

THE CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL:

Achieving Shared Results through Partnership

The Child Welfare Council was established to bring partners together who share the vision of positive outcomes for children, youth, and families in California's child welfare system. The federal outcomes reflected below were adopted and elaborated in California. The Department of Social Services is accountable for the federal outcomes and collaborates with a variety of partners, often through strategic initiatives.

Shared Vision

Every California child lives in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families with the capacity to meet the child's needs and support their well-being, and is prepared for the transition into adulthood to become a contributing member of society.

Shared Outcomes (page 2)

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| Prevention/Early Intervention | Federal & State Child Welfare Services: Safety, Permanency Child & Family Well-Being | Systems Improvement |
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California Child Welfare System

Child Welfare Partners

- Federal
- State
- County
- Community Non-profits
- Philanthropic

Child Welfare Initiatives

- Katie A. Implementation Planning
- Child Welfare Services Realignment
- Child Welfare Prioritization
- Continuum of Care Reform
- Strengthening Families Roundtable
- California Partnership for Permanency
- Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation Project

PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION

Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) administers federal grants, contracts, and state programs designed to promote best practices and innovative approaches to child abuse prevention, intervention and treatment. The Office of Child Abuse Prevention serves as a statewide source of information, developing and disseminating educational material regarding prevention/early intervention programs, activities, and research.

Differential Response (DR)¹: Differential Response is a strategy that creates a new intake and service delivery structure that allows a child welfare services agency to respond in a more flexible manner to reports of child abuse or neglect. The child welfare response is a customized approach based on an assessment of safety, risk, and protective capacity as well as the ascertainment of facts to determine the strengths and needs of the child and his or her family.

DR has as its hallmark both flexibility and family engagement, which act as an umbrella for various responses and services. This represented a significant change for many child welfare agencies. The Differential Response approach also recognizes each family's unique strengths and needs, and addresses these in an individualized manner (with a strategic three-path approach) rather than with a "one size fits all" approach.

SAFETY, PERMANENCY, CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING²

Emergency Response (ER) Program: receives reports of suspected child abuse and neglect from individuals mandated to report as well as others who report voluntarily through county "hotlines" and conducts safety and risk assessments to determine if the report is founded, unfounded or inconclusive. Provides, in some instances, short-term services before a case is closed, and for families requiring ongoing services, develops case plans for the services to be provided through open cases in Family Maintenance, Family Reunification or Permanent Planning.

Family Maintenance (FM) Program: provides services to families in crisis to prevent or remedy abuse or neglect with parents and children together in the home. Services are provided based on a case plan and can include but are not limited to: mental health counseling, emergency shelter care, respite care, emergency in-home caretakers, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence services, and parenting education. Family Maintenance may be voluntary or court-ordered.

Family Reunification (FR) Program: provides intervention and support services for up to one year to parents whose children have been removed from the home (placed into foster care, with a relative, or into a group home) with the goal of safely returning the child home to the parents. Family Reunification is most often court-ordered but can also be voluntary.

Permanency Planning (PP): provides services to children who have been removed from families with alternative safe, stable, and permanent families when reunification is not possible. Adoption is the first alternative permanency option, followed by legal guardianship. When those permanency options are not achieved, children remain in longer-term foster care placements with non-relatives or in group homes, and the goal of permanency through adoption or guardianship remains in place.

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636)³, put in place measures that hold the state and counties accountable for improving outcomes for children through the establishment of improvement goals, public reporting of outcomes and county-specific improvement plans that must be approved by county boards of supervisors and submitted to the state. This statute implemented federal requirements in the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act of 1996 as implemented by the federal government in 2002.

¹Excerpted from: The Child Welfare Improvement Activities: Differential Response Guidelines, May 2010.

²Adapted from: Understanding the Child Welfare System in CA; a Primer for Service Providers and Policymakers, June 2009.

³Adapted from: The Child Welfare Improvements in California: Frequently Asked Questions CDSS/FC/CWDA, 2004.

California Child Welfare System and Services⁴

Brief Description

Counties are the primary governmental bodies that directly interact with children and families to address child abuse and neglect. The county department or agency of social services through its child welfare division administers, partially funds, and provides local child welfare and foster care services under Sections 300 et seq. and 16500 et seq. of the California Welfare and Institutions Code. The county child welfare division investigates reports of child abuse and provides case management and other services to help families stay together whenever possible.

Initially the Child Welfare Social Worker works with the family to find the least intrusive approach to support the child and family with ameliorating the issues that brought them to the attention of child welfare. If the child is provided services through the Child Welfare System, the Child Welfare Social Worker is responsible for coordinating their care through a family-focused and needs-driven approach. When a child and family enter the Child Welfare Services System, they are assessed for safety and risk factors for child abuse and/or neglect. A Child Welfare Social Worker may investigate to identify what the child and family needs.

If there are risks but no immediate safety factors, the family may be provided the following services:

- Community-Based Services without an open child welfare case (Child Welfare Social Worker closes the referral).
- Voluntary Family Maintenance services with appropriate safety plans.
- Court-Ordered Family Maintenance Services with appropriate safety plans.

If there are safety factors that require detaining a child, the following services may be provided to the family:

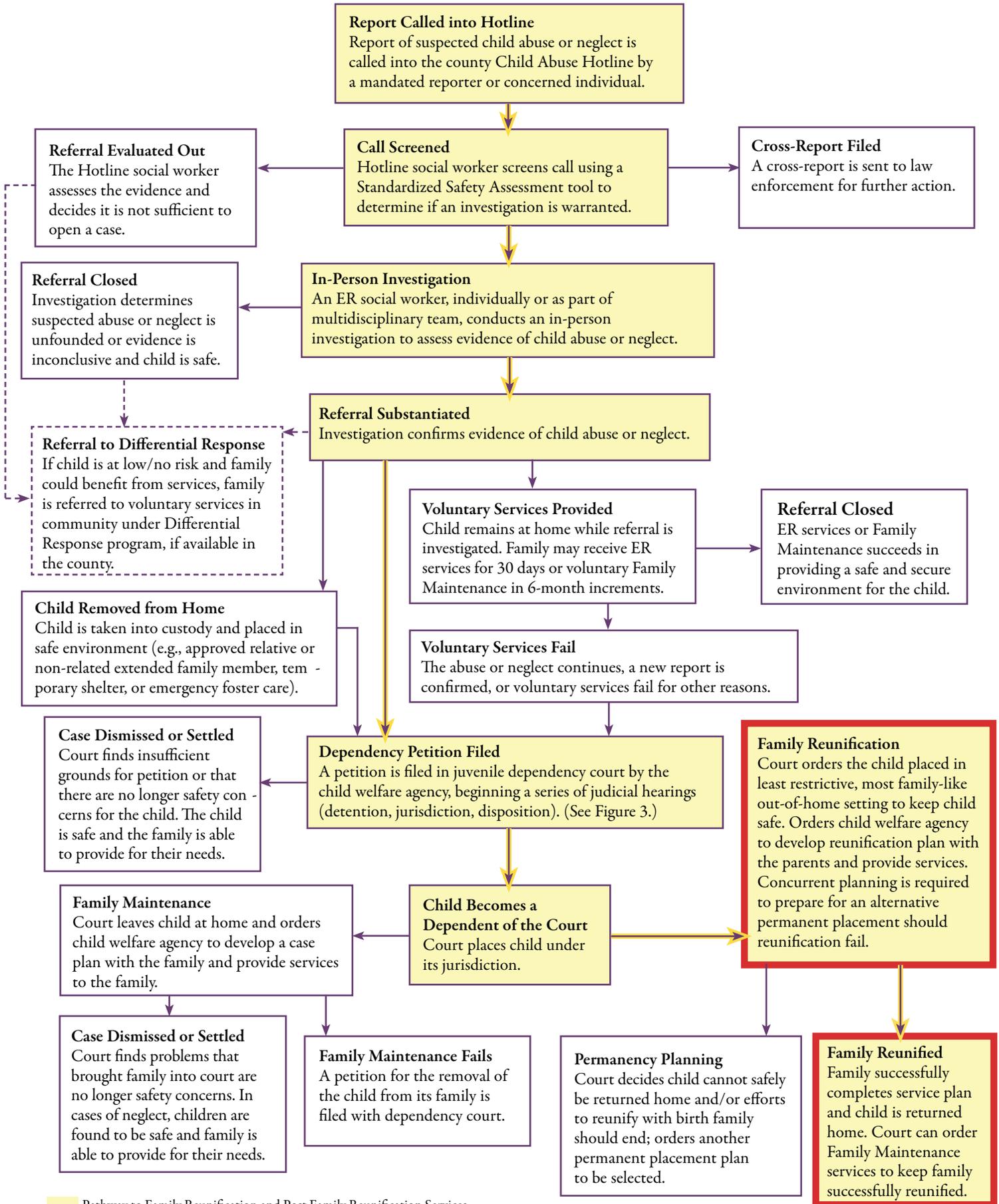
- Voluntary Family Reunification
- Court-Ordered Family Reunification
- Permanency Planning

If the child is placed in out-of-home care, the Child Welfare Social Worker will work with the child and family to develop a case plan with a goal to return the child home, and concurrently the Child Welfare Social Worker will develop a permanency plan of guardianship or adoption if the child is unable to be returned home. The Child Welfare Social Worker is responsible for reporting the progress of the family to the Juvenile Dependency Court every six months until the child can be returned, or placed in a permanent home. If a child remains in care and turns 18 years of age, s/he will be eligible for extended foster care services up until age 20.

The following page depicts the flow through the child welfare system highlighting activities and structures that are particularly relevant to the Child Welfare Council.

⁴Excerpted from DRAFT The Core Practice Model Guide, CDSS & DHCS 12.14.12.

Going Through the Child Welfare System⁵



Yellow box: Pathway to Family Reunification and Post Family Reunification Services
Red box: Population Target of the Prioritization Project

⁵Excerpted from: Understanding The Child Welfare System in California: A Priming for Service Providers and Policy Makers, June 2009.