

Keeping Families Together:

How Communities are Working with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services to Implement the Title IV-E Waiver

California State Child Welfare Council
Sacramento June 2009



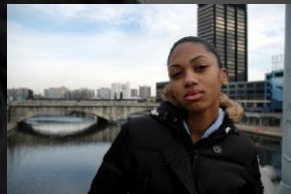
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Executive Director
SHIELDS for Families, Inc.**





SHIELDS currently has 30 programs located in the communities of Compton and Watts with a static capacity of 3000 families.

Incorporated in 1991, **SHIELDS** has been working as a contractor with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services since 1992 as one of the first Family Preservation agencies in Los Angeles.



In 1992, DCFS first initiated attempts to reduce their high rates of detentions and out-of-home placements with the implementation of Family Preservation Community Partnerships. Since then, they have implemented numerous programs and strategies in collaboration with the community to address these issues as well as the disproportionality evidenced in the child welfare system.

SHIELDS became a part of each of the programs implemented:



- **1992**, Family Preservation services, intensive services to high risk cases (FM/FR), expanded countywide.
- **1997**, Families First Pilot for Compton, became the basis for countywide implementation of Alternative Response.
- **1997**, Family Support, supportive services for families not involved with DCFS, usually from the community.
- **2004**, Up Front Assessments, in collaboration with the Compton and Wateridge offices, assessments for caregivers.
- **2005**, Adoption Promotion and Support Services, supportive services to families and children in the adoption process.
- **2008**, Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project; linkage, support, legal and vocational services



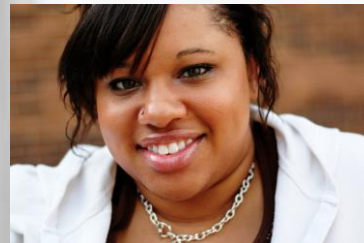
Title IV-E Waiver Projects

- Up Front Assessments
- The Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project



How the Waiver Helped

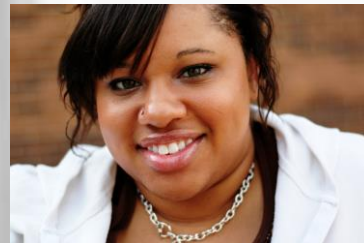
Prior to the Waiver (2007-2008), efforts to address identified gaps in the child welfare system and to bring to scale pilot programs, such as Up Front Assessments, were not feasible due to the lack of flexible funding. Therefore, while many of the programs were successful, their full potential could not be realized until the Waiver allowed for the implementation of a full continuum of care throughout the County.





Up Front Assessments

In 2004, DCFS began to pilot Point Engagement (POE). POE is a process that attempts to engage the family as soon as possible after referral to DCFS. It also represents a paradigm shift from a focus solely on child safety to looking at the family and their caretaking ability.



Response Before POE

Unfounded



Nothing

Inconclusive



ARS/Nothing

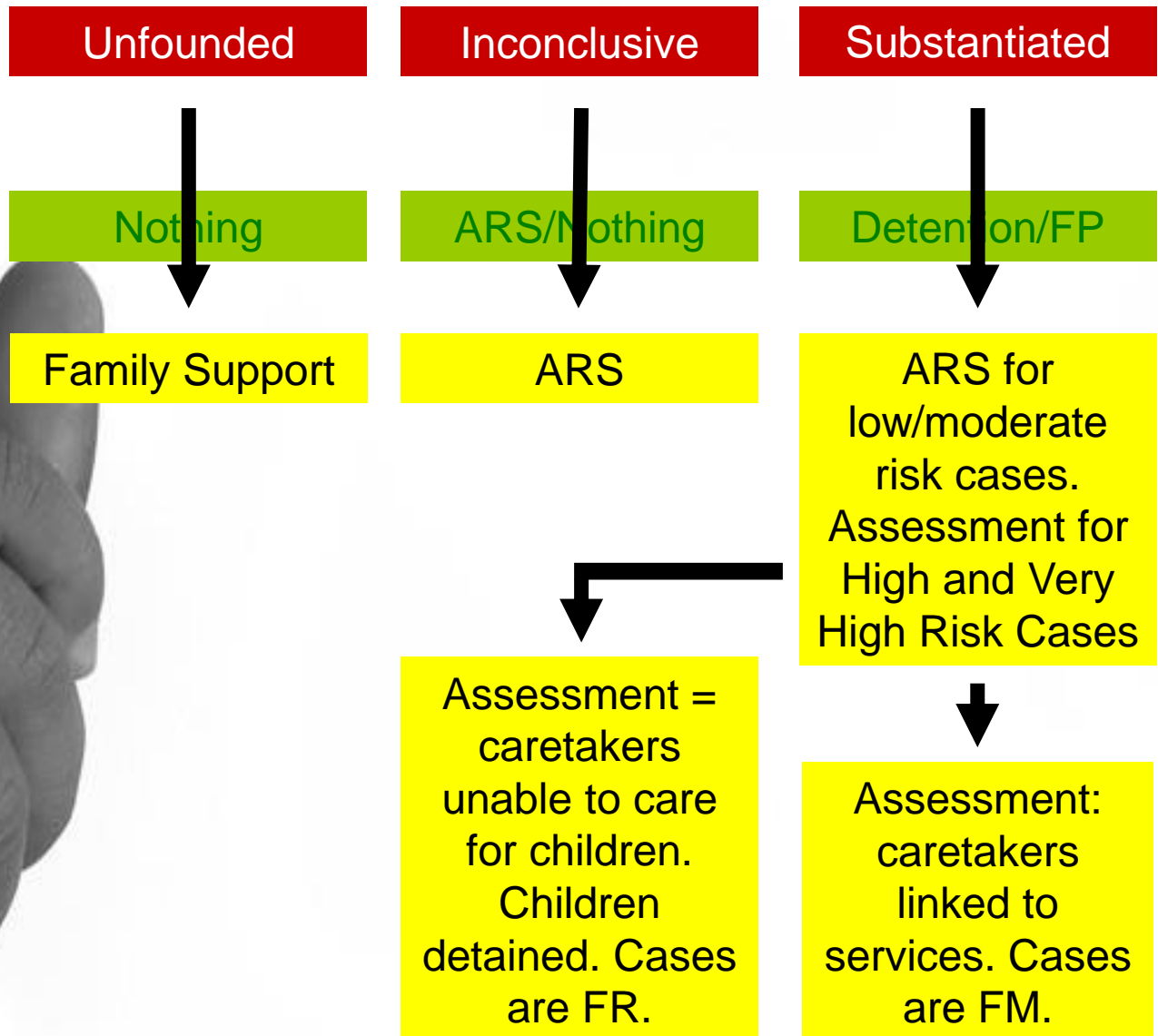
Substantiated



Detention/FP



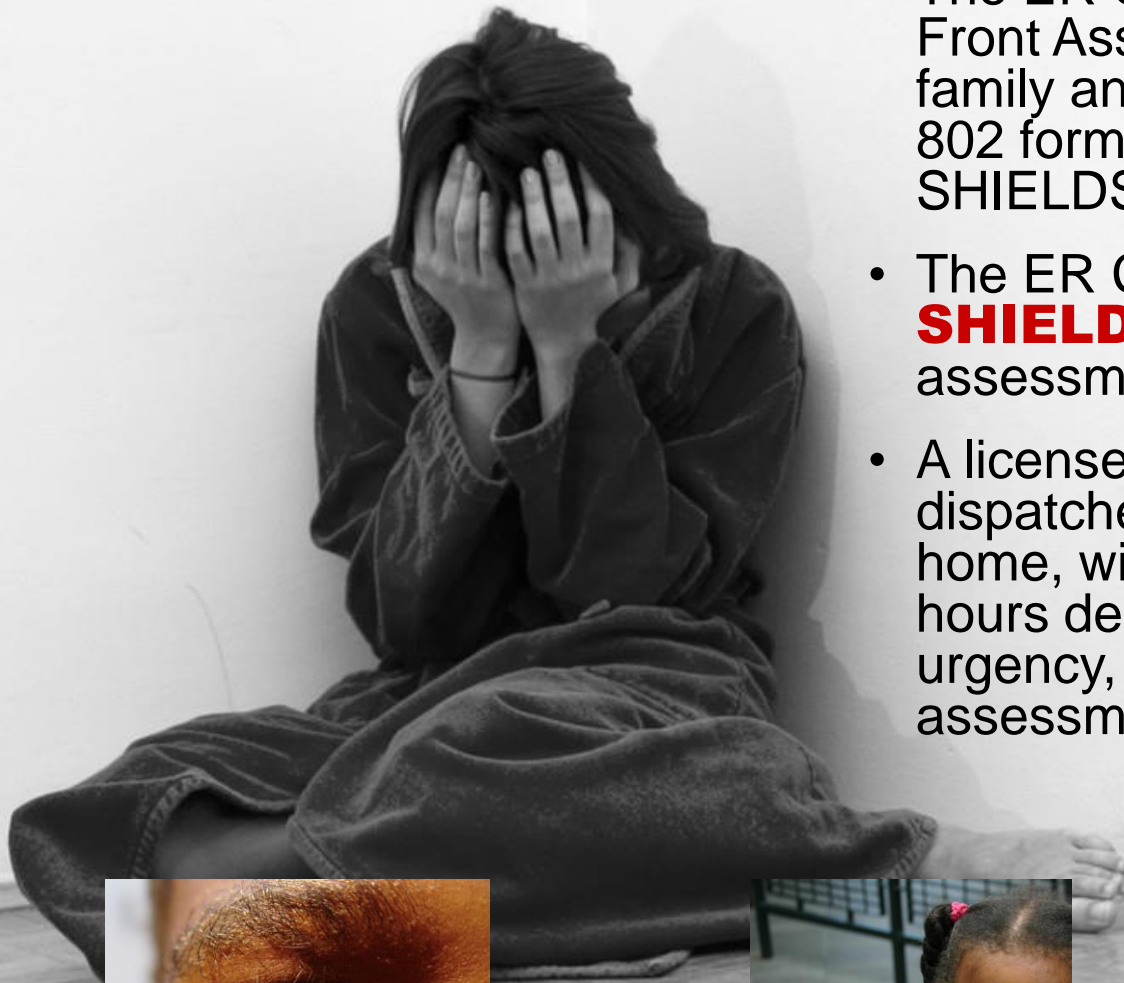
Response After POE



SHIELDS began providing the Assessment Component of POE to the two offices who piloted the process: Wateridge (February) and Compton (June). Working with both offices, we developed a standard protocol for implementation:

- Emergency Response Worker determines that a child abuse and/or neglect allegation is substantiated and the level of risk is high due to mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence or a combination of these issues





- The ER CSW discusses the Up Front Assessment pilot with the family and obtains a consent (FP 802 form) to refer the family to SHIELDS.
- The ER CSW then contacts **SHIELDS** and requests an assessment.
- A licensed or registered clinician is dispatched out to the families home, within two to twenty-four hours depending on level of urgency, to complete an assessment.





- Once the assessment is completed, the **SHIELDS** assessor shares the results with the ER CSW and they both determine if it is appropriate for the children to remain in the home.
- Families are immediately linked to indicated service(s), usually while assessor is still in the home.
- **SHIELDS** Staff participate in and host Team Decision Making meetings and assist with development of a family plan.



The assessment instrument used is the Behavioral Severity Assessment Program (BSAP).

It is a computerized program that provides a set of standardized questions and assists in the writing of the narrative report.

While DCFS focuses their assessment on risk to the child's safety, the BSAP focuses on the caregiver(s) capability to care for the child, including both strengths and challenges. It helps to identify the extent of the problem(s) the caregivers are facing.

The results of both assessments are utilized to help determine the plan for the family.

To date, 5312 assessments have been conducted, keeping over 9000 children out of the dependency court system.



Of the families assessed, less than 5% result in detentions and subsequent open dependency court cases.

The majority of cases go to VFM or VFR, avoiding the court and reducing the time the case is under DCFS jurisdiction (approx. 6 months).

All cases referred are high risk or very high risk and would have resulted in detention prior to the implementation of this pilot program.

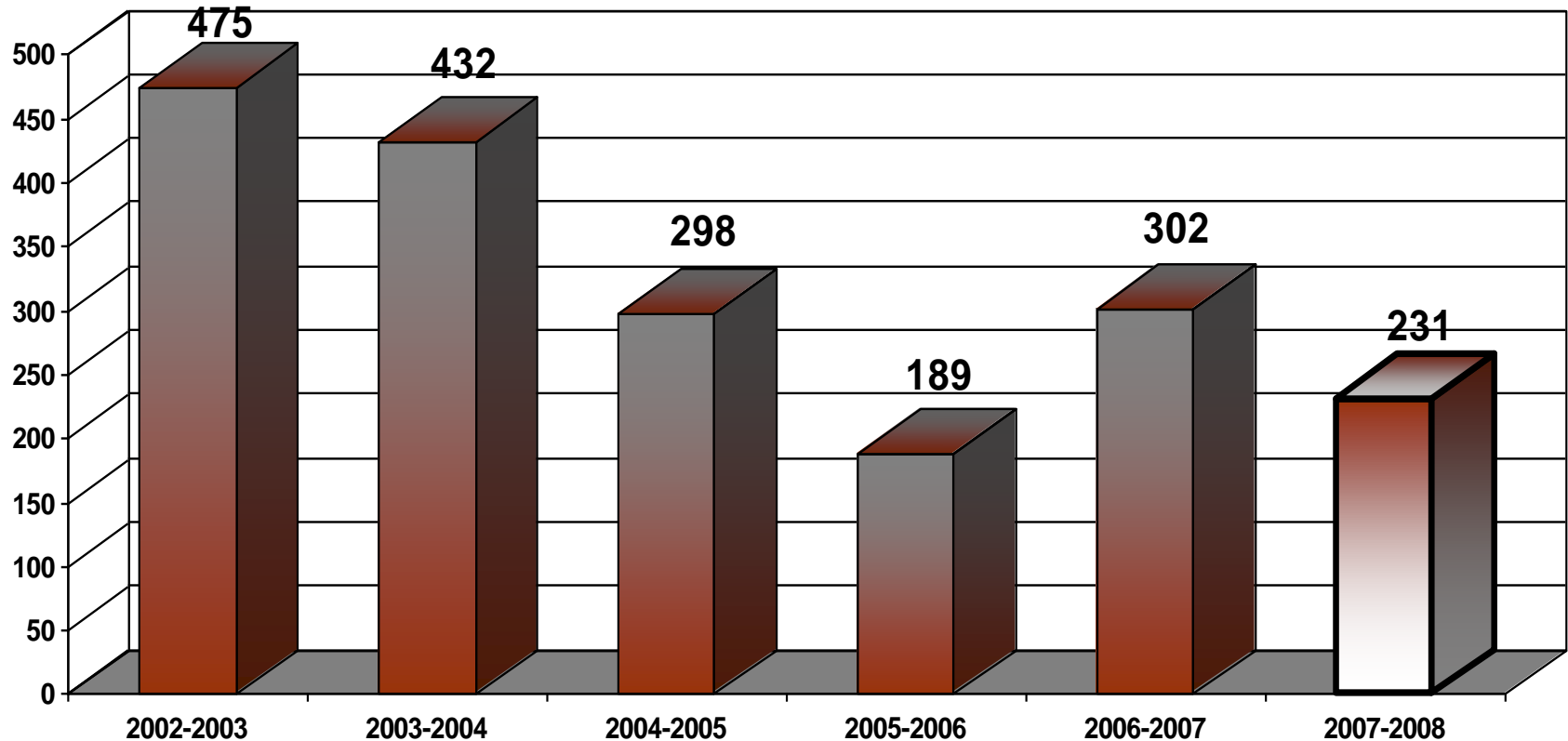
Assessment and services have been provided at no cost to the families.

Out-of-home placement rates in Compton decreased by over 50% since implementation.

The amount of time children are out of the home, reduced to less than a year (previously close to 2 years)



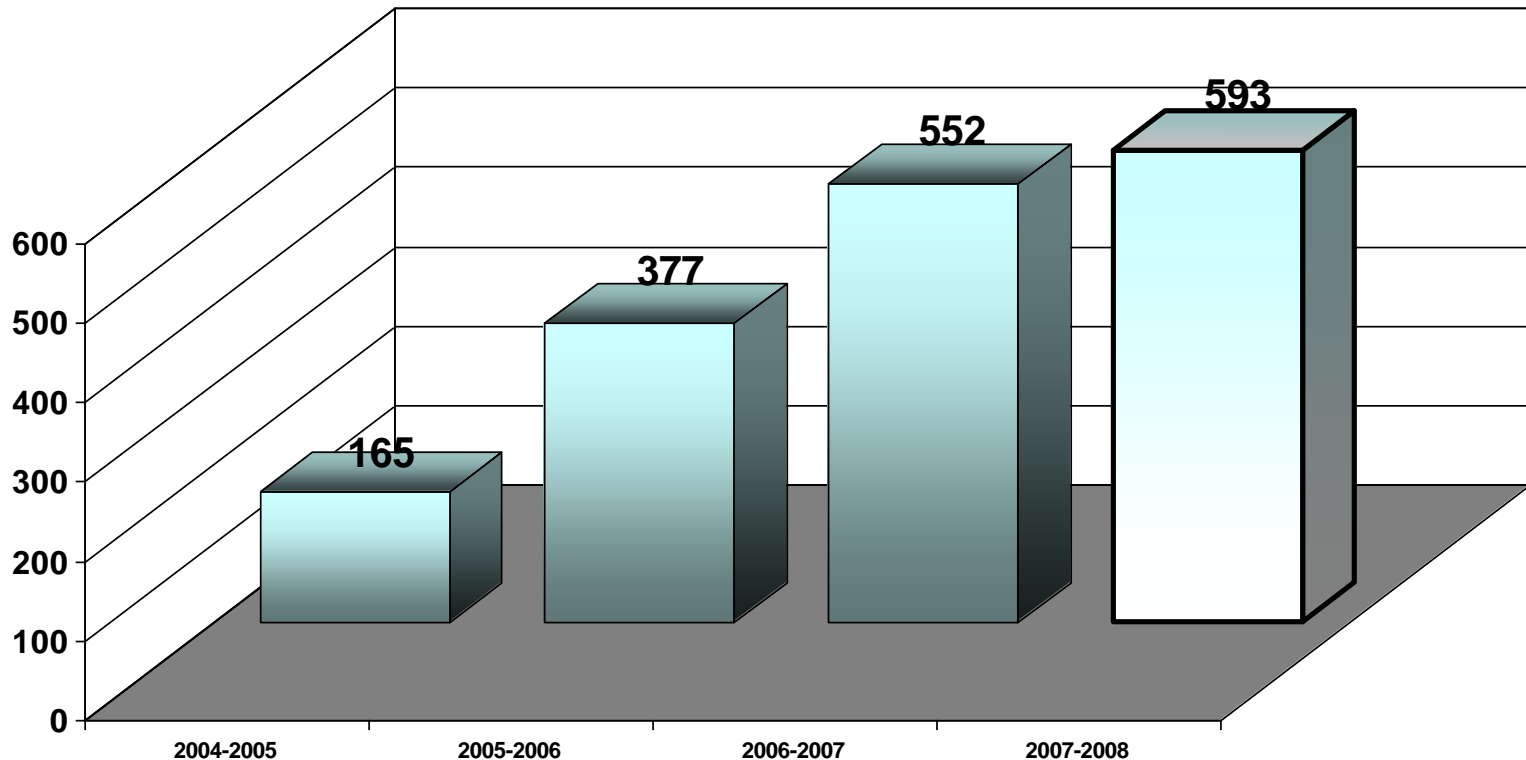
Children Detained- Compton Project (SPA 6)



Total # of Children Detained in FY07-08= 231

Reduction of 52% from Baseline Year 2002-2003

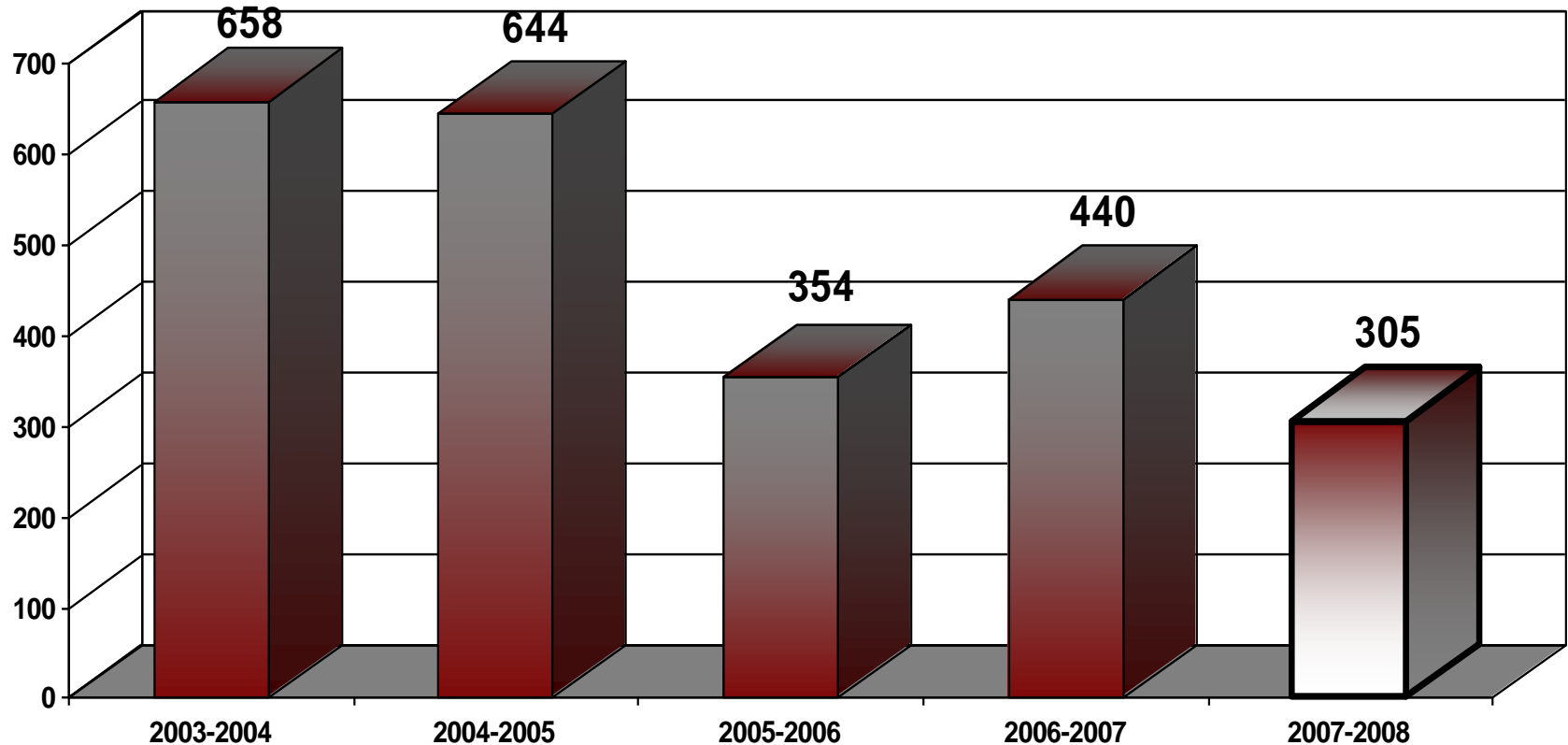
Children Reunified- Compton Project (SPA 6)



Total # of Children Reunified in FY07-08= 593

Reunified 3.6X the Amount of Children compared to Baseline Year 04-05

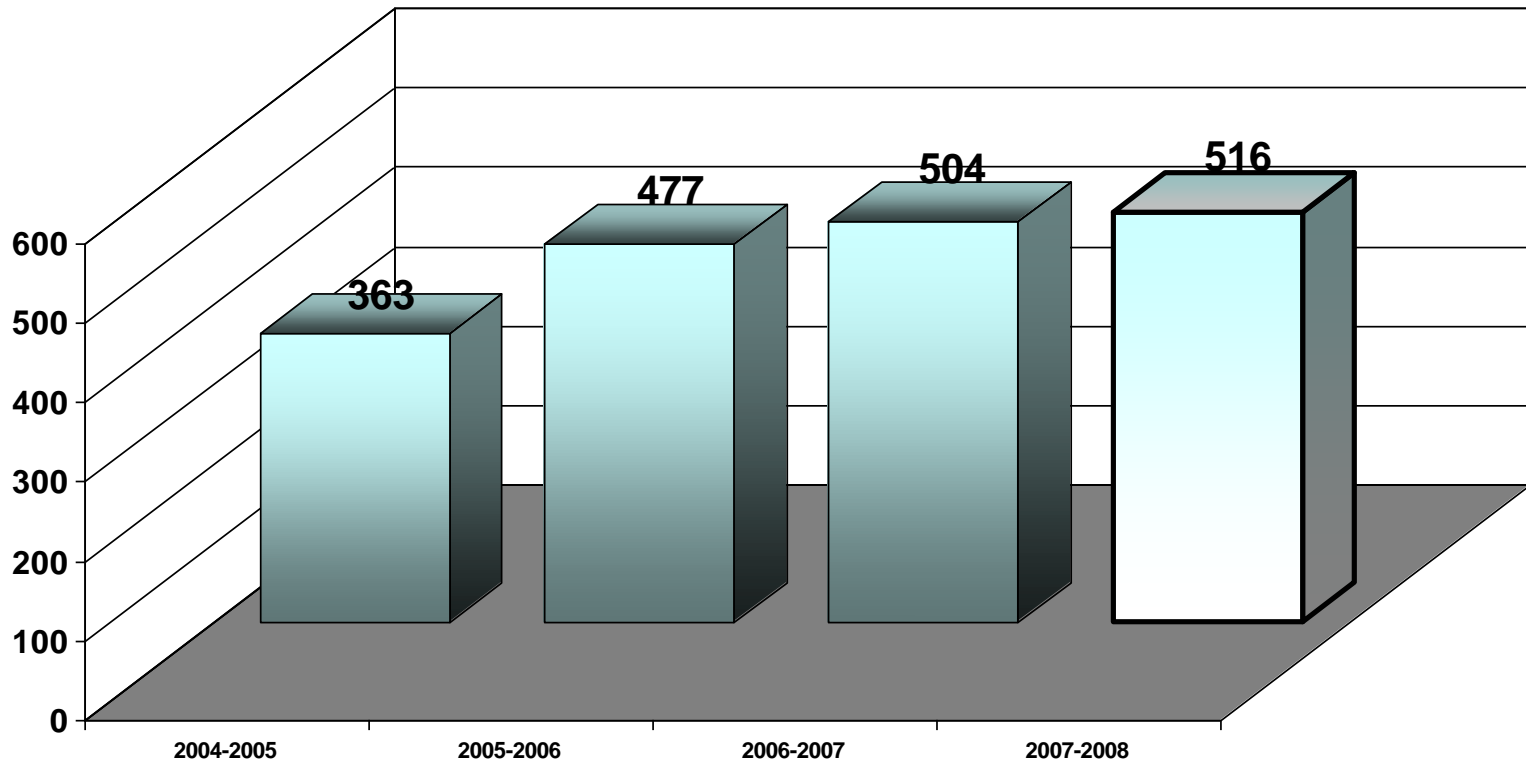
Children Detained- Wateridge (SPA 6)



Total # of Children Detained in FY07-08= 305

Reduction of 53% from Baseline Year 2003-2004

Children Reunified- Wateridge (SPA 6)



Total # of Children Reunified in FY07-08= 516

Reunified 42% more Children compared to Baseline Year 04-05

With the receipt of the Waiver, Los Angeles expanded our resources in the first round of funding to provide Up Front Assessments throughout SPA 6, conducting 80-100 assessments monthly.

In February 2009, the second round of Waiver funding was utilized to enhance the contracts for Family Preservation Agencies to provide Up Front Assessments for all Offices and the Emergency Response Command Post.


In March of 2009, SHIELDS trained all Community Based Family Preservation Agencies in Los Angeles County on the protocol for Up Front Assessments.

In April 2009, Up Front Assessments were implemented Countywide.



Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP)





In 2008, Los Angeles County implemented the PIDP. Community Based Collaboratives developed programs specific to their Service Areas. Initial funding was for one year only with plans for leveraging resources.



With the savings realized in the Waiver after the first year, the Department made a decision to continue the PIDP with an enhanced focus on families evaluated out of the child welfare system.

ASK: Ask Seek Knock Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project SPA 6





ASK Program

ASK: Ask Seek Knock provides four Family Resource Centers throughout the Service Area. One Resource Center is linked with each of the 3 DCFS Offices in the community and one Center is a faith based site.



ASK utilizes a collaborative model to provide three components: Direct Services, Internal Capacity Building and External Capacity Building.



ASK Program




Core Partners for ASK:

**Institute for Maximum Human Potential
Avalon-Carver Community Center
West Angeles Community Development
Corporation
Wings of Refuge
Asian American Drug Abuse Programs
SHIELDS for Families**

**In addition to the Core Partners, ASK
collaborates with unfunded partners to
provide resources and services to our
families.**

ASK Program



- In the Direct Service Component, ASK works closely with the Department of Children and Family Services, the Vermont Corridor, Wateridge, and Compton Offices, to provide services to families with children throughout our Service Planning Area.



- In addition, families in the community are also provided services through self referral.

Direct Service Component Resources and Services



- **Linkage and Referral to Resources**
- **Navigation and Kiosk service**
- **Legal Clinics and Referral Services**
 - **Criminal Record Expungement**
 - **Certification of Rehabilitation**
 - **Immigration Law**
 - **Child Support**
 - **Special Education Law**



Direct Service Component Resources and Services



- Vocational and Educational Services, including Certificate programs in Fiberoptics, EMT and Medical Coding
- In Kind Social Support Groups and Family Activities
- Community Health Education
- Community Libraries
- After-School tutoring / homework assistance

Direct Service Component



- Since implementation of the program in August of 2008 through May of 2009, 2602 families have been provided services through the Family Resource Centers. In April and May the referrals increased to well over 500 per month.
- This includes over 500 families assisted with housing, over 400 with food, and 379 with legal services.
- In addition, our Certificate programs have graduated over 150 participants, all are employed.

ASK Program



In the Internal Capacity Building Component, partners work to enhance their own staff and agency in order to strengthen their capacity to serve families using the resources provided by the Program.

The External Capacity Building focuses on efforts to enhance the economic development in the community to provide the supports necessary for our families, including legal services and vocational opportunities.

ASK Program

Achievements in Service Delivery



ASK Program: Achievements in Service Delivery



The ASK Program wanted to ensure that families served were provided with a continuum of accessible and seamless services. To do so, we built this concept into the design of the program.

ASK Program: Achievements in Service Delivery



Service Delivery Design:

- **Co-location of all Core Partners and Services**
- **Three conveniently located Drop-in Family Resource Centers**
- **Joint Personnel Policies and Procedures**
- **Joint Hiring and Supervision of Staff**
- **Joint Data Sharing and Quality Improvement Policies and Procedures**

The ASK Program

Achievements in Internal Capacity Building



Achievements in Internal Capacity Building



In the Internal Capacity Building Component, the ASK has focused on three areas:



1. Enhancing the strengths and addressing the challenges of each core partner agency in the Collaborative.
2. Ensuring that staff have the skills and knowledge to provide the most effective practices and services.
3. Addressing the professional workforce shortage in our community.

Achievements in Internal Capacity Building



Internal Capacity Building:



- **Hired Organizational Consultant to conduct assessment and develop plan for each Core Partner.**
- **Joined the Prevention Initiative with the First 5 Partnership for Families Initiative to further leverage resources among our Core Partners.**
- **Developed partnership with California State University, Dominguez Hills to implement on-site MSW program for partner agency staff. Currently, 12 students in 2nd year of program.**

The ASK Program

Achievements in External Capacity Building



Achievements in External Capacity Building



The External Capacity Building at the ASK has concentrated on economic development needs in the community. This has included:

1. Removing legal barriers to employment
2. Job Training/Opportunities
3. Sustainability of Partner Agencies

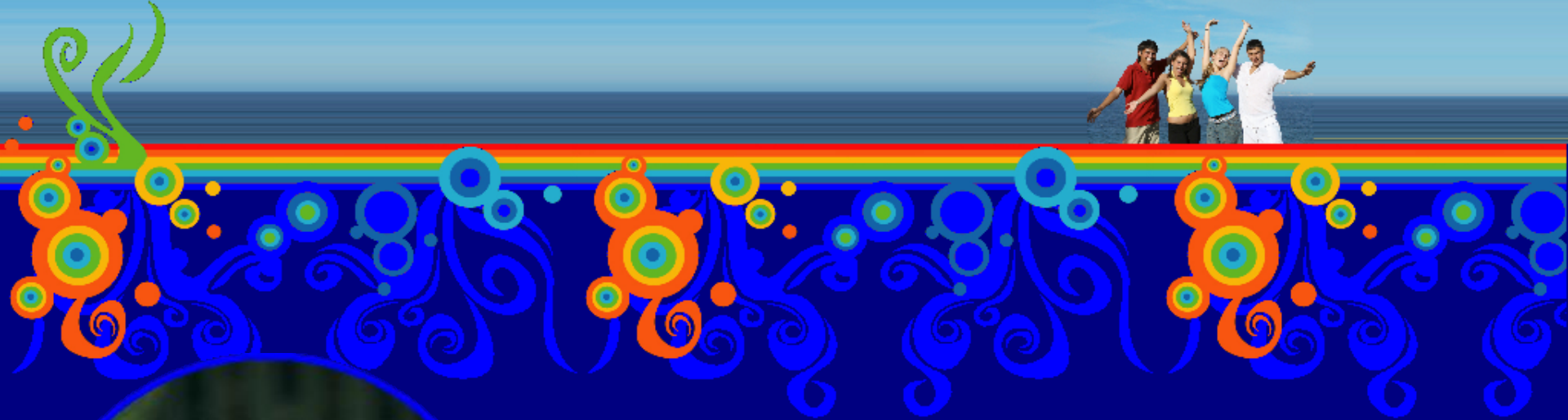
Achievements in External Capacity Building



External Capacity Building:

- Partnership with Public Interest law firms and County entities to provide Expungement and Immigration Clinics
- Provided Certificate Training in Fiber Optics, Medical Billing, Emergency Medical Technician; partnerships with TimeWarner and Comcast
- Purchase of office building
- In discussion re: purchase of ground leases for retail property; purchase of 163 unit apartment complex.





QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The End

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Presented by the **SHIELDS for Families** IT Department

Caregiver Capability

Parent/Caregiver Protective Factors :

- Cooperation with Agencies/Other Helpers
- Ability to Endure Hardship
- Physical and Emotional Health
- Capacity to Form Healthy Relationships
- Positive Problem Solving Skills
- Appropriate Communication
- Past Experiences Protecting Child



Engaging Difficult Families

When working with a Reluctant Family:

- **Always explain who you are and your role**
- **Do not “push the expert card”**
- **Always ask the family’s perception of the problem**
- **Remember you are a guest in their home**



Questions and Answers



THE END

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