



University/Practice Partnership

UCLA | Los Angeles DCFS

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S U M M A R Y

Abstract

The ability to access and receive services is an essential element to reunification for most families who have children placed in out-of-home care. The current process by which referrals are made for clients, appointment are scheduled, and initiation of services begins is one that can be complex and create barriers for the families served. In a collaboration of UCLA's Department of Social Welfare and the Los Angeles County Torrance Regional Office, the current projects use web-based technology to create a more streamlined process for determining which agencies have openings available to serve clients and matching client referrals with service providers. The goal of the project is to reduce the time it takes these families to access mandated services, ultimately reducing lengths of stay in out-of-home care and increasing rates of reunification. Further the tool will allow us to track those types of needs that take the longest to fill or begin service initiation. This feedback to the Torrance Regional Office will allow caseworkers and administrators to begin to identify emerging service needs of the families served and develop a strategy to find community partners who can address these needs. To do this, the proposed project will be addressing the near-term goals of increasing resources by engaging traditional and non-traditional service providers in providing services for families, enhancing coordination and integration and more supportive infrastructure and policy and fiscal environments, and involving more community systems and stakeholders in child welfare. Successful completion of these goals will mean that communities are engaged in meaningful efforts to improve the child welfare system and continuous improvement of practices.

Goals

The specific aims of the partnership include:

1. Evaluate a technology-based intervention design ("Needs Portal") designed to reduce the time from service request to service initiation for clients. Outcomes to be studied include length of stay in out-of-home placement and rates of reunification;
2. Create, implement and evaluate a "Youth Needs Portal" that will assist youth aging out of the foster care system in obtaining services and creating supportive social networks of other youth who have transitioned from the foster care system to self-sufficiency;
3. Use classroom teaching and field instruction to involve CalSWEC and other Public Child Welfare students in the evaluation of the Portals and to identify and analyze interesting research questions related to data collected from the portal; and
4. Strengthen the UCLA/DCFS Torrance Regional Office partnership in order to allow for an easier exchange of evidence-based research to improve practice, training and education.