



*Taking a Closer Look  
at the Reduction  
in Entry Rates  
for Children in  
Sacramento County  
with an Emphasis  
on African American  
Children*

*A Spotlight on Practice*

JANUARY 2013



sacramento  
*county*

# acknowledgements

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The Research Services Department at Casey Family Programs led the effort to produce an objective report. This work was independent of other collaborations between Sacramento County CPS and Casey Family Programs.

This report is also available on the Casey Family Program's website [casey.org](https://www.casey.org)

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## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

Sacramento County believes that children fare best when they can be raised safely at home with their families. For that reason, one of the goals of Sacramento County Child Protective Services (CPS) is to safely reduce the number of children in foster care by finding them permanent homes. All residents of Sacramento County benefit from a safe reduction in foster care because children who grow up in safe and healthy families have a better chance to mature into successful adults who will help build and sustain strong communities.

Between 2006 and 2010, Sacramento County has become more aligned with California in the rate of children entering foster care. Entry rates in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (55%) within this time, from 7.43 to 3.35 per 1,000 children. From 2006 to 2009, however, African American children in Sacramento County entered foster care at rates higher than for African American children statewide. In 2010, that trend reversed itself as the entry rate in Sacramento County for African American children actually dropped below the statewide rate. This was remarkable considering that in 2006 the gap between the county and the state was substantial. In 2006, African American children in Sacramento County entered foster care at a rate of 20.48 per 1,000 children, compared to 11.70 for the rest of California. In 2010, Sacramento County's entry rate had dropped to 9.65, compared to 11.16 for the rest of California. In sum, between 2006 and 2010, the rate of African American children entering foster care in Sacramento County decreased an impressive 53 percent. In comparison, the statewide decrease for those same years was 5 percent.

Sacramento County's reductions in foster care entry rates have occurred around the same time it has implemented several innovative child welfare practices and policies. The majority of those innovative practices are designed to improve services for all children and families in Sacramento County, regardless of race or ethnicity. Some, however, have focused specifically on African American children and families. Either way, all families benefit from improved practices and policies.

*After analyzing the data and considering the timing of the practice improvements, it is believed that the evidence is strong that a series of practice and policy improvements have been instrumental in reducing the number of African American children entering foster care in Sacramento County.*

The purpose of this report is to document the events that occurred over time and how they may have impacted the reductions in foster care entry rates that are seen through Sacramento County trend data. The report presents:

- A contextual overview of racial disproportionality and disparity.
- Sacramento County's Theory of Change.

- Event Timelines depicting changes to funding, staffing and practice/policy.
- An extensive analysis of Sacramento's County entry rate and recurrence trend data.

The next steps for Sacramento County to continue to achieve safe reduction of children entering foster care.

## Context on National Racial Disproportionality and Disparity

Child welfare agencies use the term *disproportionality* to describe the overrepresentation of some children of color in the child welfare system, relative to their proportions in the general population. The terms *disproportionality* and *disparity* sometimes are used interchangeably, but their definitions are distinct:

**“Disproportionality** refers to the differences in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the county as compared to the percentage of the children of the same group in the child welfare system.”<sup>1</sup> For example, in 2011 African American children made up approximately 14 percent of the children in this country but 27 percent of the children in the child welfare system.<sup>2,3</sup>

**“Disparity** means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. This can be observed in many forms including decision points (e.g., reporting, investigation, substantiation, foster care placement, exit, treatment, services, or resources). Research shows that children of color in foster care and their families are treated differently from — and often not as well as — Caucasian children and their families in the system. For example, fewer African American children receive mental health services even though the identified need for this type of service may be as great (or greater) for African Americans as for other racial or ethnic groups.”<sup>4</sup>

With early reports and recent literature reviews outlining a comprehensive yet contradictory view of the situation, many child welfare agencies are concluding that the outcomes reflecting numerical differences occur because of **multiple factors**, including greater needs among certain racial groups and inequitable access to services for some racial groups.<sup>5,6</sup>

Within child welfare services, there has been some evidence of unjust, unnecessary or unequal treatment resulting from biased decision-making, institutional racism and other related factors, which affect quality, access and utilization of services.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, *parent and family risk factors*, *community risk factors*, and *organizational and systemic factors* may influence what services certain families receive, including foster care, as well as the relative effectiveness of certain strategies to improve racial equity.<sup>8</sup> Additional information about the disproportionate rate of African American children in child welfare is provided in Appendix A.

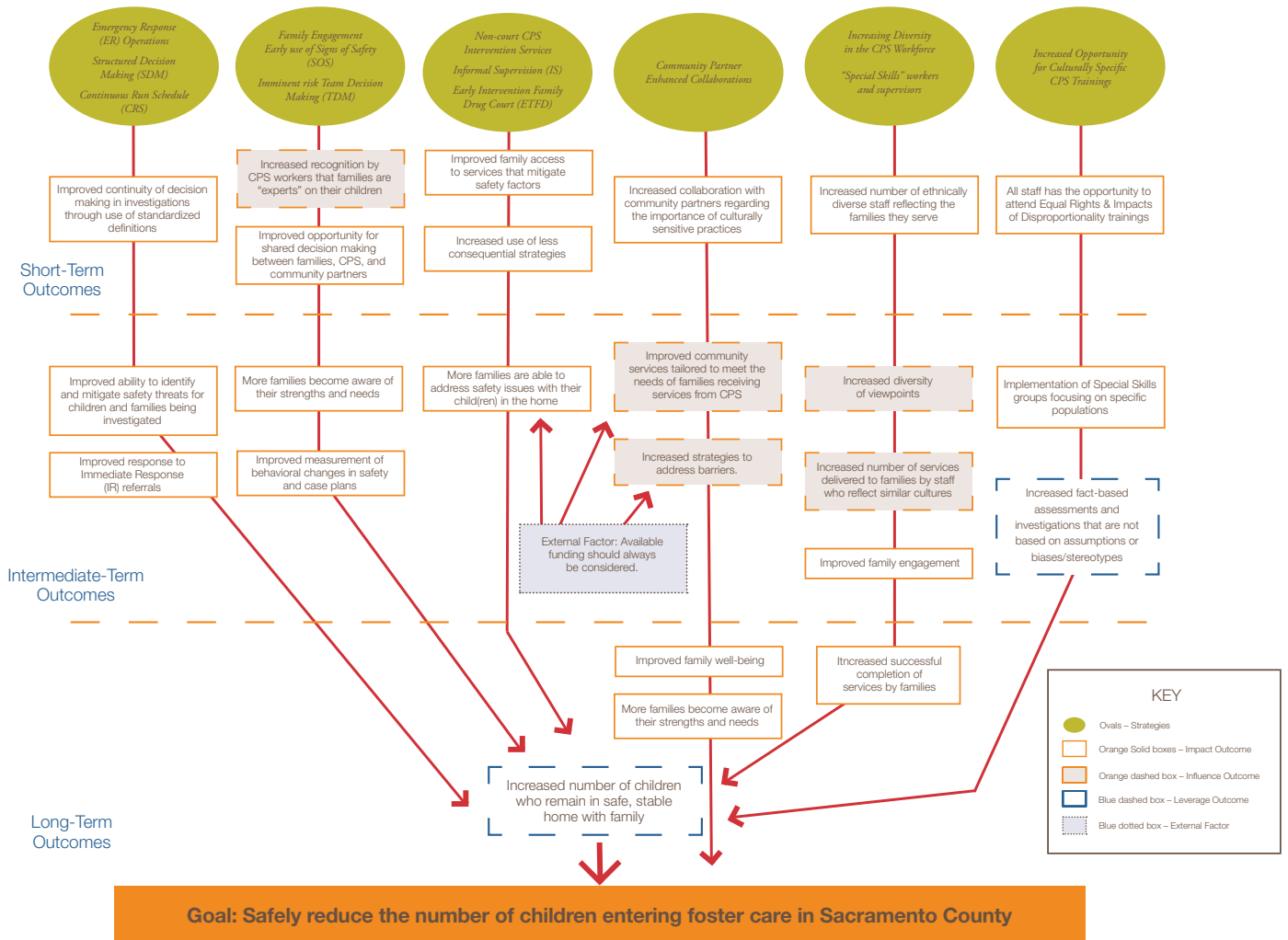
A goal of Sacramento County child welfare leaders and staff is to establish solid strategies that safely reduce the number of *all children* entering foster care, with the idea that those effective strategies will also lower the entry rate of children of color.

## Theory of Change

A Theory of Change, a type of logic model, visually describes the path to reach an ultimate goal. In Sacramento County, that goal is to safely reduce the number of children entering foster care. A Theory of Change provides a picture of strategies put in place to achieve outcomes that lead to that goal. Sacramento County had a preexisting logic model that identified safely reducing the number of children entering foster care as one of their outcomes. This Theory of Change was developed by Sacramento County CPS (see below and Appendix D).

[Click here to see larger chart](#)

### Sacramento County Child Protective Services: Theory of Change for Impacting Entries into Foster Care





## Key Strategies

Strategies (indicated by ovals in the Theory of Change) set the path for achieving the goal. Sacramento identified six key strategies:

1. Emergency Response (ER) Operations, which includes Structured Decision Making® (SDM) and the use of a Continuous Run Schedule (CRS).<sup>9,10</sup>
2. Family Engagement, which employs Signs of Safety® and Imminent Risk Team Decision Making (TDM) strategies.
3. Non-court CPS Intervention Services, which includes Informal Supervision (IS) and Early Intervention Family Drug Court (EIFDC).
4. Community partner enhanced collaborations.
5. Increasing diversity in the CPS workforce.
6. Increased opportunity for culturally specific CPS trainings.

CPS management directly impacts all key strategies, and these strategies cannot be implemented without the full support of CPS leadership. Descriptions of the strategies listed above are provided in the Event Timelines that follow this section.

## Outcomes

Outcomes (indicated by boxes in the Theory of Change) are measurable actions that result from a strategy. Outcomes can be ways to engage community members or even training goals, all of which identify the path that lead to the ultimate goal, also known as the *outcome path*. For example, if a strategy is to engage community partners' then an example of an outcome is to increase community partners' awareness of the importance of culturally sensitive practices.

## Time Terms

- *Short-Term*, which are outcomes that tend to occur first as a result of the strategy.
- *Medium-Term*, which are outcomes that have reached greater scale and benefited from the changes made short term.
- *Long-Term*, which are outcomes that have fully developed over time.

## Impact, Influence, and Leverage

Outcomes are further broken down into three categories: impact, influence and leverage. Sacramento County defined these outcomes as:

- *Impact:* Changes made to the types of CPS services that are provided so that children and families receive the services they need (indicated by solid boxes).
- *Influence:* CPS-created changes in systems and practice that shaped community partners' views, and CPS's staff knowledge and awareness of culturally sensitive practices (indicated by small dashed boxes with gray backgrounds).
- *Leverage:* Community partners' increased investments in CPS and the families they serve, and CPS staff improvements in clinical practice that help families achieve positive outcomes (indicated by large dashed boxes).

## Outcome Paths in Sacramento County's Theory of Change

With strategies and outcomes identified, the pathway for achieving the goal can be drawn; this is called an outcome path (indicated by blue lines connecting outcome boxes). Sacramento County's Theory of Change illustrates the outcome paths that lead to the ultimate goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care. Descriptions of each of the six outcome paths are provided in Appendix B.

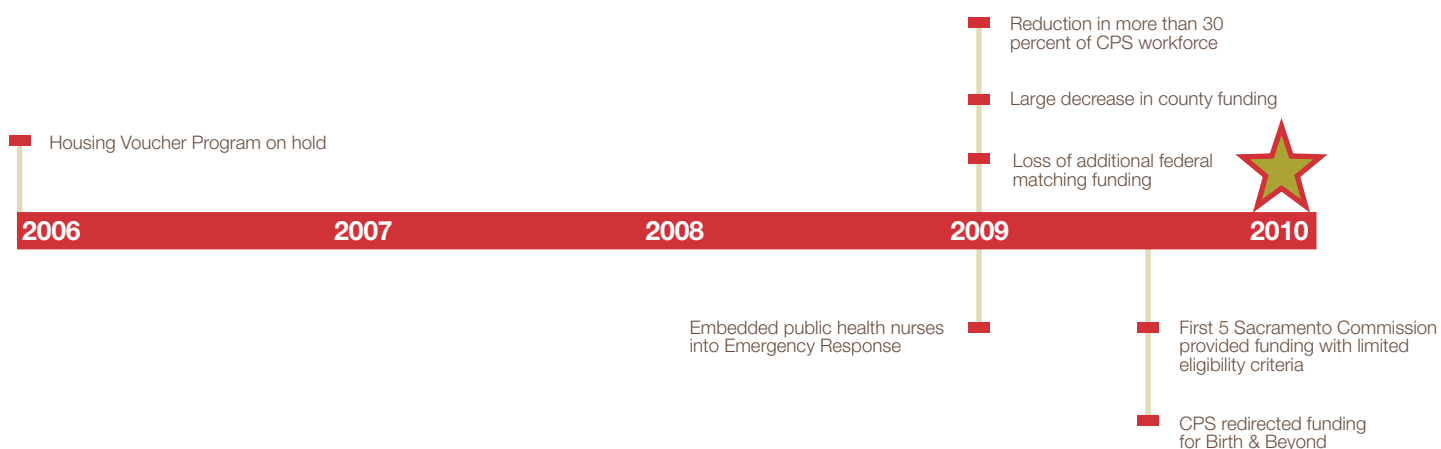
## Event Timelines

The Event Timelines highlight significant events impacting funding, staffing and practice strategies that occurred between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Child Protective Services (CPS). The lowest rate of children entering foster care in Sacramento County within this time period occurred in 2010 and is indicated by a blue star on the timeline. Some strategies presented below may not be reflected in the Theory of Change; however Sacramento County CPS has identified the strategies and events that have occurred as impacting the safe reduction of the number of children entering foster care. A brief historical review of events that occurred in Sacramento prior to 2006 is provided in Appendix C. Event Timelines were developed using information provided by a core working group of Sacramento County CPS staff comprised of multiple levels of leadership, including managers and supervisors. Data shown in Event Timelines were provided by Sacramento County CPS.

## Funding

In fiscal year 2009 to 2010, CPS redirected a significant amount of funding for Birth and Beyond (B&B) Community Response, which was a free program that supported new mothers (Figure 1). B&B's primary goal was to prevent child abuse and neglect by providing prevention services through home visitation and Family Resource Centers.<sup>11</sup> As a result of CPS Budget changes, First 5 Sacramento Commission funding was secured as an avenue to maintain B&B services, however as a result eligibility had to be modified to only include children between the ages of 0 and 5 years.

Figure 1. 2006-2010 Sacramento County Event Timeline: Funding



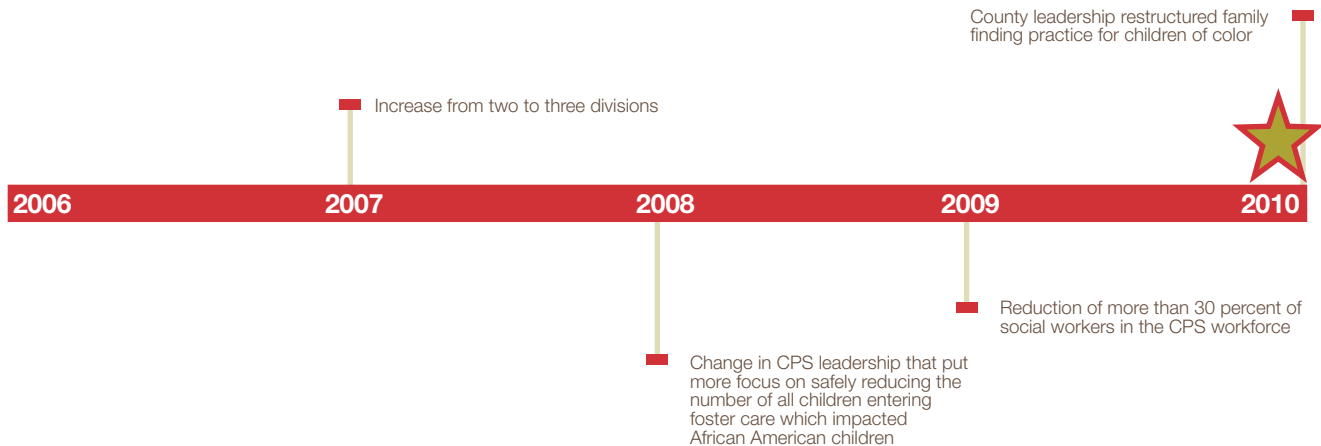
CPS is normally funded through a combination of federal, state and county dollars. State dollars are capped by an allocation limit. CPS can draw down federal Title IV-E dollars as long as the county provides matching funds. Budget challenges in Sacramento County in 2009 resulted in a Board of Supervisors direction to no longer provide those matching funds when the state allocation limit is reached. As a result, CPS was unable to draw down the federal dollars. In 2009, funding decreased again, impacting not only services but also reducing CPS's workforce by 30 percent (a loss of 150 social work staff) and decreasing the number of public health field nurses.

When Sacramento's Public Health Department decreased the number of field public health nurses in 2009, CPS embedded some of those nurses into CPS's Emergency Response operations. This allowed CPS families to continue to receive public health nurse services, which inform the level and types of interventions that a family needs to keep their children safe.

## CPS Staffing

In 2007, the number of divisions within CPS increased from two to three, which improved the agency's ability to provide consistent oversight on cases (Figure 2). Increases in case oversight lead to more consistent decision-making regarding removing children from their homes.

Figure 2. 2006-2010 Sacramento Event Timeline: Staffing



A change in leadership in 2008 put greater focus on safely reducing the number of children entering foster care with the addition of specific practice strategies such as the California Disproportionality Project, which impacted African American children. This focus required Imminent Risk Team Decision Making (TDM) when families first encounter CPS, and may be at risk of having children removed.

In 2009, with the closure of three community-based CPS offices and the 30 percent reduction in CPS staff, CPS management needed to figure out a way to work effectively with fewer staff. This led them to develop practices that allowed for more objective decision-making in casework, with the goal of eliminating personal bias and improving worker skills. These practices are highlighted in the Practice Strategies section below.

In 2010, county leadership restructured practice so that all children of color received family finding services (searching for extended family so that the relative can provide a safe home for the child). Family finding, which was part of a collaboration with Lilliput (a community-based provider), is a best practice for keeping children safely out of foster care.<sup>12</sup>

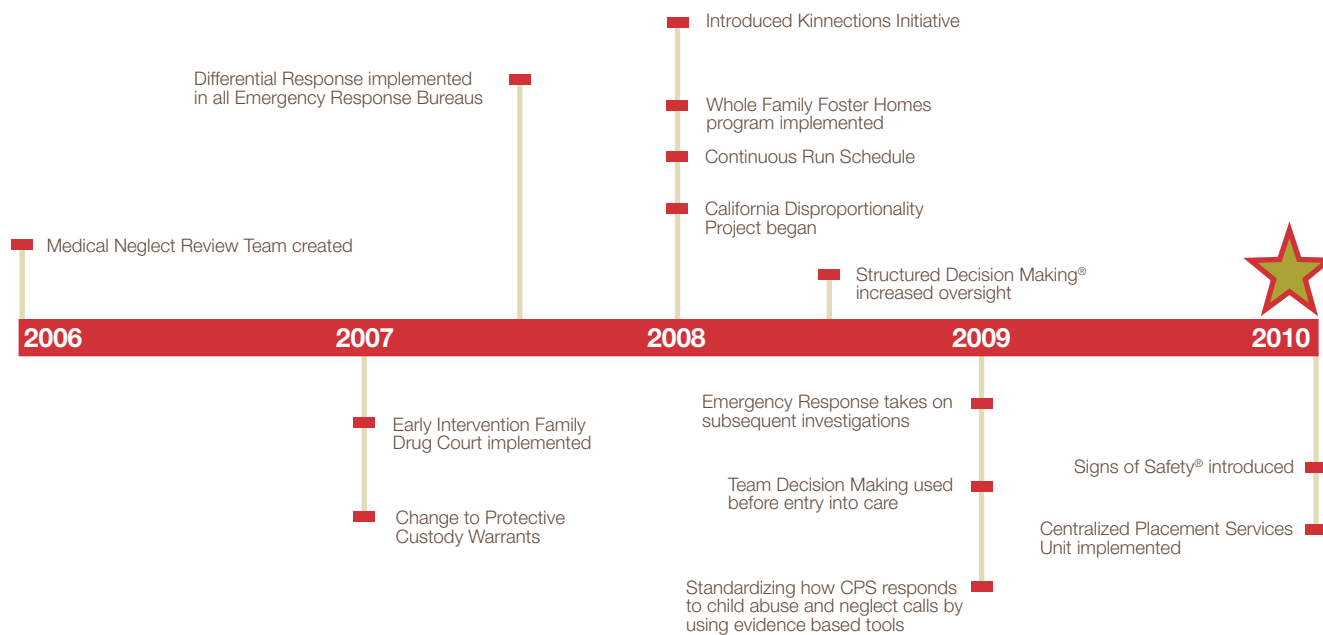
Current CPS leaders support sustaining practice changes that improve outcomes for African American families. They also are committed to increasing awareness of these practices through the education of staff and community partners.

While one could point to a reduction of staff as a result of serving fewer children due to decreased entries; the practice strategies played a pivotal role in enhancing the decision making regarding all children coming into care. It is through this systematic lens that systems improvement resulted in a decrease in entries not just for African American children, but for all children in Sacramento County.

## Practice Strategies

It is important to recognize that it takes time to see changes in outcomes when new practices are implemented. Often changes that impact outcomes are not seen until two to three years after a program has been fully implemented. This delay can be caused by multiple factors such as practitioners becoming competent with a specialized practice, and cultural shifts made in support of a practice. Sacramento's practice strategies are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. 2006-2010 Sacramento County Event Timeline: Practice Strategies



## **Many changes to practice strategies occurred in 2007:**

- Early Intervention Family Drug Court (EIFDC) was implemented, allowing parents to participate in voluntary Informal Supervision services and attend Voluntary Drug Court. EIFDC made it possible for children to remain safely at home while their family received treatment for substance abuse. This program was a collaboration among CPS, Sacramento County's Substance Abuse Treatment System of Care, and Specialized Treatment and Recovery Services (STARS).<sup>13</sup> This practice is still in place.
- Sacramento County staff began seeking a Protective Custody Warrant (PCW) if a child removal is not an exigent matter. In seeking a PCW the social worker files an application for removal with the Juvenile Court. The Juvenile Court reviews the application and makes a determination if removal is in the best interest of the child's safety and well-being. Prior to the request to the court, a team process is used for any decisions regarding removal of a child via a "staffing". The PCW staffing involves the CPS supervisor, program manager and county counsel. This practice allows for critical thinking about safe alternatives to child removal.
- In fiscal year 2007 and 2008, Differential Response's (DR) pilot period concluded and the program was fully implemented in all Emergency Response Bureaus, which encompassed 42 ZIP codes within Sacramento County. DR programming targets families whose children are at risk of entering foster care and provides them with prevention and early intervention services.<sup>14</sup> DR works to build on a family's strengths, identify unsafe behaviors and address them, and teaches families how to keep their children safely at home. In cases where a child is removed from their home, DR engages families in community based resources to help with aftercare supports and services.

## **Many changes to practice strategies occurred in 2008:**

- The Kinnections Initiative provided intensive family finding for African American children entering CPS for the first time and provided supportive services to relative caregivers.<sup>15</sup> This initiative helped prevent African American children from staying in foster care for extended periods of time.
- The Whole Family Foster Homes program began. This practice focused on helping teen parents become self-sufficient, and allowed them to care for their own children as they continued to live in foster care.<sup>16</sup>
- The Continuous Run Schedule (CRS), utilized by Sacramento's Emergency Response (ER) program utilizes a continuous run schedule to respond timely to reports that have been assessed as Immediate Response referrals.
- The California Disproportionality Project, also known as the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative, was a partnership between Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California. This project began in 2008 and addressed

racial disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian children in foster care by raising awareness, providing trainings and engaging the community on this issue.<sup>17</sup> Sacramento County specifically identified Imminent Risk TDMs as a primary strategy to address disproportionality. TDMs are held before a potential child entry into foster care, allowing families to develop a plan to prevent their children from entering foster care.

Between 2008 and 2009, Sacramento increased their oversight and monitoring of Structured Decision Making (SDM). Children's Research Center developed SDM and identified practice elements including: research based assessments, an evidence-based model of practice with families, and coordination of services from providers so that the family's experience is a seamless one.<sup>18</sup>

### **Many changes to practice strategies occurred in 2009:**

- Rather than having caseworkers conduct subsequent maltreatment investigations, Emergency Response (ER) workers – who are better trained in investigation – began taking on that duty. Their ability to conduct more thorough and objective investigations, and their knowledge of community resources for safety planning, decreased the likelihood of children being placed into foster care.
- Imminent Risk TDM was implemented before a potential entry into foster care.
- CPS management put more emphasis on the use of standardized practices to achieve more consistent and objective decision making, reducing the chance of worker or supervisor bias. The process by which reports of abuse and neglect are screened in and became referrals was also standardized by using evidence-based tools.

### **Many changes to practice strategies also occurred in 2010:**

- CPS implemented Vertical Case Management (VCM) where a family has one social worker who remains with the family through the reunification and court-ordered family maintenance periods, and if necessary until the child secures permanency. This strategy strengthens family relationships and eliminates the need of a new social worker to learn family strengths and needs, which can result in the loss of information when transitioning between workers.<sup>19</sup>
- Early exposure to Signs of Safety through Emergency Response (ER) brought a unique strengths-based approach to child welfare work. Signs of Safety strategies support the active engagement of parents in the process of the investigation, helps workers to give the child a voice, and recognize that families are the experts on themselves.<sup>20,21</sup> Signs of Safety improves worker-family rapport, allowing the worker to gather information that helps develop effective safety plans.
- CPS implemented the Centralized Placement Services Unit (CPSU). This shift in practice allowed for one centralized unit to complete all foster care placements for children. This resulted in consistency and helped ensure that all placement options were examined.

## Sacramento County Trend Data

Data provided in this section illustrate trends in foster care entry rates between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County and California State. Data were also stratified by age and racial group to better understand trends for these groups. Although trends in Sacramento's entry rates are encouraging, they should be interpreted carefully. There are external factors (e.g., policy changes, changes in the community) that were not included in the scope of this report. Therefore researchers cannot say for certain that events depicted in the Event Timelines caused the decrease in entry rates. Instead, one can only suggest that these events impacted the decrease. Further examination will be necessary to explore external factors, and identify what community providers and parents believe were key factors in this decrease.

### Where are the Data from?

All data presented in this report were drawn from the public Child Welfare Dynamic Reporting System, which is a joint project of the California Department of Social Services and the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>22</sup> At the time of the data pull, the most recent data available for all indicators for a full year was 2010 data. (Data were extracted during the first quarter of 2012. For data pulled on entry, the data source was Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) 2011 Quarter 4 Extract). Data were examined five years prior to 2010 so that strategies would be relevant.

### California Totals

Statewide entry rates were adjusted by removing Sacramento County data. This was done so Sacramento's data could be compared to all other counties combined.

### Categories Used for Racial Groups

The four racial groups examined in this report were based on codes from the California Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS).<sup>23</sup> American Indian children were not included in this report because relatively small numbers of these children are served, and therefore the data may not be representative of the American Indian population.

### How was the Analysis Conducted?

#### Entry Rates

The statewide entry rate was calculated by dividing the unduplicated state count of children entering foster care by the state child population, and then multiplying by 1,000 (for an entry rate per 1,000 children in the population).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Sacramento's County entry rate was calculated by dividing the unduplicated county count of children entering care by the county child population, and then multiplying by 1,000. If an entry rate is 4.00, for example, this means that four out of every 1,000 children entered



foster care. To be able to compare Sacramento County to all other counties combined, Sacramento County was removed from the California statewide entry rate. (Among all children entering foster care between 2006 and 2010 there was a decline of 54 percent. Among children who spent seven days or less in foster care during the same time period, there was a decline of 72 percent. Among children who spent eight days or more in foster care during the same time period, there was a decline of 51 percent. Data used for these calculations were pulled from the “caseload, entries” report, data source: CES/CWM 2012 quarter 3 extract).

## **Significant Rate Differences**

Statistical tests were used to determine whether the rates between two groups at a single point in time were considered significantly different.<sup>25</sup>

## **Rate Percent Decrease in Entry Rates over Time**

Percent in rate change was used to measure how entry rates have changed over time. Percent in rate change was calculated by taking the difference in rates at two time points, then dividing by the earlier time point, and multiplying by 100.<sup>26</sup> For example, Sacramento County had a large decrease in entry rates between 2006 and 2010, from 7.43 to 3.35, which is a 55 percent decrease in the number of children entering foster care.

## **Entries into Foster Care: Sacramento County and California**

### **Overview**

Over the past five years, Sacramento County has become more aligned with California in the rate of children entering foster care. This alignment over time is shown in Figure 4.

### **Entry Rates**

The entry rate, measured as the number of children entering foster care per 1,000 children in the population, is presented in Table 1.

- Entry rates in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (55%) between 2006 and 2010, from 7.43 to 3.35.
- Entry rates in California have decreased (15%) during this same time period, from 4.05 to 3.44.
- In 2010, there were no statistically significant differences in the rate of entries of children into foster care between Sacramento County (3.35) and California (3.44).

Figure 4. Rate of children entering foster care in Sacramento County and California

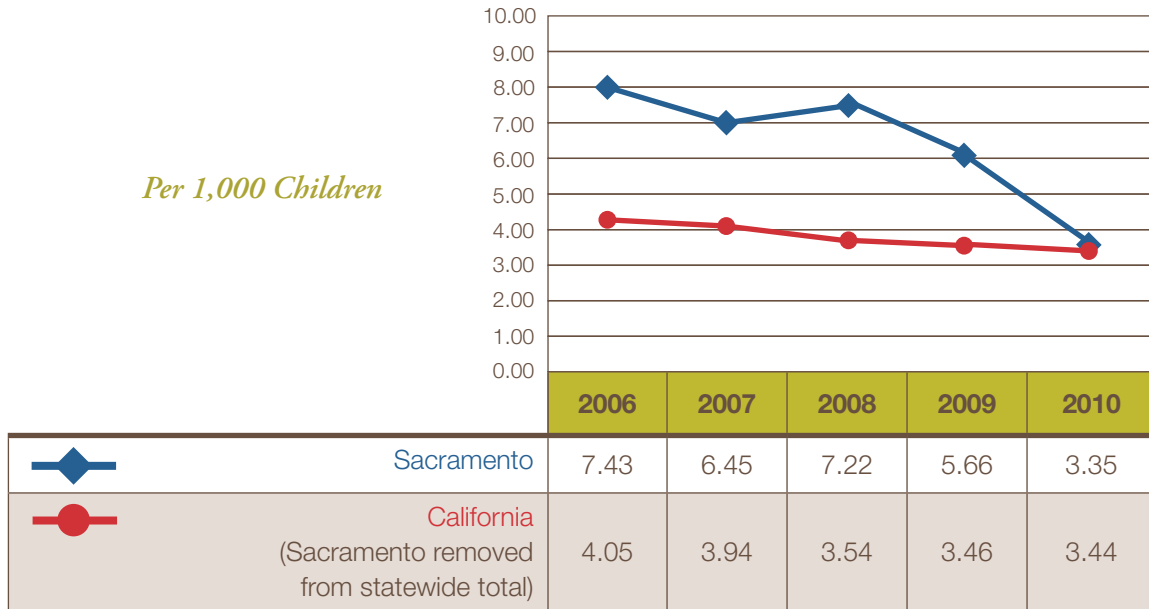


Table 1. Entries into Foster Care: Sacramento County and California

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
Sacramento, AA	2,408	1,113	324,048	332,488	7.43	3.35	55%
California, AA	34,392	29,180	8,496,633	8,491,818	4.05	3.44	15%

2006
  2010

### Events that Account for Improvements in Sacramento County

Multiple practice strategies were put in place that may be drivers for the decline in the rate of children entering foster care (as seen in Figure 4). Some of these strategies include:

- ER begins handling subsequent child maltreatment investigations instead of the ongoing social worker, implemented in 2009.
- Imminent Risk TDM, used before a child enters into foster care, was implemented in 2009.
- CPS standardization of how CPS investigation cases were responded to in 2009.

## Entries into Foster Care, African American Children: Sacramento County and California

### Overview

Figure 5 shows the rate per 1,000 African American children who entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County and California. Over those years, the statewide rate of African American children entering foster care held relatively steady. In Sacramento, however, entries began to decline in 2009, dropping below the statewide rate of 11.16 in 2010 (9.65 in Sacramento).

### Entry Rates

- The entry rate, measured as the number of African American children entering foster care per 1,000 children in the population, is presented in Table 2. Entry rates for African American children in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (53%) between 2006 and 2010, from 20.48 to 9.65.
- Entry rates for African American children in California during this same time period decreased slightly (5%), from 11.70 to 11.16.
- In 2010, the rate of African American children entering foster care was significantly lower in Sacramento County (9.65) compared to California (11.16).

Figure 5. Rate of African American children entering foster care in Sacramento County and California

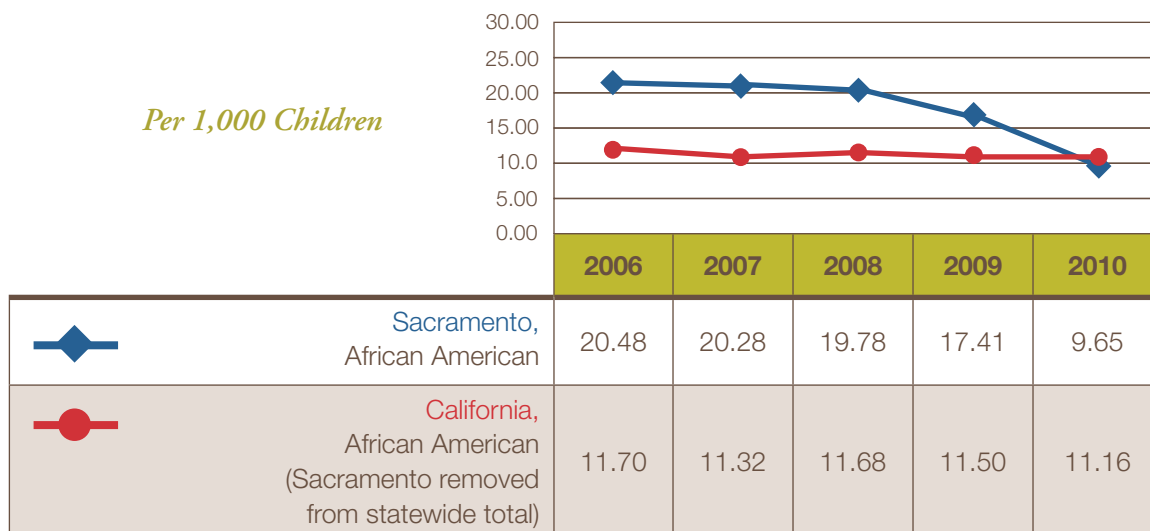


Table 2. Entries into Foster Care, African American Children: Sacramento County and California

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
Sacramento, AA	814	381	39,755	93,472	20.48	9.65	53%
California, AA	6,270	5,404	535,791	484,053	11.70	11.16	5%

2006
  2010

### Events that Account for Improvements in Sacramento County

The practice strategies that were put in place for all children and may have been especially impactful for the decline in the rate of African American children entering foster care (as seen in Figure 5) include:

- California Disproportionality Project, launched in 2008
- Kinnections Initiative, implemented in 2008

### Entries into Foster Care, Children of Various Racial Groups: Sacramento County

#### Overview

Figure 6 shows the rate per 1,000 children who entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County by racial group. Racial groups examined were African American (AA), Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander (API). American Indian children were not included in this report because relatively small numbers of these children are served, and therefore the data are difficult to interpret for meaningful patterns. As mentioned previously, overall entries of children into foster care held relatively steady in Sacramento until 2009, when entries began to decline. These decreases were present in all racial groups examined but were more pronounced for African American children.

## Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of children entering foster care per 1,000 children in the population, is presented in Table 3.

- Entry rates for African American children showed a steady decline (Figure 6), however the greatest rate decreases between 2006 and 2010 occurred among Asian/Pacific Islander children (77%) and Hispanic children (59%).
- Although the rate decreases for African American and Caucasian children (53% and 46%, respectively) were not as high as Asian/Pacific Islander children and Hispanic children, both of these groups had dramatic decreases of over 400 children each.
- In 2010, the rate of children entering foster care was statistically significantly different for African American children (9.65) compared to Caucasian children (3.11), Hispanic children (2.60) and Asian/Pacific Islander children (0.82).

Figure 6. Rate of children entering foster care in Sacramento County by racial group

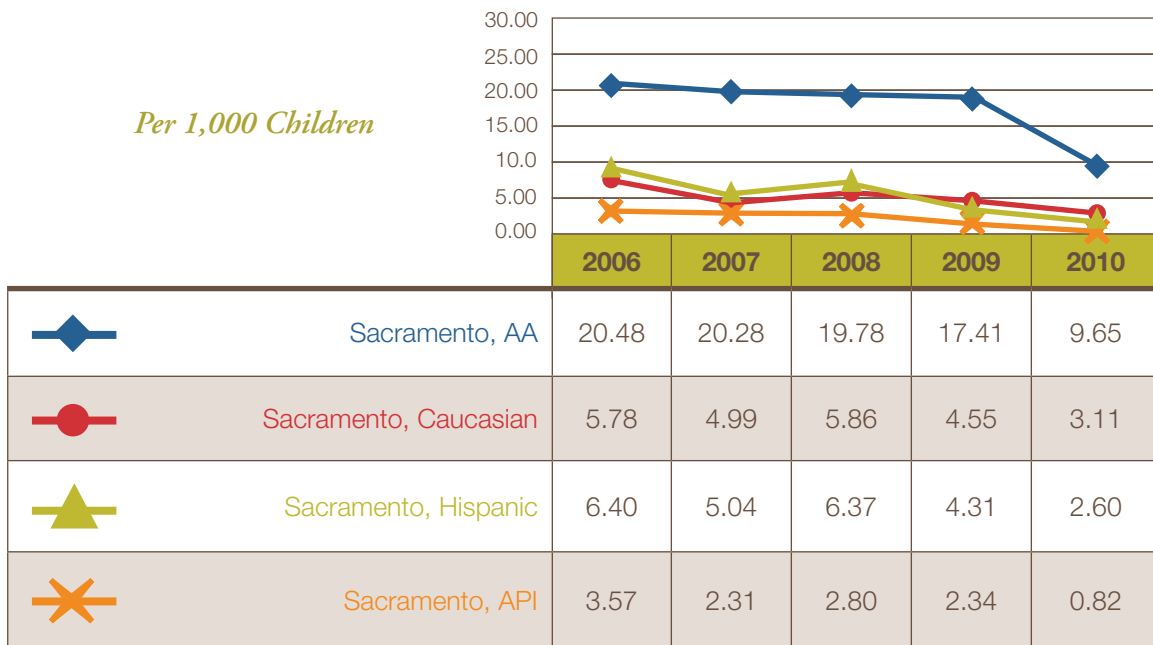


Table 3. Entries into Foster Care, Children of Various Racial Groups: Sacramento County

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
Sacramento, Total	2,408	1,113	324,048	332,488	7.43	3.35	55%
Sacramento, AA	814	381	39,755	39,472	20.48	9.65	53%
Sacramento, Caucasian	803	399	138,972	128,193	5.78	3.11	46%
Sacramento, Hispanic	616	289	96,250	111,074	6.40	2.60	59%
Sacramento, API	175	44	49,071	53,749	3.57	0.82	77%

2006
  2010

Note that conclusions drawn from Figure 6 and Table 3 regarding Asian/Pacific Islander children in Sacramento are limited because relatively small numbers of these families are served.

Between 2006 and 2010, there was a 59% decrease in entry rates for Hispanic children in Sacramento County.

## Entries into Foster Care, Infants: Sacramento County and California

### Overview

Figure 7 shows the rate per 1,000 infants (less than 1 year) who entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County and California. Over the past five years, entry rates for infants in both Sacramento and California have declined. Entries for infants in Sacramento, however, have decreased at a greater rate than in California, and in 2010 became more aligned with the state rate of 11.06 (12.73 in Sacramento).

### Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of infants entering foster care per 1,000 infants in the population, is presented in Table 4.

- Infant entry rates in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (55%) between 2006 and 2010, from 28.02 to 12.73.
- Infant entry rates in California have also decreased (21%) during this same time period, from 14.05 to 11.06.
- In 2010, the rate of infants entering foster care was statistically significantly different in Sacramento County (12.73) compared to California (11.06).

Figure 7. Rate of infants (less than 1 year old) entering foster care in Sacramento County and California

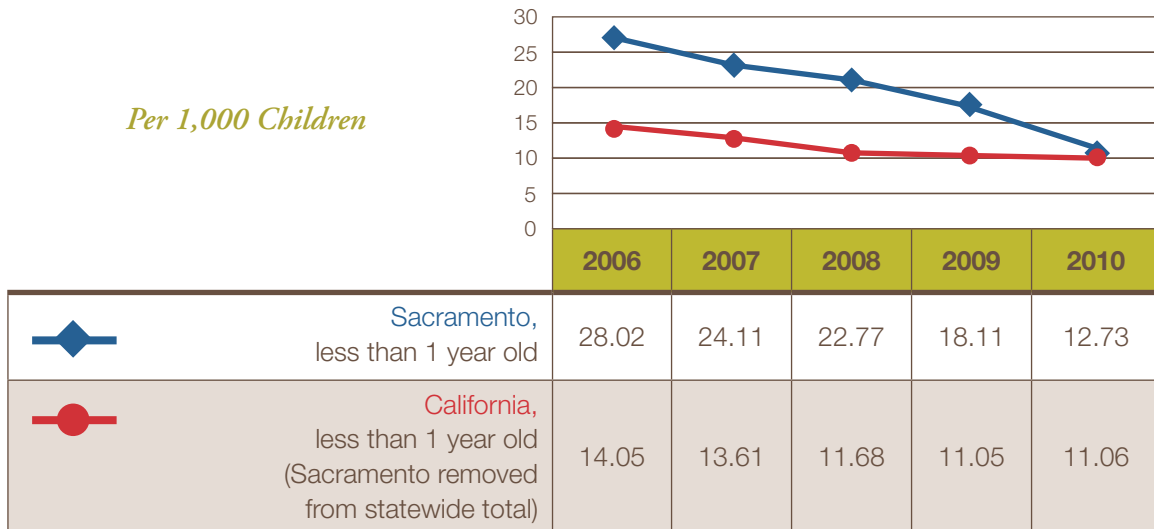




Table 4. Entries Into Foster Care, Infants: Sacramento County and California

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
	2006	2010	2006	2010	2006	2010	
Sacramento, infants	517	246	18,450	19,326	28.02	12.73	55%
California, infants	6,622	5,252	471,341	474,732	14.05	11.06	21%

 2006      2010

Between 2006 and 2010, there was a 55% decrease in entry rates for infants in Sacramento County.

## Entries into Foster Care, African American Infants: Sacramento County and California

### Overview

Figure 8 shows the rate per 1,000 of African American infants (less than 1 year) who entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County and California. Over those years, the statewide rate of infants entering into foster care held relatively steady. In Sacramento, however, entries began to decrease in 2007. Entry rates for African American infants in Sacramento County were much higher than the statewide rates until 2010, when Sacramento's entry rate (42.69) aligned with the statewide rate (42.05).

### Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of African American infants entering foster care per 1,000 infants in the population, is presented in Table 5.

- Entry rates for African American infants in Sacramento County decreased substantially (53%) between 2006 and 2010, from 90.76 to 42.69.
- Entry rates for African American infants in California during this same time period decreased slightly (8%), from 45.57 to 42.05.
- In 2010, there were no statistically significant differences between African American infants entering into foster care in Sacramento County (42.69) and California (42.05).



Figure 8. Rate of African American (AA) infants (less than 1 year old) entering foster care in Sacramento County and California

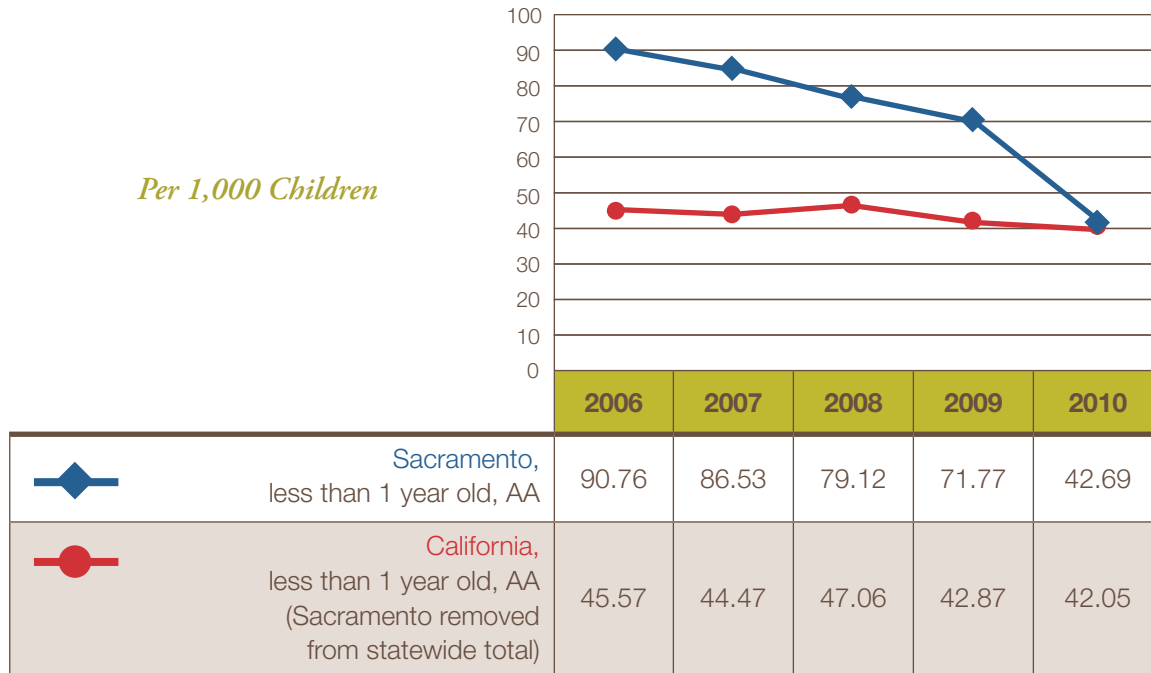


Table 5. Entries into Foster Care, African American Infants: Sacramento County and California

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
	2006	2010	2006	2010	2006	2010	
Sacramento, AA infants	167	80	1,840	1,874	90.76	42.69	53%
California, AA infants	1,414	975	25,040	23,188	45.57	42.05	8%

2006    2010

Between 2006 and 2010, entry rates for African American infants in Sacramento County decreased by 53%.

## Entries into Foster Care, by Age: Sacramento County

### Overview

Figure 9 shows the rate per 1,000 children that entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 by age in Sacramento County. A comparison of infants (less than 1 year) and non-infant children (ages 1 to 17 years) was made. Entry rates in Sacramento have declined for both infants and non-infant children.

### Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of infants and non-infant children entering foster care per 1,000 infants and non-infant children in the population, is presented in Table 6.

- Entry rates for infants in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (55%) between 2006 and 2010, from 28.02 to 12.73, which is a decrease of 271 infants.
- Entry rates for non-infant children in Sacramento County during this same time period showed the same percent decrease (55%), from 5.77 to 2.62, which is a decrease of over 1,000 children.
- In 2010, in Sacramento County, the rate of infants entering foster care (12.73) was statistically significantly different compared to non-infant children (2.62).

Figure 9. Rate of children entering foster care in Sacramento County by age

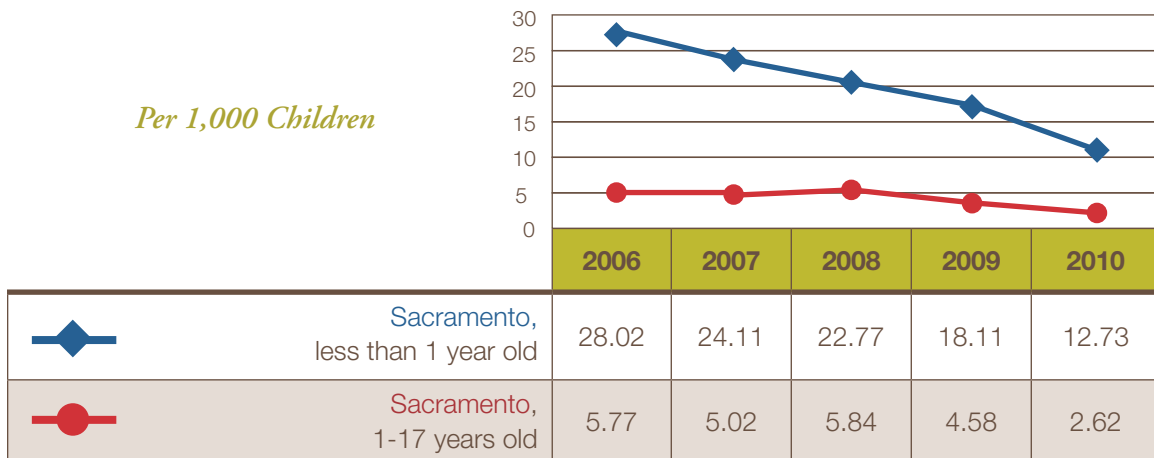


Table 6. Entries into Foster Care, by Age: Sacramento County

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
Sacramento, less than 1 year old	517	246	18,450	19,326	28.02	12.73	55%
Sacramento, 1 to 17 years old	1,930	899	334,476	343,727	5.77	2.62	55%

2006
  2010

Between 2006 and 2010, entry rates for both infants (less than 1 year) and non-infant children (1 to 17 years) in Sacramento County decreased by 55%.

## Entries into Foster Care, Infants by Racial Group: Sacramento

### Overview

Figure 10 shows the rate per 1,000 infants that entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County by racial group. Racial groups examined were African American (AA), Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander (API). American Indian children were not included in this report because relatively small numbers of these children are served, and therefore the data are difficult to interpret for meaningful patterns. As mentioned previously, entries of infants (less than 1 year) into foster care declined steadily in Sacramento from 2006 to 2010. These decreases were present in all racial groups examined but were more pronounced for African American children.

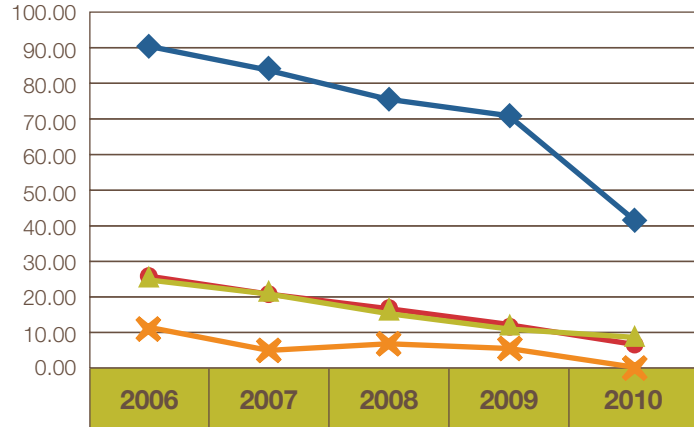
### Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of infants entering foster care per 1,000 infants in the population, is presented in Table 7.

- Entry rates for African American infants have declined substantially (53%), although the greatest decreases were among Asian/Pacific Islander infants (80%) and Hispanic infants (59%).
- In 2010, in Sacramento County, the rate entering foster care was statistically significantly different for African American infants (42.69) compared to Caucasian infants (13.60), Hispanic infants (9.81) and Asian/Pacific Islander infants (2.27). While much progress has been made, the placement rate for African American infants is more than three times higher than for other ethnic groups.

Figure 10. Rate of infants (less than 1 year old) entering foster care in Sacramento County by racial group

*Per 1,000 Children*







	Sacramento, infants, AA	90.76	85.53	79.12	71.77	42.69
	Sacramento, infants, Caucasian	26.40	21.36	21.55	17.04	13.60
	Sacramento, infants, Hispanic	23.67	21.02	18.03	12.51	9.81
	Sacramento, infants, API	11.31	6.29	8.50	7.43	2.27

Table 7. Entries into Foster Care, Infants by Racial Group: Sacramento County

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
Sacramento, infants, Total	509	237	16,696	17,412	30.49	13.61	55%
Sacramento, infants, AA	167	80	1,840	1,874	90.76	42.69	53%
Sacramento, infants, Caucasian	182	88	6,895	6,470	26.40	13.60	48%
Sacramento, infants, Hispanic	134	63	5,660	6,424	23.67	9.81	59%
Sacramento, infants, API	26	6	2,298	2,644	11.31	2.27	80%

2006    
  2010

Note that conclusions drawn from Figure 10 and Table 7 regarding Asian/Pacific Islander children in Sacramento are limited because relatively small numbers of these families are served and thus the trends may not be statistically reliable.

Between 2006 and 2010, there was a 59% decrease in entry rates for Hispanic infants in Sacramento County.

## Entries into Foster Care, African American Children by Age: Sacramento County

### Overview

Figure 11 shows the rate per 1,000 African American children that entered foster care between 2006 and 2010 in Sacramento County. A comparison of infants (less than 1 year) and non-infant children (ages 1 to 17 years) was made. Entry rates in Sacramento declined for both African American infants and non-infant children.

## Entry Rates

The entry rate, measured as the number of African American infants and non-infant children entering foster care per 1,000 in the population, is presented in Table 8.

- Entry rates for African American infants in Sacramento County decreased substantially (53%) between 2006 and 2010, from 90.76 to 42.69, which is a decrease of almost 100 infants.
- Entry rates for African American children in Sacramento during this same time period showed the same decrease (53%), from 17.06 to 8.01, which is a decrease of almost 350 children.
- During 2010, in Sacramento County, the rate entering foster care was statistically significantly different for African American infants (42.69) compared to African American non-infant children (8.01).

Figure 11. Rate of African American (AA) children entering foster care in Sacramento County by age

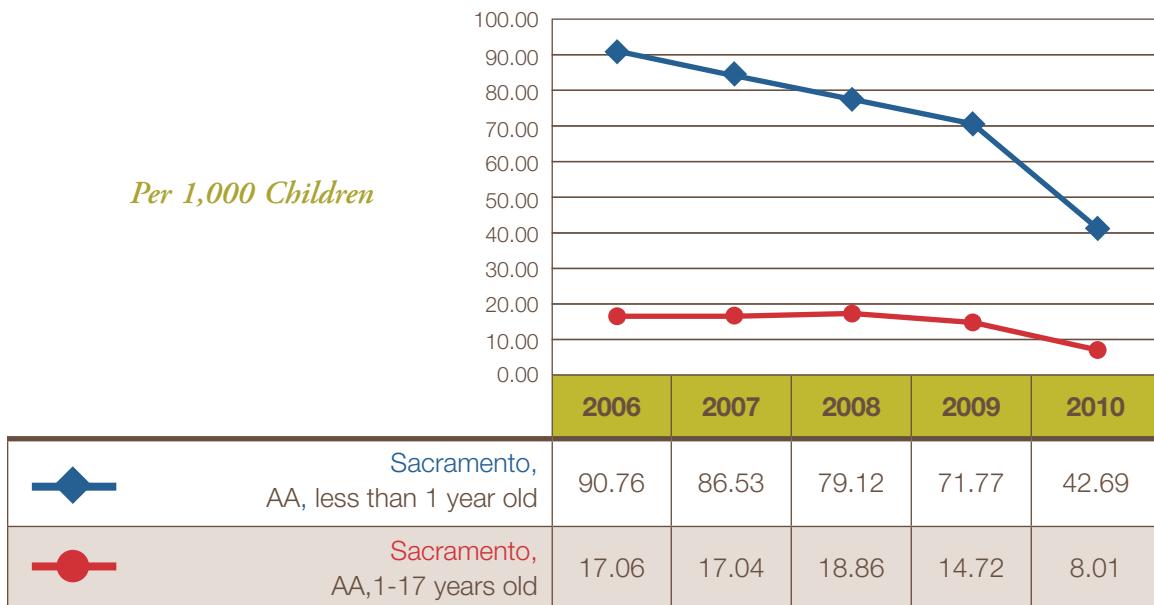


Table 8. Entries into Foster Care, African American Children by Age: Sacramento County

group	entries		child population		rate per 1,000		rate percent decreased from 2006 to 2010
	2006	2010	2006	2010	2006	2010	
Sacramento, AA, less than 1 year old	167	80	1,840	1,874	90.76	42.69	53%
Sacramento, AA, 1 to 17 years old	647	301	37,975	37,598	17.06	8.01	53%

2006    
  2010

Between 2006 and 2010, there was a 53% decrease in entry rates for both African American infants (less than 1 year) and African American non-infant children (1 to 17 years) in Sacramento County.

## Recurrence of Child Maltreatment: Sacramento County and California

When foster care entry rates decrease substantially, it is important to assess if the children who continue to be raised at home with parents or relatives remain safe, in addition to examining the safety of children who were removed from their home. ***Through examination of the recurrence of child maltreatment data, it appears that children in Sacramento County are as safe as – or more safe than – they are statewide, even as foster care rates are being reduced dramatically in the county. This is an encouraging sign that the foster care reduction occurring in Sacramento County is a safe reduction.***

### Overall Maltreatment Recurrence Rates

Recurrence data were pulled using the “Allegations, Recurrent of Allegations” report, data source: CWS/CMS 2012 Quarter 3 extract. Data were only pulled until the end of 2010 to be consistent with data pulled for entry data. This report was used so recurrence data for children who were investigated but stayed at home could be examined. Data were verified using “S1.1. No recurrence of maltreatment” report data, and although numbers vary slightly, the trends remain the same.

The maltreatment recurrence rates reflect the percentage of children who had more than one substantiated allegation of maltreatment within a six-month period.<sup>27</sup> Data were examined between 2006 and 2010, comparing Sacramento County to California. This measure was also examined by racial group, specifically focusing on African American children.

Allegation dispositions drawn from the public Child Welfare Dynamic Reporting System included the following types:<sup>28</sup>

- *Unfounded* means that a report was determined to be false, inherently improbable, an accidental injury, or not considered child abuse or neglect.
- *Substantiated* means that a report was determined to constitute child abuse or neglect.
- *Inconclusive* means that a report was determined not to be unfounded, but that the findings were inconclusive and that there was insufficient evidence to determine whether child abuse or neglect occurred.
- *Evaluate out* indicates that an allegation was made that does not rise to the level of child abuse or neglect.<sup>29</sup>
- *No recurrence* indicates children had no subsequent allegation during the six-month follow-up period.<sup>30</sup>

For this analysis, a measure similar to the federal measure for the absence of repeat maltreatment was examined. The federal measure is defined as a measurement of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first six months of the year. In other words, this is the percentage of children who **did not** have another substantiated or indicated report within a six-month period. For this report, the denominator was calculated by adding children with no subsequent allegations to children with all disposition types except substantiated.

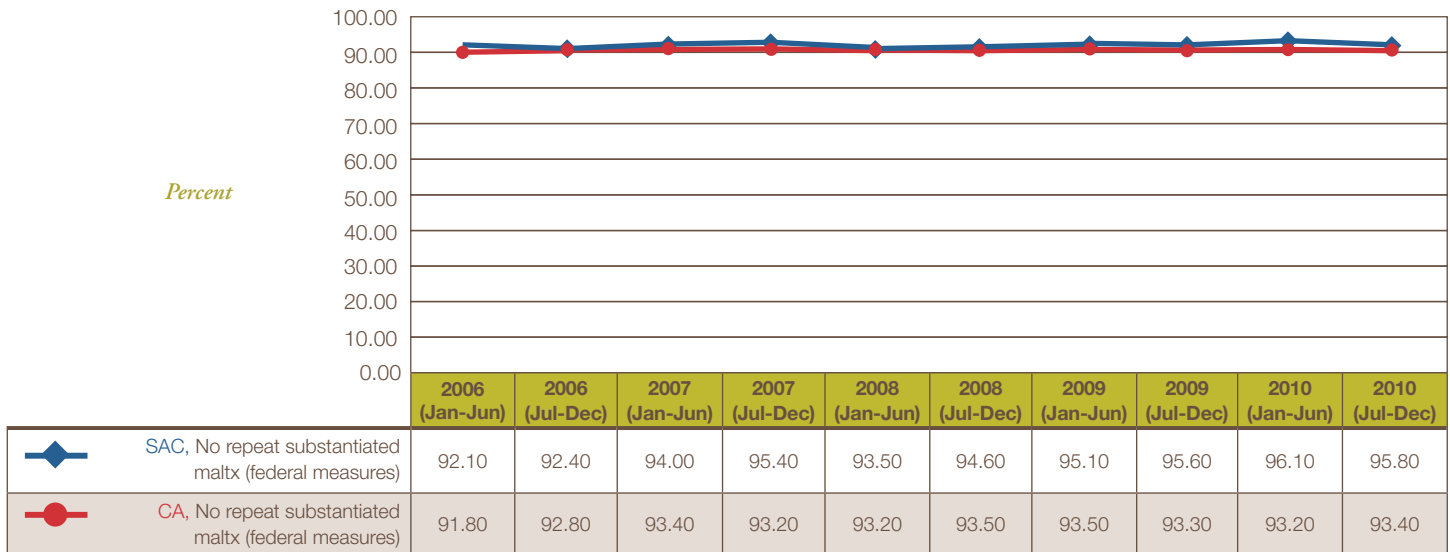
### **Comparing the Absence of Maltreatment Recurrence for Children in Sacramento County to California State between 2006 and 2010**

The Child Welfare Dynamic Reporting System provides an option to compare recurrence of maltreatment for children who stayed at home to the same measure for all children. This comparison is helpful to explore whether children who are remaining at home post-investigation may be as safe as those who have been removed from their home.

Figure 12 shows the percentage of children who had no repeat substantiated maltreatment recurrence within a six month period for Sacramento County and California. Trends for both Sacramento County and California State did not differ significantly. Data were further examined by race, specifically African American children, and by children who were investigated but stayed at home; all trends remained the same and were very similar to Figure 12.



Figure 12. Percent of No Repeat Substantiated Maltreatment Recurrence within 6 Months for Sacramento County and California.



### Children remaining safely at home

Children who were investigated and stayed at home are of particular interest when ensuring that children remain safely at home. When examining *all children* who stayed at home in Sacramento County, the percent of children with no repeat substantiated maltreatment (federal measure) between 2006 and 2009 ranged between 90.00% and 96.20%. In early 2010, the percent was 96.50% and by the end of the year it was 94.50%. When examining all *African American children* who stayed at home in Sacramento County, the percent of no repeat substantiated maltreatment (federal measure) between 2006 and 2009 ranged between 91.90% and 95.20%. In early 2010, the rate was 96.60% and by the end of the year it was 94.30%. The data suggest that there was a very slight decrease in the percent of children with no repeat substantiated maltreatment for children who were investigated and remained at home, however, this difference was not statistically significant.

## Services and Programs that Help Keep Children Safe at Home

There is often a misconception that child welfare departments are solely responsible for keeping children safe; in actuality, families and communities have substantial impact on children's safety. What a department can do, however, is educate and provide families and communities with tools so that they can keep their children safe at home. Different strategies and tools that Sacramento County uses to educate and provide tools to families and community members so that **they** can keep their children safe include but are not limited to:

- **Birth & Beyond Family Resource Centers (FRC's)** are based within the communities in which families reside and may include:
  - o Home visitation services for parents and their children under the age of six
  - o Five different evidence-based and court-approved parenting curricula
  - o Safe Sleeping and Car Seat Safety Workshops
  - o Mental/behavioral health referrals
  - o Health educator services
  - o Help to meet concrete needs such as assistance with food, diapers, clothing, and bus passes
  - o Parent Leadership training
  - o Access to a 24-Hour Parent Support Line
- **Crisis Nursery Program** where families can take their children to be safely cared for while parents are dealing with other life issues (e.g., domestic violence, emotional distress, hospitalization, brief incarceration).<sup>31</sup>
- **Pregnant and Parenting Teen groups:** Sacramento County has worked collaboratively with a pregnant and parenting group which is led by the dependent children's counsel, Children's Law Center (CLC).<sup>32</sup> The groups work with teen mothers to ensure that their children receive necessary services so that they stay safely with parents at home and stay out of the child welfare system. Some of the community resources that mothers are connected to are:
  - o Nurse-Family Partnership<sup>33</sup>
  - o Birth & Beyond
  - o Whole Family Foster Homes
  - o Sutter Women's Services<sup>34</sup>
  - o Child Abuse Prevention Council
  - o The Adolescent Family Life Program, which is a program provided by Sutter Women's Services<sup>35</sup>
- **Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) Resource Specialists** are co-located at the CPS Intake hotline to provide direct linkages for families who do not meet the threshold for an in-person CPS investigation to community resources, many of which are mentioned above.

- **Domestic Violence programs** which address multiple components related to issues surrounding family violence.
- **24-Hour Crisis Lines:**
  - o Parent Support Line is a hotline that provides parents who have parenting concerns or challenges a place to call and consult with a professional on all types of parenting challenges.<sup>36</sup>
  - o California Youth Crisis Line provides referrals and resources for transitional age youth, and will assist securing counseling services to prevent family situations from escalating to the level of requiring Child Welfare intervention.<sup>37</sup>
- **Culturally-based advocacy** including local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition of Service Providers, and the Mexican Consulate.<sup>38</sup>
- **Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Programs** help address housing needs in many communities and neighborhoods of Sacramento County.
- **Alta California Regional Center** provides assistance to persons with developmental disabilities, infants at risk and their families.<sup>39</sup>

## Summary of Findings and Next Steps

### Strategies that Made a Difference

Sacramento County's reductions in foster care entry rates have occurred around the same time it has implemented several innovative child welfare practices and policies. The majority of those innovative practices are designed to improve services for all children and families in Sacramento County, regardless of race or ethnicity. Some, however, have focused specifically on African American children and families. Either way, African American children and families appear to be major beneficiaries of the changes in practices and policies.

Innovative child welfare practices that may have helped improve entry rates are listed below:

- **Differential Response (DR) implemented in all Emergency Response bureaus.** DR programming targets families whose children are at risk of entering foster care and provides them with prevention and early intervention services. DR works to build on a family's strengths, identify unsafe behaviors and address them, and teaches families how to keep their children safely at home. In cases where a child is removed from their home, DR engages families in community based resources to help with aftercare supports and services.
- **Support from CPS leadership to expand their focus of safely reducing the number of all children entering foster care to also include a special focus on African American children.** Having support from management that identified work in this area as a priority was

necessary in the beginning to promote a culture shift in CPS values and clinical practice. Additionally, when leadership identified the need for focusing on African American children, it allowed staff to create workgroups and begin focusing on how they can impact the safe reduction of entries into foster care for African American children.

- **The California Disproportionality Project that addressed racial disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian children in foster care.** This project focused on raising awareness, providing trainings and engaging the community on this issue. This provided child welfare workers and community partners an opportunity to gain a better understanding of racial disproportionality and disparity. This likely helped workers to become more aware of their own biases, which may have changed how and what types of services were delivered to African American and American Indian children. A possible result from this project, is that providers may have modified existing programs to be more culturally competent, thus allowing for better engagement of African American and American Indian children and families. When services are more culturally competent and are provided in a more effective and respectful manner, families are likely to be receptive to services and to making permanent changes to keep their children safely at home.
- **Imminent Risk Team Decision Making (TDM) used preventively before a child enters foster care.** When TDMs are used at a family's first encounter with CPS, the process allows families to develop a plan to prevent their children from entering foster care. One of the strengths of TDMs is acknowledging families as experts on themselves, and as a result, they need to be included in the decision making. Through this process families identify family needs and work with a group of child welfare workers and community partners to develop a plan to address these needs. When families feel respected and engaged in their plans, they are more likely to follow through with them. This new focus on reduction likely impacted the safe reduction of African American children entering foster care.
- **CPS practices became more standardized.** Leadership emphasized the use of standardized practices to achieve more consistent and objective decision making, reducing the chance of worker or supervisor bias. How reports of abuse and neglect screened in and became referrals was also standardized. This standardization of practice improved the likelihood that all children and families would be treated equally, which may have impacted the decrease in entries into foster care for all children, specifically children of color.

## Trend Data Highlights between 2006 and 2010

Through the examination of Sacramento County and California State trend data on entry rates into foster care between 2006 and 2010, several key findings emerged:

### Sacramento County Compared with California State

- Entry rates for all children in Sacramento County have decreased substantially (55%) compared to California State which has only shown a decrease of 15 percent during the same time frame.

- The rate of African American children entering foster care in Sacramento County decreased by an impressive 53 percent. In comparison, California State's rate decrease for those same years was five percent.

### **Trends by Racial Group**

- Entry rates for African American children in Sacramento County declined rapidly (53%). However, the greatest rate decreases during the same time period occurred among Asian/Pacific Islander children (77%) and Hispanic children (59%).

### **Trends by Age**

- The rate of infants entering foster care in Sacramento County decreased an impressive 55 percent, which is a decrease of almost 300 infants. In comparison, California State's rate decreased 21 percent during the same time point.
- Entries for infants in Sacramento County have decreased at a greater rate when compared to California State, and in 2010 became more aligned with the state rate of 11.06 (12.73 in Sacramento).
- Entry rates for non-infant children in Sacramento County during this same time period showed a similar decrease of 55 percent, which is over 1,000 children.

### **Trends by Racial Group and Age**

- Entries for African American infants began to decrease in 2007, and continued to decline until 2010 when Sacramento's rate (42.69) aligned with the statewide rate (42.05).
- The rate of African American infants entering foster care in Sacramento County decreased by 53 percent, which is nearly 350 children. In comparison, the statewide rate decreased only eight percent during the same time point.
- While much progress has been made, the placement rate for African American infants is more than three times higher than for other ethnicity groups.
- Although entry rates for African American infants in Sacramento County declined, the greatest decreases were among Asian/Pacific Islander infants (80%) and Hispanic infants (59%).

### **Summary of Findings**

Note that in examining very recent data, there was a small but statistically significant increase in the rate of African American children entering foster care in 2012 as compared to the rate for 2010 (from 9.65 per thousand to 11.22 per thousand), but the rate is still very much below what it was in 2006-2008. In terms of child safety, there was no statistical difference in the percent of no repeat maltreatment between 2010 and 2012. This is one indicator that child safety has not been affected by a reduction in foster care entry rates.

After analyzing the data and considering the timing of the practice improvements, it is believed that a series of practice and policy improvements may have been drivers in reducing the number of African American children entering foster care in Sacramento County. Even more encouraging is that child maltreatment recurrence data did not change significantly over the past five years, even when entries into foster care decreased in Sacramento County.

If the reduction of children entering foster care was related to children remaining in an unsafe home, one would expect to see a decline in performance on the indicator associated with the absence of repeat maltreatment. However, this did not happen. It is important to note that this indicator only measures allegations that are substantiated. While good performance on this indicator does not guarantee the safety of children, declining performance would indicate an area of concern. The fact that performance has remained stable indicates that children are not experiencing more recurrent maltreatment due to an increased focus on in-home services.

## Areas of Further Study

- **Exploration of external factors.** There are external factors (e.g., policy changes, changes in the community) that were not included in the scope of this report. Therefore, we cannot say for certain that events depicted in the Event Timelines caused the decrease in entry rates into foster care, and rather can only suggest that these events largely impacted the decrease. Further study is necessary to explore external factors.
- **Identify what community partners and parents attribute to the decline.** Interviews with key stakeholders in CPS and the community, in addition to parents, would help to shed light on some of these external factors and also further highlight impactful CPS practice and be a nice addition to further this work.
- **Examination of other disparities in child welfare.** Further examine any remaining disparities in child welfare and related community services to have a deeper understanding of unmet needs or barriers to strong families, before further actions are taken. For example, exploring the disproportionality of underreporting based on racial groups at local hospitals.

## Next Steps

Sacramento County remains committed to examining key strategies and practices that can safely reduce the rate and number of all children entering foster care even further. Sacramento County believes that implementing effective strategies and practices for all children will have the effect of lowering entry rates and improving outcomes for African American children and other children of color. Some of the next steps identified below are among the intermediate term outcomes on Sacramento's Theory of Change:

- **Family support through relatives.** Continue to think creatively around different ways to identify relatives who can provide support to families before a family and CPS consider informal or formal supervision.

- **More accessible cultural sensitivity training.** Make culturally sensitive training more accessible to CPS workers. Include African American Special Skills training in forums, and utilize African American Special Skills social workers to help identify needs of African American families and facilitate trainings.
- **Community Collaboration.** Collaborate with partners to provide training and information sessions to all CPS staff and external partners that reach beyond CPS Special Skills training.
- **Signs of Safety.** Deeper infusion of Signs of Safety practice methods into CPS through ongoing coaching and reinforcement by supervisors and managers as the strategy takes approximately five years to be fully implemented.
- **Stay focused on sustaining the safe decrease in entries into foster care.** Reconvene a working team or another avenue to focus on sustaining reductions and improving practice with populations that would include a focus on possible disparities.

## Final Thoughts

Achieving positive results in child welfare generally requires a team effort and multiple interventions. Thus it may never be possible for child welfare and other community providers to pinpoint any one particular strategy that impacts child entries into foster care. This is why it is essential to take a multi-strategy approach to carefully implement practice methods, successfully engage families, and have equitable access to services.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of Sacramento County CPS, contact Kim Pearson, Sacramento County Child Protective Services division manager, at 916.875.1299 or [pearskb@SacCounty.net](mailto:pearskb@SacCounty.net).



## Appendix A. Disproportionate Rate of African American Children in Child Welfare

Researchers Fred Wulczyn and Bridgette Lery have formulated a similar set of definitions that are more precise in the use of the term disparity, defining it as “relative rates” (e.g., the rate of placement per 1,000 African American children divided by the rate per thousand for Caucasian children).<sup>40</sup>

The situation is complex. Based on the interpretation of early findings from the National Incidence Studies (NIS-2 and NIS-3), child welfare advocates and researchers assumed that children’s representation at the first child welfare decision point should mirror their proportionate composition of the child population. The more recent NIS-4, however, challenged this assumption by concluding that African American children were at greater risk of maltreatment.<sup>41</sup> New evidence showing that African American children have higher odds of poverty as well as higher rates of maltreatment questions the prior assumption in the field that racial differences in rates of placement in and of itself are problematic. According to this line of thinking, higher rates of placement may be the byproduct of greater family needs.

But we believe that the reality is even more complex. Recent research has showcased how African American children actually had better permanency and other outcomes in certain communities where family needs were more effectively addressed.<sup>42</sup> And there is a small but growing literature about how the use of multiple strategies can strengthen communities and individual families to reduce child maltreatment recurrence, foster care placements, and the number of children not achieving legal permanency—including children of color.<sup>43</sup>

## Appendix B. Description of Six Outcome Paths

### Emergency Response Operations

Emergency Response (ER) Operations improves the continuity of decision making in investigations through the use of standardized, research-based definitions. This allows ER Operations to respond rapidly to allegations, working more effective and efficiently. As a result, workers improve their ability to identify and mitigate safety threats of children and families that are being investigated, allowing for a timely response to Immediate Response (IR) referrals. Over time, this outcome path leads to an increase in the number of children who remain in safe, stable homes with their family, finally leading to the ultimate goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care.



## Family Engagement

Family engagement is another strategy identified by Sacramento County that is necessary to reach the ultimate goal. The outcome path begins by CPS recognizing that families are experts on themselves. When taking this perspective, CPS workers must ensure that families have input into decisions being made about their children. By engaging families, CPS workers improve the opportunity for shared decision-making between families, CPS and other community partners that are invested in the outcome of the child. By improving opportunities for shared decision-making, CPS is able to develop a more informed safety plan, also known as a safety map, for the child.<sup>44</sup> When families are recognized as experts on themselves, their own family and given a voice in decisions, more become aware of their own strengths and needs, and are able to help CPS develop a case plan that is measurable and obtainable. When families are engaged with their safety plan and see their own words written into the plan, they are more likely to follow through with it, which increases the likelihood that their children will remain with family, and ultimately leads to the final goals of keeping children safe and out of foster care.

## Non-court CPS Intervention Services

Non-court CPS intervention services begin with improving a family's access to services that help to address safety concerns, while being supportive of the family. Over time, this leads to more families being able to raise their children safely at home, which leads to the ultimate goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care.

## Community Partners

The goal of safely reducing the number of children in foster care cannot be reached unless there is support by the community to make changes to child welfare services throughout Sacramento County.

CPS engages community partners to work together to discuss the importance of creating culturally relevant and sensitive programs and practice. CPS and community partners share information gleaned from these discussions with staff and make adjustments to their own programs and practice. This strengthens the relationship that CPS has with community partners and builds on collective knowledge of best practices, which improves the community services received by families. CPS and community partners will have improved access to services, such as mental health and substance abuse programs, and strategies to use with challenging cases. Over time, a family's well-being will improve, which may help decrease the likelihood that the family will have contact with CPS in the future. Ultimately, this leads to the goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care.

## CPS Workforce

Another crucial strategy that impacts the ultimate goal of reducing entries into foster care is the CPS workforce itself. This is particularly important when trying to impact the reduction of African American children into foster care because there must be staff buy-in for some changes to occur. For example, management must support and staff must understand the importance of a diverse workforce in order for hiring practices to change. This affects the first outcome, which is CPS purposefully hiring a more ethnically diverse staff that better reflects the families that CPS serves. Having a more diverse staff increases the variety of viewpoints in the workforce, which can impact the way that a service is delivered. Family engagement may improve if families are receiving services provided by CPS staff who reflect their culture, resulting in more families successfully completing services. The successful completion of services improves the ability of families to raise their children successfully at home, which helps in achieving the ultimate goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care.

## CPS Training Goals

All CPS staff must have an opportunity to attend trainings that address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare so that they can learn how to provide services that are culturally appropriate and relevant. Staff also must have access to work groups or meetings dedicated to specific populations, such as Special Skills meetings that focus on Russian/Ukrainian, Hmong, African American, Hispanic, or American Indian populations. Trainings and interacting in groups helps to increase CPS staff awareness of their own biases and stereotypes leading to better communication with families, and increasing fact-based assessments and investigations. Improved interactions with families and subjective decision-making can improve the ability of families to raise their children safely at home, which leads to the goal of safely reducing the number of children entering foster care.

## Appendix C. Event Timeline for Events Prior to 2006

### Funding

#### Events Prior to 2006

Several events occurred in Sacramento County prior to 2006 in regards to CPS funding. In 1999, an increase in funding for child welfare prevention efforts improved access to community-based, culturally appropriate prevention services for families receiving CPS services. Examples of funding sources at this time were: Preserving Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), and Cal Works incentive funds.

In 2005, however, decreased funding impacted many of these same programs. For example, the county had to close a community Family Resource Center, which then limited families' access to health, mental health, education and recreational services.<sup>45</sup> Despite the decreased funding in 2005 for some services, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) was established during the same year. Kin-GAP provided relative caregivers access to funds to help keep the child that they are caring for in their home.<sup>46</sup>

## CPS Staffing

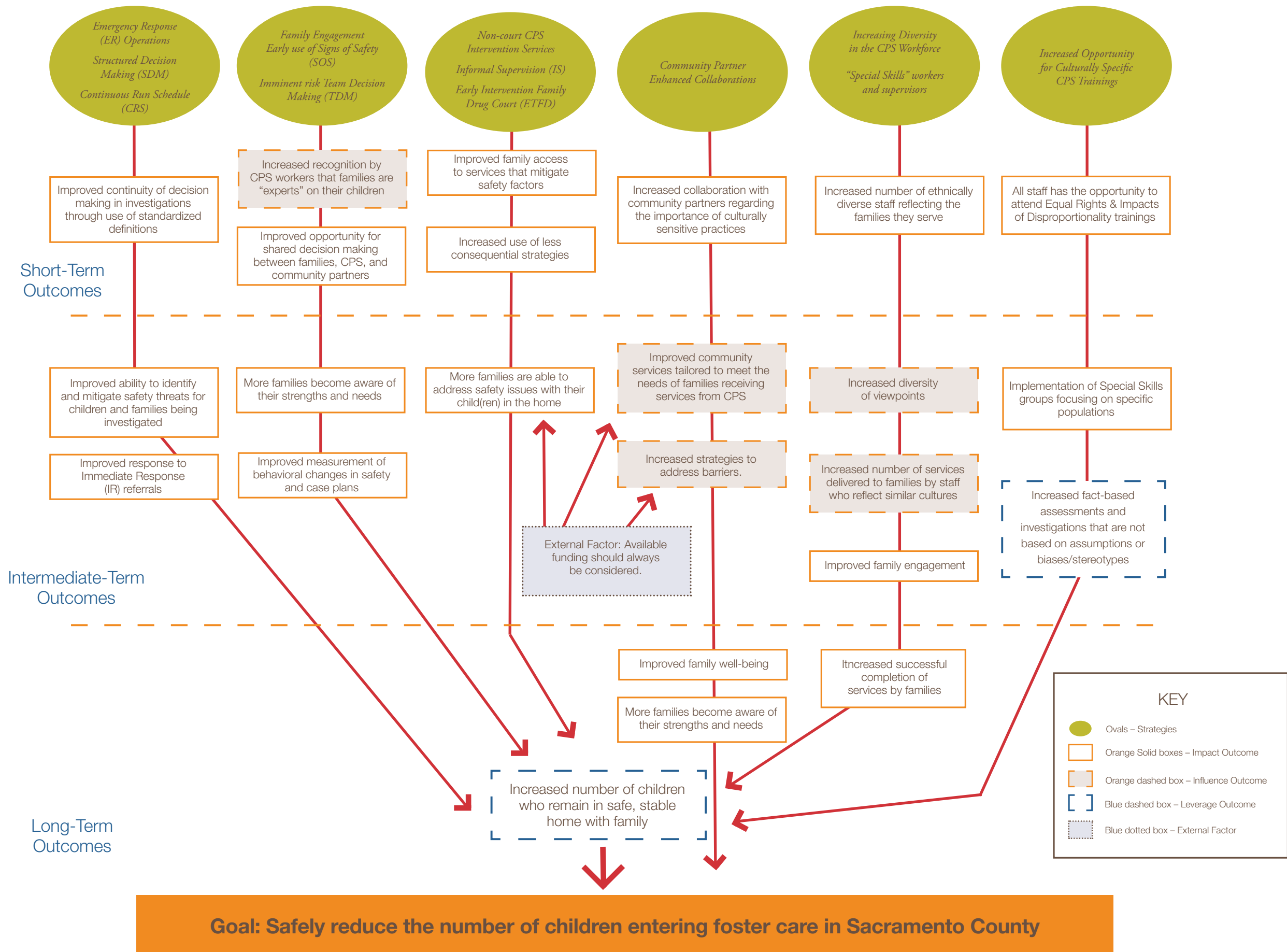
### Events Prior to 2006

In 1989, CPS staff could become certified as Special Skills workers, which was designed to improve the delivery of services to African American families and other specific populations. Since then, Sacramento County CPS experienced multiple staffing changes prior to 2006 that addressed the cultural competencies of its workers. In 2003, CPS opened offices in some communities that were staffed by out-stationed workers. This helped CPS workers become more aware of the cultures present in the communities they served. In 2005, CPS purposefully began to hire more program managers of color. This not only increased the diversity of viewpoints at the administrative level, but also built a staff that better reflected the racial makeup of the population it served. Although efforts of hiring more managers of color began in 2005, it takes time to build a diverse workforce. These efforts that began in 2005 most certainly impacted practice and CPS culture.

## Practice Strategies

### Events Prior to 2006

In late 2004 and late 2005, Differential Response (DR) was piloted in Sacramento County. In cases where a child is removed from their home, DR engages families in community based resources to help with aftercare supports and services. DR helps families recognize unsafe behaviors and engages families in the decision-making process regarding placement of their child.<sup>47</sup> Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) was also introduced in 2005. This strategy involves bringing together parents/caregivers, family, friends and community providers to help decide what is best for the child and family involved with CPS.<sup>48</sup> The goal of FGDM is to avoid foster care placements. FGDM was discontinued in 2009 and resources were moved to TDM.



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