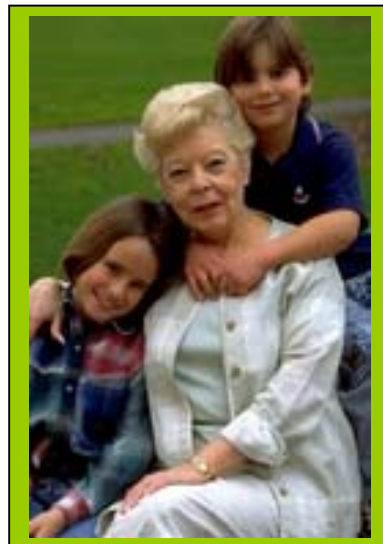
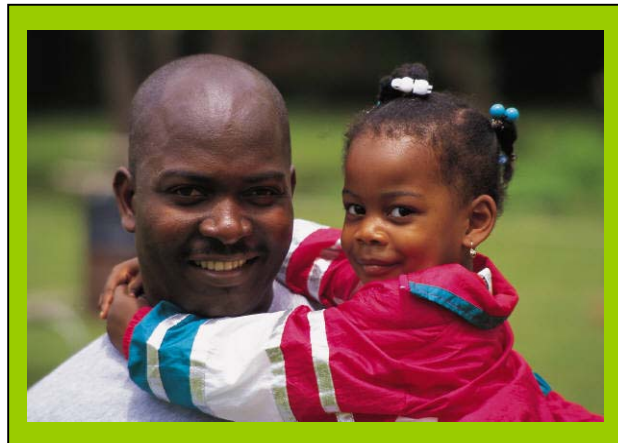




*Alameda County  
Social Services Agency*

*Department of Children and Family Services  
2001 Annual Report*



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**ALAMEDA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCY**  
**Department of Children and Family Services**

**VISION**

All children in Alameda County will have the opportunity to grow and develop in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stable home.

**MISSION**

To ensure that all children receive the support and security that a family, an extended family, or an alternative family can provide.

**GOALS**

- To protect children when they have been abused or neglected, or are in danger of abuse and neglect.
- To strengthen and preserve families.
- To find permanent homes or alternative placements for children who cannot remain safely at home or be returned to their families.
- To assist children in our care to become productive adults.
- To support the efforts of foster parents and other substitute caregivers to provide high quality services to children and families.



## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

This is the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the Children and Family Services Annual Report. It was written and compiled by members of the CFS Administrative Team, known as PIPER (Planning, Information, Policy, Evaluation, and Research).

We wish to recognize all of the Agency staff, care providers, community agencies and clients who have helped us improve our services for children and families in Alameda County over the last year, and we look forward to our continued partnership.

The Annual Report can be found online at the Alameda County website:

**<http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/>**

(Select “Children and Family” under the Department List dropdown menu.)

Hard copies may be requested by calling (510) 271-9180 or writing to:

Alameda County Social Services Agency

Department of Children and Family Services Administration

1106 Madison Street, Suite 420

Oakland, CA 94607

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In the future, Annual Reports for the Department of Children and Family Services will be published to correspond with the fiscal year. The Fiscal Year 2002/03 Report will be published in October, 2003.

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2001 held both challenges and accomplishments for Alameda County's Department of Children and Family Services (CFS). Mr. Chet Hewitt became the Deputy Director of Alameda County Social Services Agency over CFS at the end of 2000, and with his leadership, we began to make headway in several key areas.

The Department developed a list of priorities to support key functions. These included: reorganizing the management structure, with an emphasis on clarifying roles and adding new skill-sets to the administrative team; improving communication on all levels; developing innovative approaches to recruitment and retention of child welfare workers; and updating the department's manual of policies and procedures.

Soon after Mr. Hewitt's tenure began, CFS received a notice of non-compliance from the California Department of Social Services related to Division 31, the state's child welfare regulations. A Corrective Action Plan was launched, and CFS created a new Quality Assurance Program, with identified roles for all staff and managers.

Ninety percent of child welfare workers and supervisors were expeditiously trained in Division 31 requirements. Since the Department was confident that the problem with many of the items was not with service delivery but

a lack of appropriate documentation, training emphasized how the necessary information should be captured to accurately reflect the services being provided.

Staff devoted significant energy and many overtime hours to the effort to bring CFS into compliance. As a result, the state's November, 2001 audit found the Department to be in compliance on seven of the nine review items. The state publicly commended Alameda County for its surprisingly quick progress.

CDSS will be auditing the Department on these items again in the fall of 2002, and we continue to strive for full compliance with Division 31 regulations. However, despite the cost associated with quality assurance activities and program improvements, no additional funding has been made available. Without an infusion of resources to allow CFS to address the critical need for caseload relief and fully staff the Quality Assurance Unit, these gains will be difficult to sustain over time.

CFS continues to struggle with the ongoing challenge of providing mandated services with inadequate funding. While child advocates correctly herald the need for substantive systems reform and innovative programming, these are curtailed as long as child welfare services are not a fiscal priority for state legislators.

### **Major Accomplishments for 2001**

In spite of the challenges faced by the Department, there were positive changes in several areas during 2001. In addition to achieving substantial compliance with Division 31 regulations, the Department also:

- ❖ prepared 90 adoptions for simultaneous finalization at the second annual Alameda County Adoption Day in November, 2001;
- ❖ expanded post-adoption services;
- ❖ assisted relative care providers in becoming legal guardians for 75 children;
- ❖ opened two Kinship Service Centers (north and south county) to support relative caregivers of both dependent and non-dependent children;
- ❖ expanded housing and vocational opportunities for emancipating foster youth; and
- ❖ located a site for the first Assessment Center, opening 8/02.

### **Child Welfare on the Web**

Alameda County's Department of Children and Family Services is the first child welfare program in the Bay Area to put its program manual on the

World Wide Web, and one of the few in California to include commonly used forms and links to other resources on the Internet.

The Online Practice Guide (OPG) is a state-of-the-art website that staff can easily access from their desktop or home computer. There are several advantages to this format, primarily that updates to the web-based manual, in contrast to a paper manual, are simultaneously made available to all staff. Child welfare workers can choose to print out specific pages or use the manual online with confidence that it reflects the most recent changes in regulations, policies, and internal procedures.

Staff also have access to information on the state's Division 31 requirements, the latest versions of many forms, and an easy method to contact the OPG team from the site with questions or suggestions.

After a period of review and revision, the information in the OPG will be adopted as the Department's official manual of policies and procedures.

## DATA SUMMARY

### **Data Integrity**

Gathering and analyzing data on child welfare cases has historically been challenging for CFS for a variety of reasons. The data available to the administrative team has at times been inaccurate or incomplete. As we move forward with full implementation of the statewide computer data system (CWS/CMS), better information will be available for the crucial tasks of program planning and evaluation, including assessing the Department's performance on critical outcome measures. The information presented in this report is based on the best data currently available from CWS/CMS, and also includes, where noted, data from the Center for Social Services Research at UC Berkeley.

### **Child Abuse Referrals**

There were 8,272 referrals made for suspected child abuse or neglect in 2001, naming 12,027 children. In-person investigations were done on 5,285 of these referrals. About one third of the referrals involved duplicate information, currently open cases, reports that did not require an in-person investigation, or situations that were not within the jurisdiction of CFS.

Recent data evaluation shows 9,373 referrals from the year 2000. However, that number seems to have been

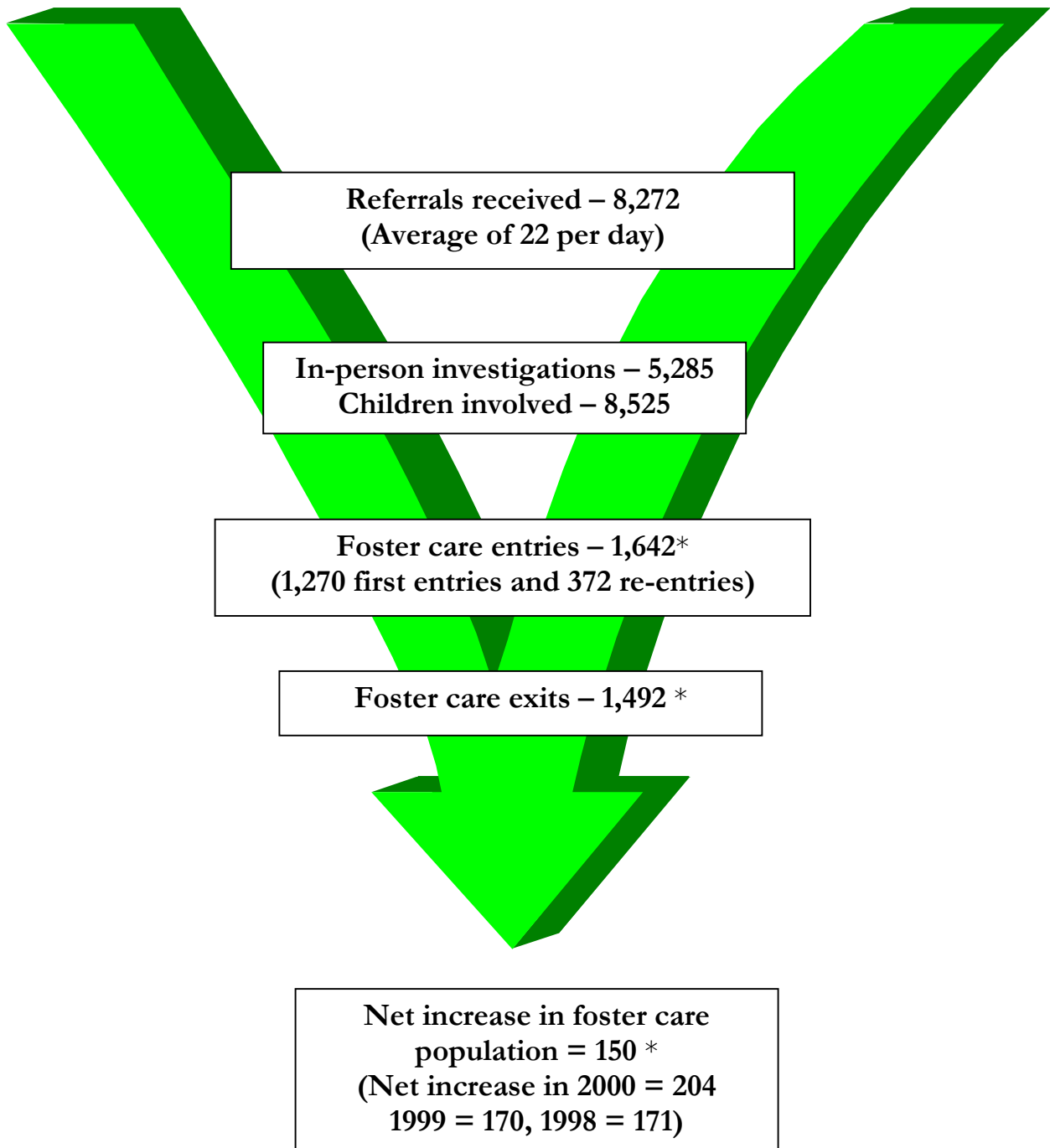
artificially inflated by a backlog of referrals for "information only" from previous years which were entered into the system during 1999 and 2000. The 1.6% increase in the number of in-person investigations (from 5,202 in 2000 to 5,285 in 2001) is within the expected range.

In addition to suspected child abuse referrals, the hotline screeners also field a great number of calls from people requesting information and referrals to other community agencies. These calls are not reflected in the above figures.

### **Number of Children in Foster Care**

Children in foster care can be counted either for a period of time or a given point in time. Either method can be useful; however, children with longer stays in the system tend to be over-represented in the point-in-time count. This report uses a combination of point-in-time and time period data.

By the end of 2001, there were 4,725 children in foster care, including non-dependent children in child welfare supervised legal guardianships. A total of 5,781 children were in foster care at some point during 2001. At the end of 2000, there were 4,587 children in foster care, with a total of 5,553 children in care during the course of the year.



\*Data from:

Needell, B., Webster, D., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Brookhart, A., Lery, B., Shaw, T., Dawson, W. & Kim, H. (2002). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved 07/08/02, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website.

URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>

## DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

There are three program divisions within the Department of Children and Family Services. The divisions and the programs they encompass are listed below.

### **Community Services Division**

Screening  
Emergency Response  
Dependency Investigations  
Neighborhood Services  
School Linked Services  
Another Road to Safety (ARS)  
The Assessment Center (opening 8/02)

### **Family Services Division**

Family Reunification  
Family Maintenance  
Long Term Foster Care  
Kinship Unit  
Family Preservation  
Adoptions Program  
Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP)  
Model Approaches to Partnership Parenting (MAPP)  
Services to Enhance Early Development (SEED)  
Community Action to Reach Out to Infants (CARI)

### **Support Services Division**

Placement Services  
Shelter Care  
Group Homes  
Court Officers  
Transportation  
Clerical Support  
Foster Care Eligibility  
Foster Care Licensing  
Central Placement Unit  
Support and Technology Unit  
Interagency Child & Family Service Team

## RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### Emergency Response

The Department of Children and Family Services operates a 24-hour hotline for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. The majority of calls are from mandated reporters - teachers, medical professionals and others who are required to report suspected abuse or neglect they encounter in the course of their jobs. Others come from concerned relatives or neighbors in the general public. After a referral is taken, a supervisor determines what type of response is warranted by the available information.

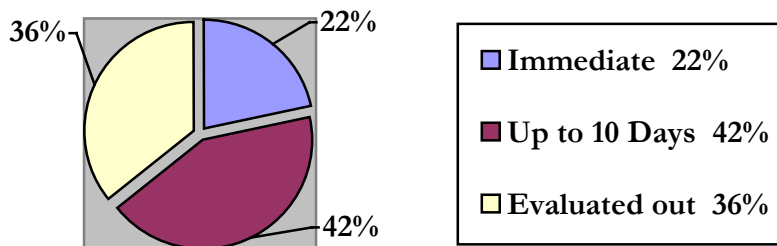
Many of the referrals taken each year refer to incidents which took place in the past, occurred in another county, have already been investigated by the police, or for other reasons do not require an investigation by a child welfare worker. These are “evaluated out.”

When the referral indicates the need for an in-person investigation, a field worker is assigned to respond either immediately or within 10 days, depending on the level of risk. The emergency response worker interviews the child and family and assesses the allegations to determine the appropriate intervention, if any.

In 2001, there were in-person investigations of 5,285 of the referrals (64%). One third of those assigned for investigation (1,771) were given immediate priority.

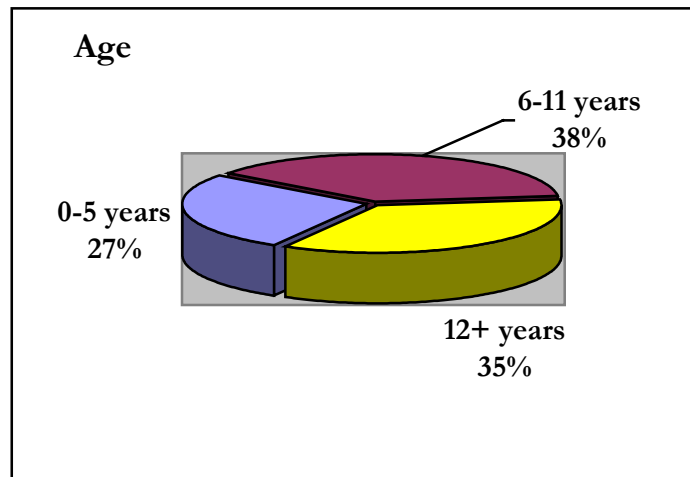
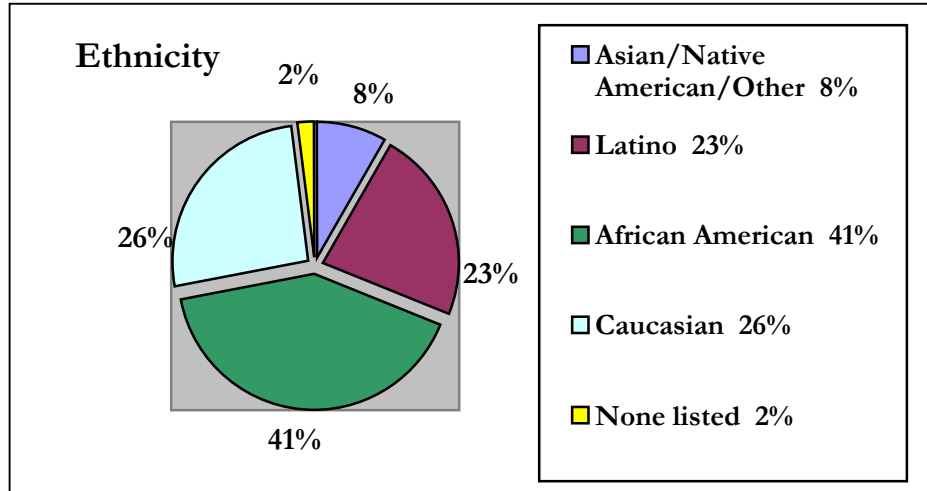
Whenever allegations are substantiated, the Department’s priority is to safely maintain children in their own homes if possible through the provision of services such as case management, parenting classes, and therapy. If necessary, the emergency response worker or the police will take the child into custody.

Response Priority for Referrals Received in 2001



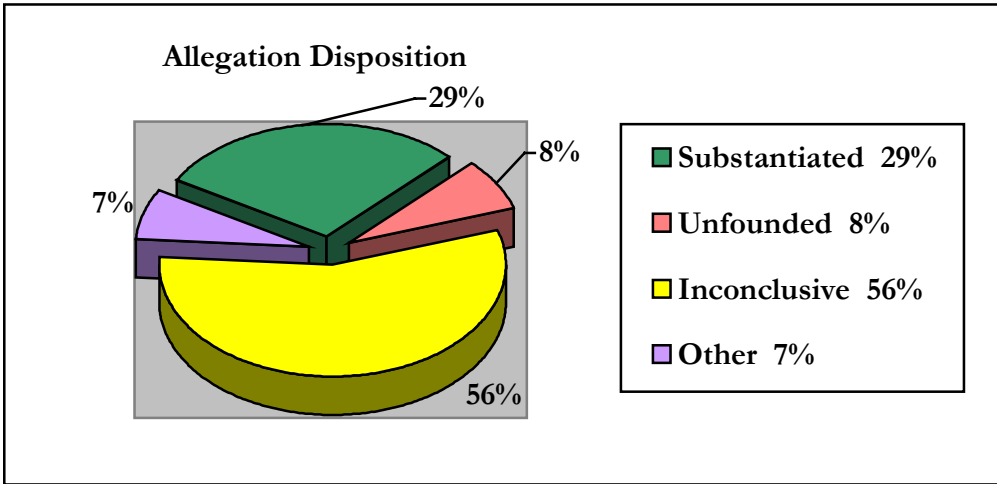
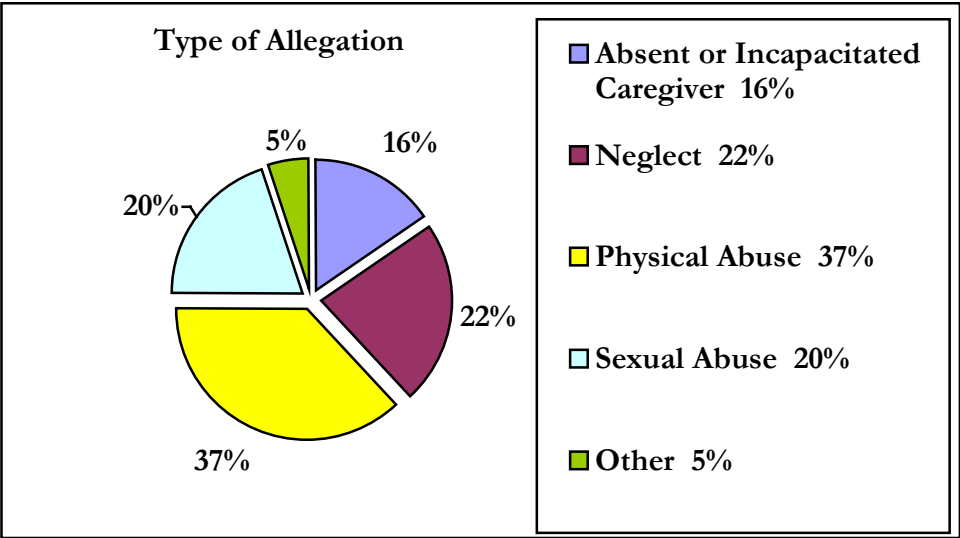
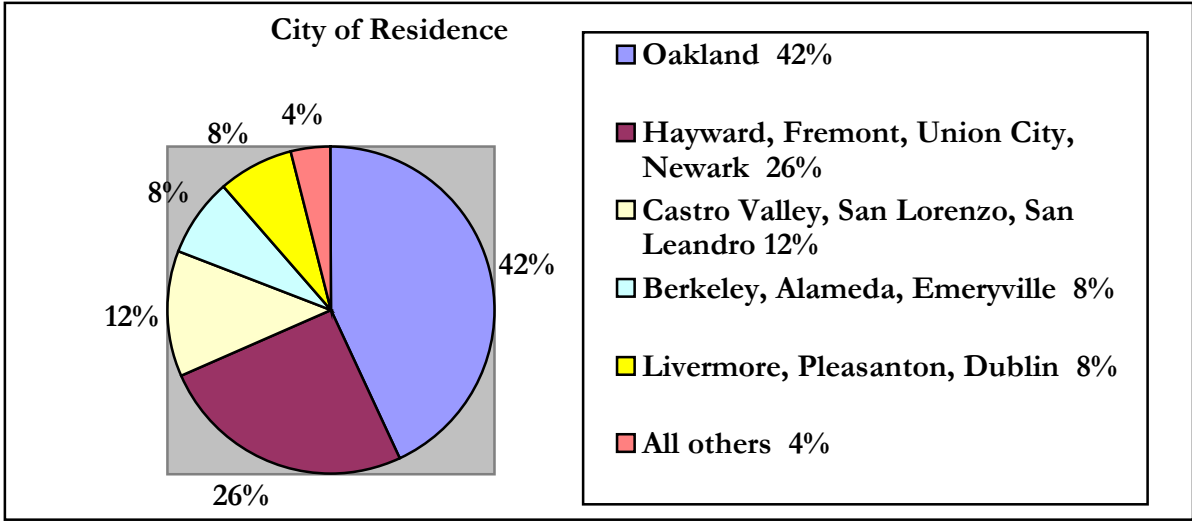
## Demographics of Investigated Referrals

Based on available data for 8,525 children in referrals that were assigned for investigation during 2001.



**Primary Language**

|            |     |
|------------|-----|
| English    | 89% |
| Spanish    | 7%  |
| Other      | 2%  |
| Not Listed | 2%  |



## Dependency Investigations

When a child has been brought into protective custody, a detention hearing is held within 48 hours and another hearing date is set for within 10 days. A worker in dependency investigations does an in-depth evaluation and makes recommendations to the juvenile court regarding the allegations and the child's needs. The juvenile court judge makes the final determination of whether the child is made a dependent of the court and where the child is placed.

If the situation can be stabilized, a family may be offered voluntary services to prevent the child from being placed in foster care. The judge has the option of making the child a dependent of the court and placing the child in the home, rather than in foster care. In either case, CFS provides services to help the family address the risk and prevent future out-of-home placement.

If out-of-home placement is determined to be necessary, the first preference is to place the child with a relative, or with a non-relative with whom the child has a relationship.

Otherwise, the child may be placed in a licensed foster home or group home setting.

The majority of children in foster care were referred due to neglect or the absence/incapacitation of the caregiver. These can be the most challenging types of issues for families to address, because they often reflect underlying substance abuse problems and other complex socioeconomic factors.

## Neighborhood Services

Child welfare workers in the Neighborhood Services Program are outstationed in Family Resource Centers in the Prescott neighborhood in West Oakland, the San Antonio/Fruitvale neighborhoods in East Oakland, and the Harder-Tennyson neighborhood in South Hayward. Each Family Resource Center provides formal and informal services for families, including emergency food, assistance with housing, advocacy and access to computer technology. Child welfare workers offer placement prevention services as part of a multi-disciplinary team collaboration.

### CASE INTERVENTION REASONS FOR CHILDREN WHO BECAME DEPENDENTS OF THE COURT DURING 2001

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Absent/Incapacitated Caregiver | 34% |
| Neglect                        | 26% |
| Physical Abuse                 | 17% |
| Substantial Risk               | 9%  |
| Sexual Abuse                   | 8%  |
| Other                          | 6%  |

## PLACEMENT, REUNIFICATION AND PERMANENCY

### **Placement**

When children need to be removed from their family of origin for their safety and well-being, permanency planning must begin immediately. The first choice for permanency is returning the child to the birth family once the risk has been addressed. If it is not possible for the family to be reunified, the second choice for permanency is adoption – either by a relative, the current foster parent, or a family with whom the child has been matched. Legal guardianship provides yet another option for providing children with a legally permanent home.

About 35% of Alameda County children who are in foster care are placed outside of the county, most in the contiguous Bay Area Counties. A substantial number of those children placed out-of-county are placed with relatives. Nevertheless, a lack of placement resources within the county means many children are placed in foster or group homes out of the area.

### **Family Reunification**

Family Reunification services are offered to parents whose children have been placed in foster care, except in certain cases as required by state regulations. Services are provided for up to 12 months, though the Juvenile Court may extend services for an additional six months. The child welfare worker and parents establish a

case plan, and the worker is responsible for providing the Juvenile Court with reports documenting the parents' efforts and progress toward addressing the areas of risk. Case management includes assisting parents with accessing community resources such as parenting classes, therapy, substance abuse treatment programs, housing and employment resources. The worker also coordinates with other service providers and meets with the child and the relative caregiver or foster parent to make sure the child's needs are being addressed.

### **Family Preservation**

The Family Preservation Program works with parents of children in foster care who are motivated to reunify, but who need intensive assistance to complete their case plan and have their children returned home. The worker is involved for up to 90 days, including the period of family stabilization after reunification.

Family Preservation workers see families in their homes and communities, remain available to families 24 hours a day, and provide a wide range of services. These include clinical case management, parent education and assistance with practical issues such as housing and childcare.

## Family Maintenance

The Family Maintenance (FM) Program works with families whose children:

- have been made dependents of the court due to abuse or neglect;
- either remain in or are returned to the home; and
- may remain in the home safely while services are being provided.

The FM Program can help prevent or shorten foster care placements by empowering families to address risk factors, supporting their efforts to protect and nurture their children, and connecting them with community resources. In court-ordered cases, the child welfare worker is responsible for providing reports to the Juvenile Court regarding the family's progress.

## Long Term Foster Care

Unfortunately there are a significant number of children for whom family reunification is not possible. When the Department is not able to match these children with caregivers who are willing to adopt or become their legal guardians, long-term foster care is provided. Options for permanency continue to be explored, and some families are able to reunify even after the children have been in care for several years. However, the ongoing shortage of families willing to offer permanency to older children placed in

the foster system means too many children grow up in foster care. Statewide, as of July, 2001, 52% of children in foster care were in long term care, also known as permanent placement.

## Independent Living Skills Program

For those youth who are in foster care during their adolescence, the Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) supports them in developing the skills they will need for future success. ILSP receives federal and state funding to help eligible youth to achieve self-sufficiency through training in independent living skills. ILSP services are available to all youth in out-of-home placement on or after their sixteenth birthday. Eligibility continues until age 21, even if the youth did not participate in ILSP prior to being reunified or emancipated.

### ILSP Program Summary

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Youths served   | 940 |
| Youths who completed high school/<br>GED/or adult education | 89  |
| Youths enrolled in college                                  | 89  |
| Youths who obtained employment                              | 221 |

Data for 10/1/00-9/30/01

ILSP classes meet weekly for 37 weeks of the year. A variety of topics related to living independently are covered, including: basic skills such as budgeting and job hunting; social development, such as communication and relation-

ship skills; and academic support, such as tutoring, college preparation, and computer training.

A significant number of youth enrolled in the program go on to higher education, and there is a strong employment assistance component for youth entering the job market. Support groups and services for pregnant and parenting teens, aftercare case management, and housing assistance are also provided. ILSP has its own website with information for current program participants, alumni, and the public: [www.alamedacountyilsp.org](http://www.alamedacountyilsp.org).

### **Group Homes**

The majority of children in group home placements are assigned to a worker in a group homes unit. These units work mainly with adolescents in long term foster care, who are also offered the support of the Independent Living Skills Program.

### **The Adoptions Program**

Alameda County Social Services Agency is licensed as a Public Adoption Agency by the California Department of Social Services. The Adoptions Program provides services related to the adoption of court dependent children in the child welfare system, as well as independent and step-parent adoption services for non-dependent children.

Workers in the Adoptions Program perform many different functions related to locating and supporting adoptive placements and preparing for adoptions to be finalized.

Prospective adoptive parents participate in a structured training called Model Approaches to Partnership Parenting (MAPP). The 30-hour program gives families the opportunity to develop the core competencies needed for adopting children with adverse backgrounds, who may have special needs.

#### **ADOPTIONS PROGRAM SUMMARY FOR 2001**

- **COMPLETED 72 ADOPTIVE HOMESTUDIES**
- **MADE 111 ADOPTIVE PLACEMENTS**
- **FINALIZED:  
152 ADOPTIONS OF COURT DEPENDENT CHILDREN,  
90 STEP-PARENT ADOPTIONS &  
80 INDEPENDENT ADOPTIONS**
- **PROVIDED FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO 1600 FAMILIES THROUGH THE ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP)**
- **PROVIDED POST-ADOPTION SERVICES TO 228 FAMILIES**

### **The SEED Program**

SEED stands for “Services to Enhance Early Development.” This program serves children from 0-5 years of age in a collaborative effort with the Center for the Vulnerable Child at Children’s Hospital Oakland.

The risk of attachment problems and developmental delays increases greatly with each placement change a child experiences. The goal of the SEED Program is to minimize disruptions in attachment relationships by quickly placing court-dependent children with caregivers who would be willing to provide permanency (adoption or legal guardianship) if reunification with birth parents is not possible.

Children in this program are given comprehensive assessments of their health, development, and mental health as they enter foster care, and their progress is closely tracked. The family is served by a multidisciplinary team which includes mental health professionals, public health nurses, and child welfare workers.

Preliminary data indicates that children in the SEED Program average fewer placement changes than other children in the system. The concurrent planning model implemented by this program is only made possible by additional funding, allowing these workers to have lower caseloads and provides resources and services to meet the needs of the children and caregivers.

### **CARI**

Community Action to Reach Out to Infants (CARI) is a state-funded project with the Department of Alcohol and Drugs. It provides a comprehensive system of care for children, birth parents, and caregivers. The program serves children from birth to 36 months who were prenatally exposed to drugs. CARI focuses on supporting family reunification in high-risk communities. Foster parents and relative caregivers are provided with specialized training, support groups, and respite care.

### **Medically Fragile Child Program**

This program provides specialized case management services to medically fragile children placed either in a foster home or with a parent.

Workers in this program cooperate closely with other programs within the Department to identify, train and support caregivers. They also coordinate meetings with representatives from all agencies involved in the care of the child, including Children’s Hospital, the Regional Center and California Children’s Services.

### **Kin-GAP**

Kin-GAP is a program established by the California Department of Social Services and implemented in 2000. The Kin-GAP program provides financial support to a child’s relatives, who assume guardianship of the child after

court dependency is terminated. Under this program, relative guardians receive the same amount of financial assistance they received as foster parents.

Relative placements accounted for about 35-40% of Alameda County foster care placements during 2001. Relative placements generally have fewer disruptions and more stability. The Department is currently working to expand Kin-GAP participation by identifying eligible relatives who are willing to become legal guardians of the children in their care. Once guardianship is established, the child is no longer part of the foster care system and has legal permanency. The case does remain open and a guardianship

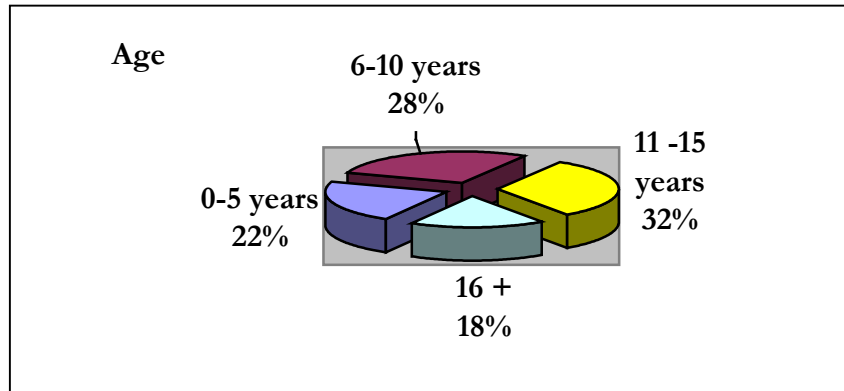
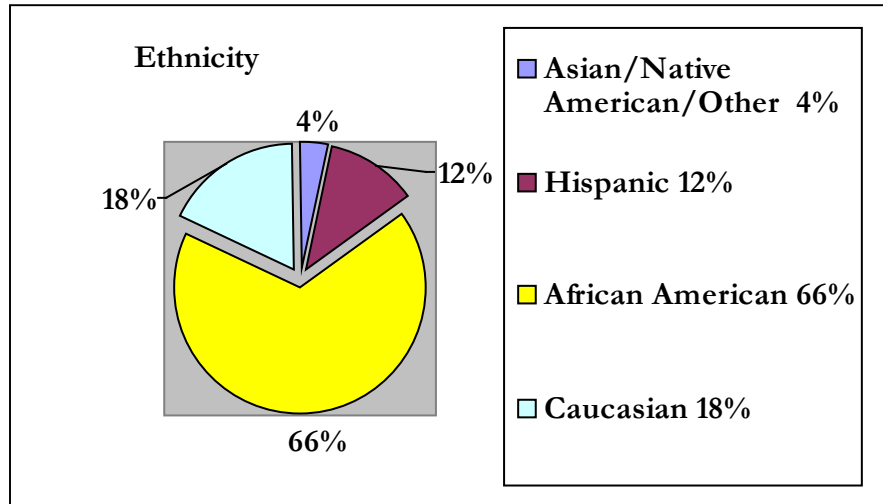
worker is assigned, but caseloads can be higher because of the stability of these cases. Over time, this will help reduce the caseloads for workers in the long-term foster care program. The new Kinship Unit was created in early 2002 to address the particular needs of relative guardians.

The Department also provides support for two Kinship Support Centers which opened in 2001. These sites, one in south county and one in north county, are operated by community-based organizations. Each center provides support groups, assistance in accessing resources, and other services to relative caregivers of dependent or non-dependent children.

***According to the 2000 Census, more than 953,000 children in California are being raised by grandparents or other relatives.***

## Demographics of Children in Foster Care

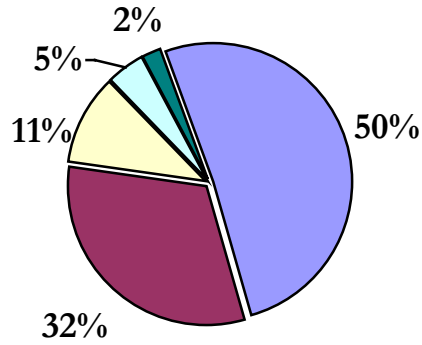
Based on available data for 5,781 children who were in foster care or child welfare-supervised guardianships at any time during 2001.



**Primary Language**

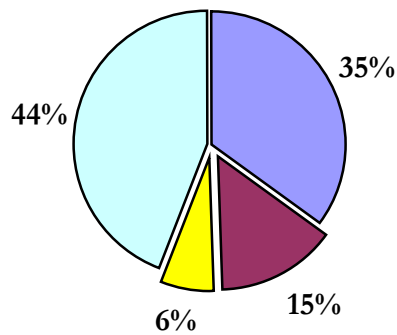
|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| English | 97% |
| Spanish | 2%  |
| Other   | 1%  |

**Reason for Out-of-Home Care**



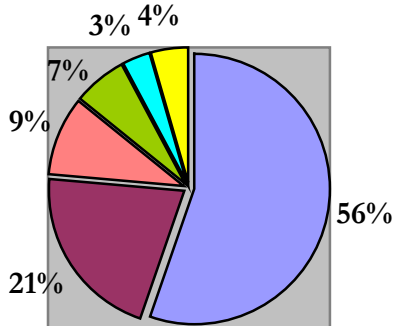
- Absent or Incapacitated Caregiver 50%
- Neglect 32%
- Physical Abuse 11%
- Sexual Abuse 5%
- Other 2%

**Placement Type**



- Relative 35%
- Group Home 15%
- Guardian 6%
- Foster Home 44%

**City of Residence for Children Placed in Alameda County**



- Oakland 56%
- Hayward, Fremont, Union City, Newark 21%
- Castro Valley, San Lorenzo, San Leandro 9%
- Berkeley, Alameda, Emeryville 7%
- Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin 3%
- All others 4%

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Without the crucial services provided by non-case carrying staff, the Department would be unable to function effectively. The following are some of the staff providing these services and brief examples of their responsibilities:

- ❖ *Screeners* take referrals coming into the hotline from the public and the police.
- ❖ *Eligibility workers* determine the source of funds used to support a child's placement (state, federal or county resources) and authorize foster care payments.
- ❖ *Placement specialists* have expertise in matching children with stable long-term placements.
- ❖ *Licensing staff* review and approve applications for foster home licensure, monitor licensed facilities for regulatory compliance, and investigate complaints.
- ❖ *Placement unit clerks* keep track of computerized placement information.
- ❖ *Transportation staff, unit clerks* and a host of *administrative and program support staff* all have crucial roles in helping the Department to serve children and families.
- ❖ *Shelter care coordinators* locate placements for all new intakes.
- ❖ *The foster parent recruiter* works with the community to get the word out about the crucial need for foster caregivers.

## STAFF ETHNICITY

Child welfare workers endure high caseloads and difficult working conditions. Not surprisingly, staff retention is a challenge. Nationally there has been a reduction in numbers of graduates from MSW programs,

and surrounding counties also offer competitive salaries. Nonetheless, the Department has aggressively recruited and worked to retain an ethnically diverse staff which reflects the community we serve.

| <b>Ethnicity of Child Welfare Workers, Supervisors and Managers</b> |           |                               |                                   |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|   | % of CWWs | % of Supervisors and Managers | % of Alameda County's Population* |
| African American  | 29        | 33                            | 15                                |
| Latino  | 9         | 4                             | 19                                |
| Asian   | 7         | 6                             | 20                                |
| Caucasian   | 55        | 57                            | 49                                |

\* According to 2000 Census Data

## OUR PARTNERS

Another essential component of the Department's operations is our community partners, including emergency foster homes, foster family homes, group home providers, and community based organizations with whom we contract to provide mental health treatment and other supportive services to children and families.

### Foster Parents

Foster parents are at the heart of the system which was designed to provide a safe and loving temporary environment for children who cannot live at home or with relatives. Foster parenting offers many rewards, but also takes a special kind of commitment.

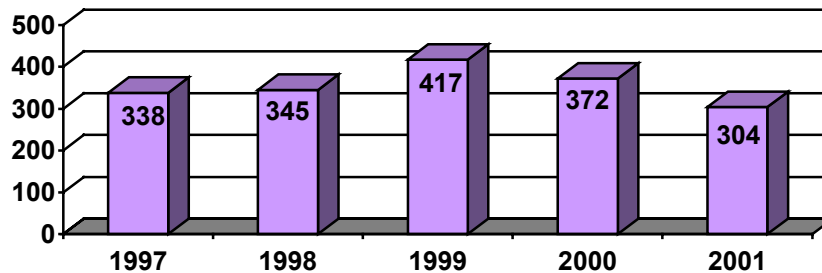
The number of foster homes licensed by Alameda County has been declining

for several years. This is due to various factors, including more rigorous screening and recruitment procedures, and the inadequacy of foster care payments.

Without adequate local placement resources, many Alameda County children must be placed in surrounding counties.

***"It's just about the hardest thing I've ever done, but my life is so much happier because of being a foster parent. Being around kids gives your life hope and meaning."  
~ Alameda County Foster Parent***

**Number of Alameda County  
Licensed Foster Homes**



## **Interagency Collaborations**

The Department participates in multiple collaborations with other agencies in our community.

- ❖ The Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC) provides a forum for promoting better service integration among county agencies serving children and families. The participating agencies include CFS, Behavioral Health, Probation, Education, and Health Care. ICPC-sponsored programs focus on outcomes such as: more children living safely at home; more parents able to support their children (economically, emotionally, and developmentally); and a more integrated service system.

- ❖ Every Child Counts/Proposition 10 is an initiative to develop prevention and early intervention programs for Alameda County children age 0-5 and their families. Every Child Counts has spent several years in a joint effort to plan and develop Another Road to Safety (ARS) - previously known as the Alternative Response System. After several years of planning and development, ARS is launching in two communities in the summer of 2002. This program will allow the Department to focus on serving families who do not meet the full criteria for intervention by a child welfare worker, but who could benefit from services from community-based organizations to prevent problems from escalating.

- ❖ Severely emotionally disturbed children and their families may be involved with multiple agencies

simultaneously. The System of Care Interagency Services Program fosters collaboration and cooperation between staff from CFS, Special Education, Behavioral Health Care Services, and Juvenile Probation in serving these children, with a goal of keeping them at home with their parents when possible. The program also sponsors an Interagency Training Series for public agency staff and the community, providing an overview of the many agencies serving children in Alameda County.

- ❖ Project Destiny is a public-private partnership between CFS and the Flexcare Consortium, a group of three group home providers. The program began in 2000, and continued to expand in 2001. Funding flexibility allows Project Destiny to provide intensive services to children with significant behavioral problems, as well as their families. Without wraparound services, these children would most likely need placement in facilities with a higher level of care.

Alameda County's Project Destiny Program is leading the state with the number of children enrolled in the federal Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project. Children in the program are demonstrating fewer placement changes than a control group of similar children receiving traditional child welfare services. The Department is currently making plans for developing the capacity of more group homes to meet the intensive needs of this population.

## FINANCE AND BUDGET

For fiscal year 2001-02, the Board of Supervisors approved an annual budget of \$164.5 million for the Department of Children and Family Services. The Department's expenditures include costs for both mandated and discretionary services.

Mandated child welfare programs account for about 90% of the CFS annual budget. The core programs and services required by state regulations are:

- ❖ Emergency Response/ Dependency Investigations;
- ❖ Emergency Shelter Care;
- ❖ Family Maintenance;
- ❖ Family Reunification;
- ❖ Permanent Placement; and
- ❖ Family Preservation.

Approximately 10% of the budget is used to provide a wide range of "discretionary" services, many of which are actually considered essential to meeting the Department's mission. These programs are supported by a combination of federal, state and local funding:

- ❖ Adoptions;
- ❖ Community Action to Reach Out to Infants (CARI);
- ❖ Neighborhood Services;
- ❖ The Child Abuse Prevention Council;
- ❖ Dependency Mediation;
- ❖ Family Reclaim;
- ❖ Services to Enhance Early Development (SEED);
- ❖ Foster Home Licensing; and
- ❖ The Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP)

Most federal funding for child welfare services is in the form of entitlement payments for eligible children in foster care. Out-of-home care accounted for nearly 66% of the Department's costs. The other 34% was related to staffing, support, and client services.

CFS staff provide most client services, but over \$5.5 million is currently allocated for contracts with various agencies in the community. Parenting classes, drug treatment, and respite care are some of the types of services that are contracted out.

## EXPECTATIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2002

### **Leadership Transitions**

After a year of strong leadership bringing many positive changes for CFS, Deputy Director Chet Hewitt was appointed in December, 2001, to the position of Alameda County Social Services Agency Director. Ms. Donna DeAngelis was appointed by Director Hewitt to assume the position of Interim Director of CFS.

As Interim Director during a challenging period, Ms. DeAngelis has helped the Department continue to build upon the positive changes put in place during Mr. Hewitt's tenure. Ms. DeAngelis was the program manager who spearheaded the effective Quality Assurance effort, a role she looks forward to resuming when the search for the new department director is complete.

### **The Children and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)**

Amendments to the Social Security Act in the 1990's authorized the Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family service programs. The reviews cover child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation, family support, and independent living. They are designed to help states improve child welfare services and the outcomes for families and children.

In 2001, California passed legislation requiring the Department of Social Services to establish a system to review county child welfare programs in a manner that is consistent with the new federal standards and phase out the prior system of auditing for regulation compliance. CDSS is scheduled to commence reviewing counties using these new standards by January, 2004.

The reviews will examine each county's outcomes compared to national standards in three core areas: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. Systemic factors affecting the quality of services and the outcomes children and families experience will also be evaluated.

Examples of the measures that will be used to evaluate outcomes are: the rate of children entering foster care; the percentage of children in care who were reunified, adopted or living with legal guardians; the percentage of children who had no more than two placements during their stay in foster care; and the median length of stay in foster care.

The Department's administration is in support of the shift to an evaluation of outcomes. This approach will be beneficial in program planning, prioritizing the use of scarce resources, and improving services to the children

and families of Alameda County. The identified measures are also consistent with top priorities identified by the Department in its goals for the current year.

### **Program Goals**

The following are some of the goals established for 2002 by the Department's senior managers, who have placed strong emphasis on evaluating and restructuring the placement system:

- ❖ improve the integration of child-centered practices with placement services;
- ❖ evaluate the causes of multiple placement changes;
- ❖ open the Assessment Center and evaluate its impact on placements;
- ❖ increase Kin-GAP dismissals through creation of a Kinship Unit;
- ❖ reduce attrition of current foster homes;
- ❖ recruit and license 250 new foster homes;
- ❖ pilot Structured Decision Making (SDM) to increase standardization of decision-making; and
- ❖ support and enhance parent-child visitation.

### **The Ongoing Challenge**

Alameda County's Department of Children & Family Services is motivated to provide innovative programs and services to prevent

children and families from entering the foster care system or, if removal is necessary, to provide permanency as quickly as possible. However, this Department, along with other public child welfare systems in California and across the nation, faces a funding dilemma that undermines these goals.

The current funding structure essentially encourages out-of-home care over placement prevention or services that promote reunification. This means that as staff strive to reduce the number of children entering foster care and expedite exits from the system, "success" results in a reduction in the federal and state funds available to this Department to provide services that promote the outcomes of permanency, safety, and well-being.

Clearly, major reforms are called for on the federal level. However, high caseloads and declining placement options are currently creating enormous pressure on child welfare workers and the clients they serve. Without substantive changes, too many children will continue to grow up in long term foster care.

The Department's top strategic goal for fiscal year 2002-03 is to explore current strategies to secure funding which supports reunification and permanency and allows us to operate in the best interest of the children and families of Alameda County.