

June 30,2002

Dear Academy Trainer,

As we embark on a new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2003, we'd like to take this opportunity to bring you up to speed on recent developments at the State and Federal level related to four interconnected initiatives: the Stakeholders Redesign efforts, the Federal Review, A.B. 636 and Family to Family. Each of these efforts have far reaching implications for those of us who seek to improve outcomes for children and families through the provision of training and staff development services. The descriptions below are excerpted from the various websites and citations contained herein.

### **Stakeholders Redesign:**

The Child Welfare Services Stakeholders is a working group with several subcommittees that has been working to reform California's child welfare system to improve outcomes for children. The group has been in existence since 2000, when Governor Gray Davis directed the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to undertake a system-wide review and redesign of public child welfare services. Since that time, over 100 key Stakeholders representing all aspects of the child welfare spectrum have been developing a vision to redesign the system. The year one and year two reports are available on the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) web site at [www.dss.cahwnet.gov](http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov). The year three report, including the plan for implementation, is due out later this Summer.

According to CDSS, "the recommendations advance a spectrum of approaches including collaboration across formal and informal support systems, prevention and early intervention services, non-adversarial engagement of families, fairness and equity infused into all decision points, assessment as the foundation for service plans and accountability for outcomes."

### **Federal Review:**

Starting in 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began a new approach to monitoring State child welfare programs. Although reviews had taken place in the past, the law was changed so that these reviews became much more thorough, focused on outcomes rather than process and had stricter fiscal penalties attached to them.

Reviews were conducted throughout the country and are near completion. California's Child and Family Services Review (C-CSFR) review was conducted on September 23,2002 and the results were made available in December of that same year. California, like many other states, did not achieve "substantial conformity" with many of the 45 safety, permanence and well-being measures that were evaluated.

Ultimately, the goal of the reviews is to help states achieve the following outcomes for families and children who receive child welfare services:

## **Safety**

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

## **Permanency**

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

## **Family and Child Well-Being**

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Each of these outcomes contains one or more measures that determined progress for that outcome. For example, one of the measures for Outcome #1 is defined accordingly:

*1A. Recurrence of maltreatment: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first six months of the reporting period, what percent had another substantiated or indicated report within a six month period?*

In addition to these seven outcomes, California was also found not to be in substantial conformity with systemic factors related to the case review system: quality assurance, training, service array, foster and adoptive parent licensing and recruitment and retention. Clearly, the implications for training are significant.

As required by law, CDSS has submitted a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), California's response to the CSFR. This comprehensive PIP, currently in its third revision (after the first two were not accepted by the Feds), is currently being negotiated with Federal Review representatives and has still not been released publicly. Regardless of the exact form of the final PIP, it is known that there will be additional training requirements for all line staff, supervisors and

care providers. Likewise, the learning objectives in many curricula will need to be reviewed and possibly modified to ensure compatibility with and support of the Federal Review outcomes and measures. For more information on the Federal Review, please link to [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)

## **AB 636**

Assembly Bill 636 (Steinberg, 2002), establishes a new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System, a local accountability system, and an outcomes-based child and family service review of all 58 County child welfare departments.

Over time, it is anticipated that this system will bring about many improvements to the child welfare system. Specifically, the new child welfare outcomes and accountability system seeks to:

- Hold the State and Counties accountable for performance through: uniform standards and improvement goals, required County plans approved by supervisors, and regularly published progress reports.
- Replace the existing process-driven County child welfare reviews, with an outcomes-based review system.
- Help drive the program and county collaboration to more community-based, family-focused service system.

This new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System consists of three components:

1. County Self-Assessment
2. Targeted Peer Quality Case Reviews
3. County System Improvement Plan

This monumental effort to reform California's child welfare system integrates the redesign vision of the Stakeholders while incorporating and expanding the outcomes and measures of the Federal Review. The information gathered from these audits will help CDSS to ensure that each county is doing what is necessary to ensure that the State can come into compliance with the Federal review outcomes. The California Department of Social Service (CDSS) will begin conducting the reviews required under AB 636 in January 2004.

## **Family to Family:**

In response to the myriad of challenges facing the child welfare system, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ( [www.aecf.org/initiatives](http://www.aecf.org/initiatives) ) and the Stuart Foundation ( [www.stuartfoundation.org](http://www.stuartfoundation.org) ), in consultation with community leaders

and child welfare practitioners, have developed and are funding a reform initiative called *Family to Family*.

For those States, counties or communities that are selected to be a Family to Family grant recipient, the Foundations assist with a portion of the costs involved in both planning and implementing innovations in their systems of services for children and families, and to make available technical assistance and consultation throughout the process. In the Bay Area, San Francisco County was the first county chosen to be a Family to Family county, selected in 2001. Subsequently, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo and Monterey have been selected and are in various stages of implementation.

The new system, as envisioned by *Family to Family*, is designed to:

- better screen children being considered for removal from home, to determine what services might be provided to safely preserve the family and/or what the needs of the children are;
- targeted to bring children in congregate or institutional care back to their neighborhoods;
- involve foster families as team members in family reunification efforts;
- become a neighborhood resource for children and families and invest in the capacity of communities from which the foster care population comes; and
- provide permanent families for children in a timely manner.

Undoubtedly, we are embarking on one of the most dynamic periods in the history of public child welfare services. Training staff to the principles of these various initiatives and providing them with the appropriate knowledge, skills and values is a challenge that will require the efforts of us all.

In collaboration with the other four training academies statewide, the California Social Work Education Center and the California Department of Social Services, the Academy is preparing a strategic plan that seeks to integrate and support these initiatives. This will include revising existing trainings and developing new curricula while continuing to evaluate how well we are meeting our learning goals and objectives.

As these changes move forward, we ask that you carefully review this document and the links contained within it so that you can ensure that your curriculum and training delivery recognizes, integrates and supports these principles and outcomes.

Currently the Bay Area Academy, in conjunction with its collaborative partners, is participating in a number of forums where these matters are being discussed and strategies for integration and implementation being developed.

We will utilize our website to follow-up with keep you abreast of new developments, including an Academy sponsored training-for-trainers. We encourage you to visit us at [www.sfsu.edu/~bayacad/](http://www.sfsu.edu/~bayacad/) (go to trainers section) for updates and to contact us with any questions or input you may have.

We look forward to a continued partnership with you as we map a new landscape together!

Thank you,  
The Staff of the Bay Area Academy