

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

ACTION AGENDA SUMMARY

DEPT: Child Support Services

BOARD AGENDA # *B-2

Urgent

Routine

AGENDA DATE July 29, 2014

CEO Concurs with Recommendation YES NO

4/5 Vote Required YES NO

(Information Attached)

SUBJECT:

Approval for the Department of Child Support Services to jointly apply for the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services Grant, with Merced and Kern County Departments of Child Support Services and if awarded accept \$390,000 over a five year period beginning October, 2014, to be shared between the three Departments.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Authorize the Director of Child Support Services, or her designee, to submit an application for funding, in conjunction with Merced and Kern County Departments of Child Support Services, to the Administration of Children and Families - Office of Child Support Enforcement, for the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services grant will fund five years in the amount of \$390,000, and to accept funding if awarded.
2. Authorize the Director of Child Support Services, or her designee, to sign and execute all necessary documents related to the grant.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time. If the Administration of Children and Families - Office of Child Support Enforcement Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services grant is awarded, \$390,000 is to be allocated over a period of five years; \$150,000 for the first year of the project period, \$150,000 for the second year, and \$30,000 for years three, four and five of the project. There is no county share to this request. If the grant is awarded, the funds will be eligible for Federal Financial Participation match of 66%, making the total available funding for the project to be \$1.4 million over the five year period.

BOARD ACTION AS FOLLOWS:

No. 2014-396

On motion of Supervisor Chiesa, Seconded by Supervisor Withrow

and approved by the following vote,

Ayes: Supervisors: O'Brien, Chiesa, Withrow, Monteith, and Chairman De Martini

Noes: Supervisors: None

Excused or Absent: Supervisors: None

Abstaining: Supervisor: None

1) X Approved as recommended

2) _____ Denied

3) _____ Approved as amended

4) _____ Other:

MOTION:

Christine Ferraro

ATTEST: CHRISTINE FERRARO TALLMAN, Clerk

File No.

Approval for the Department of Child Support Services to jointly apply for the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services Grant, with Merced and Kern County Departments of Child Support Services and if awarded accept \$390,000 over a five year period beginning October, 2014, to be shared between the three Departments.

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DISCUSSION:

This proposed grant focuses on improving non-custodial parents' engagement and participation with their children and their child support case. To achieve this, participants will receive enhanced services specific to child support. The project will deliver curriculum to promote positive father engagement, effective co-parenting and financial literacy. In addition, the project will focus on existing child support cases and utilize behavioral economic techniques to improve key work processes and enhance participant engagement. This proposal is supported by a number of local agencies, including the Chief Executive Office, Alliance WorkNet, Center for Human Services, Probation and The Family Justice Center. Research shows that early father engagement in the lives of children is recognized as having significant positive benefits on children as they develop. For example, children with an active and engaged father are less likely to drop out of school, abuse drugs and alcohol or engage in criminal behavior. Further detail of the proposed grant project focus and goals can be found in the submitted concept paper.

The Department of Child Support Services will be the lead agency in Stanislaus County and will collaborate with the Community Services Agency (CSA) to implement the fatherhood program. CSA will develop and deliver a curriculum to promote positive engagement in parents who have new child support cases.

The completed grant application will be submitted to the Office of Child Support Enforcement by California Department of Child Support Services no later than Tuesday, August 5, 2014. The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement is expected to announce the grant awardees in late September 2014.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Existing Child Support services staff will administer the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services Project Grant. There is no staffing impact associated with this grant.

POLICY ISSUE:

This grant supports this Board's priorities of a Healthy Community and Effective Partnerships by supporting collaboration between departments and organizations to increase and improve parent child relationships and child support payments to families within the community.

CONTACT PERSON:

Tamara Thomas, Director, (209) 558-3062

Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services
Behavioral Interventions Pilot Project

Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement
Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services
HHS-2014-ACF-OCSE-FD-0818

Section 1115 Grant

The Behavioral Interventions Pilot Project is a multi-county effort, partnering local child support agencies (LCSA) from Merced, Kern, Stanislaus and Yolo with respective county agencies, including Merced County Human Services Agency, Kern County Department of Human Services, Stanislaus County Community Services Agency, Yolo County Department of Employment & Social Services and First 5 Yolo Children and Families Commission to improve non-custodial parent (NP) engagement and participation with their child support case and with their children.

This project benefits from the significant diversity and demographic variance between the partnering counties. As of FFY 2012, the combined population of the four counties was 1,844,307 residents with a combined IV-D caseload of 111,484 cases. Individual county caseloads range from small with Yolo County (8,334) to large with Kern County (54,856). Per the US Census Bureau, on average 21.25% of the partnering county residents live below the poverty level. Kern County suffers the highest overall percentage with 35% of their residents living below the poverty level and Yolo County has the lowest percentage with less than 20% of their residents being below the poverty level. Per data extracted from the CSE Data Repository for May 2014, of this project's combined caseload, 87,618 of the custodial parents and families are living at or below the poverty level, with 6,775 or 7.73% of them currently not receiving any public assistance benefits. In FFY 2012, the average unemployment rate of the four counties was 14.18%, with Merced County having the highest annual average of 17% and Yolo County having the lowest rate 11.3%.

Within the LCSA caseloads, the demographic variance continues in regards to public assistance cases. Per the CADCSS Operational Assessment Individual County Report, as of FFY 2012 Merced County has the highest currently aided caseload of 30.5% with Yolo County having the lowest currently aided caseload of 19.6%. The four counties have an average of 54% of NPs with earnings information. Each of the partnering counties is very successful at establishing court orders, with the combined average equaling over 90% between the four counties. But

collections for current support are not as successful, with the combined average achieving 59% and arrears fairing slightly better with a combined average of 61%.

These facts and figures paint a picture of communities of families struggling day to day to make ends meet and not necessarily receiving the benefit of available services or the child support obligations owed to them. Disconnects from the NP between the establishment phase and later compliance with the court order are immediately recognized. The goal of the Behavioral Interventions Pilot Project is to seek engagement opportunities with the NP early in the life of the child support case to establish and encourage positive behaviors and decisions that benefit their children.

The participating agencies will provide enhanced services to NPs who have a case without a child support order. Additionally, the project will include a collaborative effort by participating LCSAs to diagnose less successful work processes for the purpose of identifying key points where NPs with existing cases may become disengaged or are no longer participating in the program. Together, the LCSAs will design solutions using behavioral economics techniques to make minor changes to the processes that will re-engage the NPs. Participation in this project will provide the non-custodial parents with tools to make better decisions regarding their child support obligations. The project will encourage more consistent and sustainable payments towards their child support obligation.

Per the CADCSS Monthly Management Report for April 2014 (MMR), the combined caseload of the four participating LCSAs is 108,882 total cases. Of those combined cases, 11,084 do not have a court order. Per Table 3.12 of the Comparative Data Report, the average default rate of the combined partnering LCSAs is 58.65%.

The project will have a two-pronged approach.

First, as an early-intervention process, new cases without a court order that qualify will be selected to participate in a fatherhood program. This selection may be voluntary or via mandated referrals from the Courts and local Probation Departments. Assignment to the treatment group will be determined by random assignment as developed and implemented by the Evaluation Team. The fatherhood program curriculum will be based upon the award winning program, All Dad's Matter, from Merced County's Human Services Agency (HSA).

HSA will further develop their current curriculum to specifically address child support requirements, in addition to reiterating the need to promote positive father engagement, engage in effective co-parenting, and provide financial literacy training to assist NPs to be

financially responsible. This financial literacy component will assist the low income fathers in our shared counties to achieve better understanding of how to handle finances while fulfilling their child support obligations.

This program will encourage NPs to communicate and work with their LCSA regarding their child support cases. An independent mediator will be incorporated into the process to help parents address custody, parenting time and other joint issues. As a result of this focused encouragement and opportunity to actively participate in the process, the NPs will be engaged in the establishment of their court order. The partnering LCSAs will consequently realize a decrease in default orders.

This program and curriculum will be instituted in each county but with variation in regards to implementation. This variation will give the evaluators the opportunity to gauge which implementation method would provide the greatest level of success.

- Merced and Stanislaus will use the model currently in practice in Merced. The fatherhood program will run through the IV-A Department and the two agencies will partner to establish a referral process and provide a more integrated shared services model.
- Yolo County will expand the original model to include NPs and other fathers served through First 5 Yolo funded family resource centers. The fatherhood program provided by the Yolo County Department of Employment & Social Services will focus on those NPs who are not the primary custodian of their children.
- Kern County will create a third model in which the fatherhood program will be developed and managed within the LCSA.

The second prong of the project will be diagnosing less successful work processes to identify key points where NPs with existing cases with orders have become disengaged and may no longer be participating. A small committee, made up of representatives from each LCSA, will meet regularly to examine current processes with the goal of identifying key NP drop-off points that can affect the overall success of the process. Using behavioral economics techniques and a plan for continuous improvement, the group will then diagnose potential reasons why NPs drop off, and develop small, low-cost incremental changes to the process that will realize meaningful and measurable affects in a short period of time.

The continuous improvement cycle will include the following process steps: 1) diagnose; 2) design; 3) implement, pilot, and evaluate; 4) refine and re-evaluate (as needed); and 5) implement improvements and assess for large scale implementation.

This project emphasizes partnering among key agencies, both LCSAs and various county partners. Regular meetings between staff from the LCSAs and their key county partners will be critical for the project's overall success. Partnering agencies have expressed interest and are committed to this pilot project.

Measurement of success will be determined through various monthly reports. Participant progress in the fatherhood program will be tracked and outcomes measured through initial enrollment, continued engagement and overall program completion. Success of the early engagement efforts from a child support program perspective will be measured through Comparative Data Reports for default rates, establishment of court orders and the CS34/35 and CS1257 reports for collections for current support, cases paying on arrears and overall distributed collections.

This project focuses on the need to increase NP participation and engagement in order to improve the operations and effectiveness of the child support program. This project will seek to utilize both early engagement to create a habit of participation and a continuous improvement cycle for existing processes to minimize NP disengagement once an order is established. As a result of this project, MDCCSS and partnering LCSAs will see a decrease in the percentage of default court orders and an increase in the percentage of current support collections from participants. These outcomes will ultimately support the CADCSS Strategic Plan of improved performance, increased customer service and increased distributed collections.