.21.*

188. *Ibid., p. 6.18.*

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION FACT SHEET

The Little Hoover Commission, formally known as the Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, is an independent state watchdog agency that was created in 1962. The Commission's mission is to investigate state government operations and through reports and recommendations, promote efficiency economy and improved service.

By statute, the Commission is a balanced bipartisan board composed of five citizen members appointed by the Governor, four citizen members appointed by the Legislature, two Senators and two Assembly members.

The Commission holds hearings on topics that come to its attention from citizens, legislators and other sources. But the hearings are only a small part of a long and thorough process:

* Two or three months of preliminary investigations and preparations come before a hearing is conducted.

* Hearings are constructed in such a way to explore identified issues and raise new areas for investigation.

* Two to six months of intensive fieldwork is undertaken before a report, including findings and recommendations, is written, adopted and released.

* Legislation to implement recommendations is sponsored and lobbied through the legislative system.

* New hearings are held and progress reports issued in the years following the initial report until the Commission's recommendations have been assimilated.

Additional copies of this publication may be purchased for $5.00 per copy from:
Little Hoover Commission
1303 J Street, Suite 270
Sacramento, CA 95814
Make checks payable to Little Hoover Commission.