



Orange County, California

OVERVIEW

Orange County Social Services became a Family to Family site in June 2003 and received a 3-year grant from the Stuart Foundation in 2004 to assist with implementation. Orange County's first Self-Assessment was completed in 2004 and the follow-up System Improvement Plan (SIP) focused on the areas of time to reunification and placement stability. Orange County's Redesign Planning Council is made up of SSA Agency staff and community partners. It oversees the agency's efforts with the SIP and implementation of Family to Family strategies.

The Family to Family Coordinator believes that the support of the executive team, inclusive of the deputies, director and managers, has been a major support in implementing Family to Family. They provide vision and a progressive and open minded approach towards Child Safety and Family Reunification. Another key factor is the participation of several community organizations who are assisting with the safety and care of children. One hindrance to implementation has been communication and coordination of services within the agency and with community partners. While there are numerous services that exist, not all service providers know about other services offered in the community. A second hindrance, experienced by other sites, has been buy-in and support from supervisors. The supervisors are aware of Family to Family but would benefit and be more receptive through knowing its effects as it relates to their cases. The Family to Family Coordinator reports that nearly all the key elements of core strategies (with the exception of icebreakers) occur frequently in the agency's child welfare practice.

SITE-LEVEL PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE INDICATORS

Exhibit B.4.1 shows that initial entries to out-of-home care in Orange County increased from 1,297 in 2005 to 1,502 in 2006 before declining to 1,449 in 2007 and again, but more substantially to 1,179 in 2008. During this period, the number of initial entries to out-of-home care (who remained in care at least eight days) in California declined from 26,781 in 2005 to 22,655 entrants in 2008.¹ During the anchor-site period, birth to one year olds accounted for just below one-third of initial admissions. Among initial entrants in 2008 in Orange County, 54.3% were five or younger, slightly lower than the statewide rate of 55.2% for this group in 2008. In 2008, 41.3% of children and youth initially entered care without a sibling and only 7.3% of entries involved children from large sibling groups (five or more children).

¹ Data obtained from Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., Peng, C. & Holmes, A. (2009). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved 7/29/2009, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

The percentage of the children and youth entering care for the first time in Orange County who were Hispanic was at least 60.4% from 2006 through 2008, but never exceeded 62.2%. The rate of admissions among Hispanic children and youth is notably higher than the rate of 47% for Hispanic persons in the general child population of the county. Whites comprise 34% of the county's child population, but only 28.2% of initial entrants in 2008 were white. During the anchor-site phase, the percent of children initially entering out-of-home care who were black ranged from 3.5% to 6.5% of initial entrants. This contrasts with the county's general child population in 2008 in which only 1.2% of residents were black.

Exhibit B.4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Children Initially Entering Out-of-Home Care —Orange County, CA

Characteristic	2005 (N=1297)	2006 (N=1502)	2007 (N=1449)	2008 (N=1179)
Gender				
Male	594 (45.8%)	695 (46.3%)	694 (47.9%)	580 (49.2%)
Female	703 (54.2%)	807 (53.7%)	755 (52.1%)	599 (50.8%)
Race				
Black	60 (4.6%)	98 (6.5%)	50 (3.5%)	58 (4.9%)
White	424 (32.7%)	427 (28.4%)	396 (27.3%)	332 (28.2%)
Hispanic	726 (56.0%)	908 (60.5%)	901 (62.2%)	712 (60.4%)
Asian American/Pacific Islanders	81 (6.2%)	67 (4.5%)	101 (7.0%)	73 (6.2%)
Native American/Alaska Native	6 (0.5%)	2 (0.1%)	0 (0%)	4 (0.3%)
Age				
0-1 year	434 (33.5%)	451 (30.0%)	442 (30.5%)	371 (31.5%)
2-5 years	299 (23.1%)	337 (22.4%)	342 (23.6%)	269 (22.8%)
6-11 years	302 (23.3%)	381 (25.4%)	353 (24.4%)	298 (25.3%)
12-14 years	137 (10.6%)	173 (11.5%)	161 (11.1%)	119 (10.1%)
15-17 years	125 (9.5%)	160 (10.7%)	151 (10.4%)	122 (10.3%)
Siblings entering care at same time				
1	546 (42.1%)	534 (35.6%)	539 (37.2%)	487 (41.3%)
2	316 (24.4%)	354 (23.6%)	335 (23.1%)	246 (20.9%)
3	208 (16.0%)	307 (20.4%)	290 (20.0%)	232 (19.7%)
4	113 (8.7%)	178 (11.9%)	161 (11.1%)	128 (10.9%)
5	50 (3.9%)	76 (5.1%)	63 (4.4%)	67 (5.7%)
6 or more	64 (4.9%)	53 (3.5%)	61 (4.2%)	19 (1.6%)

*Children in care less than 8 days excluded.

Orange County differed from other sites involved in the evaluation of the anchor-site phase of Family to Family in that most initial placements were into shelters or other types of congregate care. It is important to note, however, that while the rate was consistently in the range of 54% to

56% from 2005 to 2008—these proportions were substantially lower than had been the case in preceding years. Indeed as **Exhibit B.4.3** illustrates, prior to implementation of Family to Family, placements into congregate care accounted for over three-quarters of first entries. After adopting Family to Family in 2003, site practice did trend toward decreased use of initial placements to congregate care, and a shifted focus of the county shelter towards being more of an assessment center. Initial placements to foster homes during the anchor-site phase ranged from 11.1% to 12.6% while placements with relatives were consistent (from 30.8% to 33.8%). Very few children were initially placed in Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes or other placement settings.

Exhibit B.4.2: Characteristics of Placement—Orange County, CA				
Characteristic of Initial Placement	2005	2006	2007	2008
Initial Placement				
Relative Home	399 (30.8%)	508 (33.8%)	470 (32.4%)	376 (31.9%)
Foster Home	164 (12.6%)	172 (11.5%)	167 (11.5%)	131 (11.1%)
Foster Family Agency Home	4 (0.3%)	12 (0.8%)	16 (1.1%)	25 (2.1%)
Group/Shelter	727 (56.1%)	804 (53.5%)	796 (54.9%)	647 (54.9%)
Guardian	0 (0%)	5 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other*	3 (0.2%)	1 (0.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sibling Placement Status				
No Siblings Entered Placement	546	534	539	487
Placed with All Siblings	335 (44.6%)	455 (47.0%)	414 (45.5%)	324 (46.8%)
Placed with Some Siblings	193 (25.7%)	253 (26.1%)	245 (26.9%)	196 (28.3%)
Placed with no Siblings	223 (29.7%)	260 (26.9%)	251 (27.6%)	172 (24.9%)
Recurrence of Maltreatment w.in 6 mo.^				
No	7196 (93%)	7552 (93%)	7436 (93%)	3640 (94%)
Yes	530 (7%)	547 (7%)	542 (7%)	217 (6%)
Pct Placed initially < 1 mile from home **				
Relative Home	36.9	34.9	39.3	31.5
Non Relative Home	2.2	1.1	2.3	3.2
Total	13.0	12.7	14.4	12.2
Family Connection?***				
No	550 (42.4%)	555 (36.9%)	536 (37.0%)	469 (39.8%)
Yes	747 (57.6%)	947 (63.1%)	913 (63.0%)	710 (60.2%)

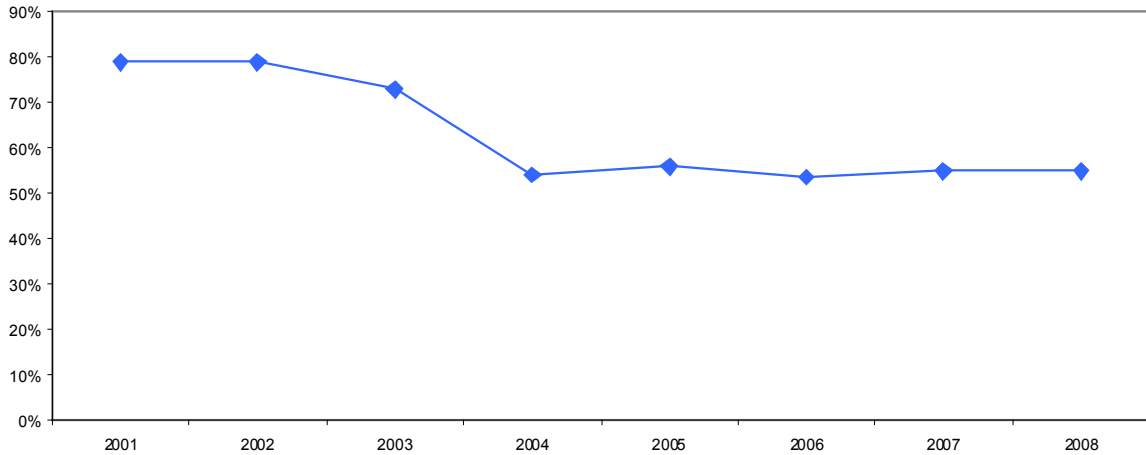
*Includes pre-adopt, and court-specified home

**Calculation of percent of entries placed initially within 1 mile was based only on instances which had both a geocodable removal and placement address.

***Family connection refers to initial placement with a relative or guardian, or at least one sibling, or within one mile of removal address.

^Base period for 2008 is Jan. 1 to Jun. 30 due to data cut-off of 12/31/08

Exhibit B.4.3: Percentage of Children Initially Placed in Congregate Care – Orange County, CA



Recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months was consistent from 2005 to 2007, but appeared to decrease slightly to 6% in 2008. This safety indicator is one of county’s target outcomes in its current system improvement plan (SIP).

From 2005 through 2008, the rate at which children who entered with siblings and were placed with all of their siblings was generally consistent with the rate of 46.8% among children and youth who initially entered care in 2008. Also, the percentage of initial sibling entrants who were not placed with another sibling had declined from 29.7% in 2005 to 24.9% by 2008.

Family and community connections also can be maintained through the use of kinship care. The data in **Exhibit B.4.2** suggest that a consequence of placement with relatives is to help children remain close to their home neighborhoods. Compared to non-relative foster homes, a much higher proportion of these placements are within one mile of the child’s original home (although the percentage declined somewhat for 2008). In contrast, no more than 3.2% of placements with unrelated caregivers were this close.

The percentage of children who maintained a family connection when placed in out-of-home care remained in the range of 58% to 63% of initial placements in Orange County.

To facilitate comparisons across cohorts, **Exhibit B.4.4** describes the number of placement moves for children and youth who initially entered care each year and were still in care 12 months later. Similar to, but corrective of the first placement stability measure in the federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) process, the longitudinal indicators in this table measure the percentage of children in their first or second, or third or greater placement. The results for children who initially entered care in 2007 point to substantial improvement in placement stability. The percentage of children in care after one year who had only 1 or 2 placements rose from 51.9% of the 2005 cohort to 54.5% of the 2006 cohort, and finally, to 64.2% of the 2007 cohort.

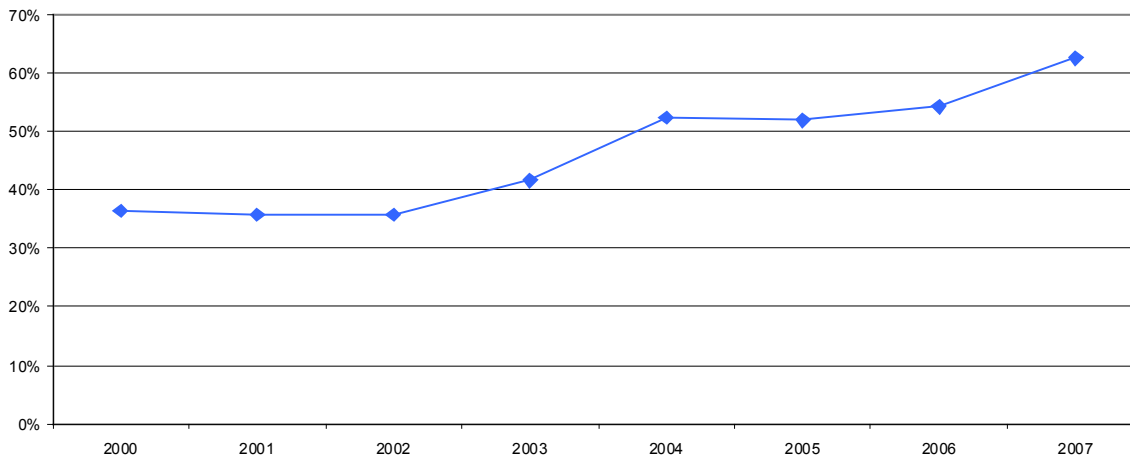
Exhibit B.4.4: Placement Stability at 12 months by Year of Initial Entry—Orange County, CA

	2005	2006	2007
No. of Placements in 1st Spell*			
1 or 2 placements	360 (51.9%)	463 (54.5%)	519 (64.2%)
3 or more placements	334 (48.1%)	386 (45.5%)	289 (35.8%)

*For children still in care at 12 months

Exhibit B.4.5 examines placement stability over a longer time period. While gradual improvement in the proportion of children with 1 or 2 placements occurred between 2001 and 2003, following Family to Family implementation in 2003 more substantial increases were seen. Placement stability is another of Orange County’s current SIP target outcome; however, they will be tracking performance on the federal version of this measure.

Exhibit B.4.5: Percentage of Children with 1 or 2 Placements in Initial Spell—Orange County, CA



Examining **Exhibit B.4.6** we find that the proportion of reunification and adoption exits from care within six months, one year, and two years appear not to have changed very substantially across cohorts. Consistent with experience in sites that rely on shelters for initial placements, a relatively high proportion of children left care within six months, ranging from 27% to 28% across the three cohorts. The proportions exiting to reunification by two years indicate that median lengths of stay of more than one year, but less than two years prevail among children who are reunified in Orange County.

Among children with very short first spells (seven days or less), the proportion reentering out-of-home care rose to 15% for children in the 2006 cohort who reunified, but declined to 0.07 among the same group in the 2007 cohort. This volatility was due to small numbers of short-stayers. Among children with longer first spells, the proportion reentering care following reunification declined steadily across the three cohorts, with the 2005 cohort having 10% reentry while the 2007 cohort had a reentry proportion of 6%.

Exhibit B.4.6: Time in Care and Reentry—Orange County, CA

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Pct Reentering Care After 1st Spell*				
0-7 days	0.07	0.15	0.07	--
>7 days	0.10	0.09	0.06	--
Pct Exiting Care by**:				
Exit to Reunification				
6 months	0.28	0.28	0.27	--
1 year	0.41	0.40	0.40	--
2 years	0.57	0.57	--	--
Exit to Adoption				
6 months	0.00	0.00	0.00	--
1 year	0.01	0.01	0.02	--
2 years	0.09	0.09	--	--

*Exit cohorts to reunification per year (same as federal measure C1.4)

**First entry cohorts, children in care 8+ days

The longer that children remain in custody, the more challenging it becomes to help them achieve a permanent placement. As **Exhibit B.4.7** shows, this is evident in the fact that no more than 25.3% of the children and youth who had been in care for two years or more on January 1 in any of the years from 2004 through 2007 achieved a permanent placement by the end of the year. The proportion of these children in long-term care who achieved permanency by the end of the year fluctuated somewhat over time.

Exhibit B.4.7: Achieving Permanency for Children and Youth in Care for Two Years or More—Orange County, CA

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Children and Youth in care on January 1st of year*	3,077	2,886	2,813	2,966
Number in care for two years or more	1,167	984	929	965
“Number who exited to reunification, adoption, guardianship by end of year and before age 18”	295	204	178	239
Percent achieving permanency	25.3	20.7	19.2	24.8

*Children in non-dependent guardianships and 18 years or older on Jan 1 excluded.

Resource Family Recruitment, Development, and Support

The Family to Family coordinator indicates that there continues to be a need to provide training and reasoning on why it is best to place with relatives. Case workers and supervisors must be apprised of the benefits of placing with relatives versus “historical thinking” of placing with a foster family as a first choice. The Family to Family Strategy Groups could facilitate these needed discussions and present data to case workers and supervisors on what works best in safety and stability when placing with a relative versus a foster family. To be most effective, this outreach and education should be delivered on a regular basis.

Among the activities undertaken by Fresno County during the past several years to promote RDS have been: Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) training offered in English and Spanish, collaboration with faith-based organizations expressing interest in recruiting and supporting foster families, significant outreach was conducted within the Vietnamese community, Orange County Heart Gallery photos displayed in several community organizations resulting in hundreds of phone calls and numerous successful adoptions, co-location of eligibility workers in other parts of CFS to help with financial assistance applications and Medical insurance, recruitment efforts through different media such as ads in specialized print publications, a popular county radio station, and websites.

Orange has also begun using the ETO web-based RDS tracking tool developed by UC Berkeley. Efforts to tap the full potential of this tool continue to be developed. Current use across sites ranges from selective use such as entry of prospective resource parents at the initial contact (basic demographic, name, address), and some tracking of PRIDE attendance, or recruitment efforts, to full utilization of the program.

No specific outcome measures have been identified at present for RDS. However, UCB is soliciting site participation in workgroups whose goal will be to determine what ongoing recruitment and training data should be measured, and clarify which “supportive services” are provided to resource parents across all sites. UCB is also creating a list and description of queries built for each site—to be shared with all other sites and posted on the ETO section of F2F CA website. A bi-weekly, drop-in WebEx video conference hosted by UCB recently began to facilitate a dialogue between counties in order to connect, share ideas and discuss data and SE efforts as they pertain to RDS.

Building Community Partnerships

The coordinator reports that Orange County has not followed the typical Family to Family approach in this strategy. Currently, they do not have a standalone Building Community Partners effort; instead they use an “infusion” model in which community partners choose to help with the reform efforts that are of most interest to them. Some work with typical Family to Family activities while others may help find summer camp opportunities for children.

Orange County SSA began reaching out to the community by hosting a series of ongoing community forums and implementing resource family recruitment campaigns in targeted communities with the highest number of children entering into foster care. A primary focus of Orange County’s Building Community Partnerships strategy has been on regionalizing agency staff and practice. Efforts to regionalize have increased social work knowledge of community resources and pro-

moted social work collaboration with designated communities. Currently, the County of Orange Social Services Agency Children & Family Services Division has identified six county regions and assigned cases to social work staff based on these geographic locations.

BCP Activities. To facilitate the development of community partnerships and enhance their child welfare practice, Orange County has implemented many programs aimed at various BCP core values. Initial collaborative efforts with community partners resulted in a drug court program and expanded wraparound services for clients. Collaboration with law enforcement has helped to increase social workers and police teaming in the field to facilitate the most appropriate and least intrusive methods of assessment and placement of children in emergency situations. Resource family recruitment efforts have included recruitment campaigns in targeted communities, trainings for staff and community partners, collaborations with faith-based organizations and in one instance, partnering with a local sports team with public service announcements and resource tables incorporated into home game day activities. Activities related to serving and supporting care providers, foster parents and birth parents include facilitating icebreaker meetings for families at placement, parenting classes offered in partnership with community collaboratives involving volunteers and local school districts, programs aimed at helping families navigate the child welfare system, and a Kinship Support Services Program offered in partnership with a local, community non-profit organization. In addition, a Parent Leadership Task Force coordinates activities related to assisting parents that are new to the agency by providing mentorship, information, and support. Orange County has also incorporated activities geared engaging and supporting youth at risk of emancipation through the California Connected by 25 Initiative and various trainings and consultations focused on eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.

Funding. In 2009, Orange County allocated \$40,000 to support subcontracts for BCP programs. An additional \$55,000 was allocated to support other BCP activities. Orange County is actively trying to engage local funders to support community partnership efforts. Collaborative relationships with many community-based agencies have resulted in provision of services to youth, foster and kinship resource families. A local foundation has agreed to match county-established youth IDA accounts to further support emancipated youth.

Exhibit B.4.8: Community Partnerships Reflected in TDM Meetings—Orange County, CA

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Removal TDMs				
Community representative present	20%	7%	2%	3%
Service provider present	67%	70%	67%	51%
Family member or friend present	57%	57%	51%	48%
Held in a community location	1%	0%	0%	1%
Change of Placement TDMs				
Community representative present	1%	0%	1%	2%
Service provider present	65%	60%	68%	69%
Family member or friend present	27%	34%	30%	38%
Held in a community location	0%	0%	0%	0%

Exhibit B.4.8 illustrates the how community partnerships were reflected in both removal and change of placement TDM meetings during the anchor site period. Because Fresno County has no formal BCP strategy, not surprisingly, few meetings were held in community locations or integrated community representatives. The county does however show a high level of participation by other stakeholders in TDM meetings. Specifically, a family member or friend attended 48% of removal TDMs and 42% of meetings related to changes in placement. Service providers attended more than half of removal TDMs, and more than two-thirds of those held for change of placement.

Team Decisionmaking

Estimates of the “penetration rate” for removal TDMs in Orange County have steadily increased in recent years, but the rate of 59% in 2008 was lower than the median rate of 67% across all F2F anchor sites. This estimate is derived by comparing the number of first entries during a year to the number of those children who had a removal TDM over the same time period, and rates among anchor sites in 2008 range from 51% to 90%. A similar comparison of changes in placement setting using longitudinal placement data and TDM data indicates that 21% of Orange County children who had a placement moves among each annual cohort of children also had a COP TDM. This compares to a median rate of 38% across all anchor sites.

Exhibit B.4.9: TDM Implementation Progress—Orange County, CA

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Removal TDMs				
Percentage of children entering care for 1st time each year who had a removal TDM during this time period	42%	44%	51%	58%
# removal TDMs held	501	554	659	734
# removal recommendations made	964	1074	1272	1470
TDM held prior to placement	66%	68%	64%	51%
Parents present	76%	80%	78%	92%
More than 1 DSS staff person present	74%	70%	69%	71%
Experienced Facilitator	92%	78%	90%	63%
Change of Placement TDMs				
Percentage of children entering care for 1st time during these years and experiencing more than 1 placement who had a change of placement TDM during these years	19%	16%	16%	21%
# COP recommendations made	942	953	927	766
Parents present	41%	42%	47%	51%
More than 1 DSS staff person present	72%	73%	72%	73%
Caregiver present	61%	59%	63%	62%
Experienced Facilitator	92%	82%	90%	68%

A notable characteristic of Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings in Orange County is that a high percentage include birth parents. As **Exhibit B.4.9** shows, a parent participated in 91% of removal TDM meetings in 2008. In this same year, parents attended 51% of change of placement (COP) meetings. Both rates exceeded the median for all anchor sites. Caregivers were present at almost two-thirds of COP meetings in 2008. A current challenge for the agency has been the difficulty with maintaining sufficient facilitator capacity; and more recently, they have had a 50 percent turnover in facilitators. This is reflected in the data where the 2008 proportion of experienced facilitators in both removal and COP meetings declined considerably from earlier years.

Removal TDMs and change of placement (COP) TDMs averaged 4.2 and 3.6 key elements (community partnership and implementation), respectively, per meeting during the past several years. This was virtually equal to the medians for these types of meetings across all F2F anchor sites (these data are not included in the table).

Exhibit B.4.10 indicates that the pattern of recommendations produced by removal TDM meetings in Orange County has changed in some important ways during the anchor-site phase of Family to Family. Recommendations to remove have declined from 70% in 2005 to 59% among the 2008 cohort with a corresponding increase in recommendations for children to remain in the home or to be returned home immediately. Specifically, the rate of recommendations to maintain or return to the child’s home rose from 28% in 2005 to 41% in 2008.

Exhibit B.4.10: Recommendation of Removal TDM Meetings by Cohort—Orange County, CA				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Out-of-home Care	70%	71%	66%	59%
Child / Youth Home	28%	27%	33%	41%
Unable to reach Consensus /Other	1%	0%	0%	0%
Missing	0%	1%	1%	0%

Exhibit B.4.11 shows only small changes in the pattern of recommendations emerging from change-of-placement (COP) meetings in Orange County from 2005 through 2008. Across this period, the percentage of children who were maintained in their current placements declined slightly from 51% of COP TDM meetings in 2005 to 48% in 2008. The rate of lateral moves generally declined from 25% in 2005 to 19% in 2008. Only small changes occurred in the rate of recommendations for transfers to both more restrictive and less restrictive placement settings, but recommendations to return children to their parents rose from 4% in 2005 to 9% in 2008.

Exhibit B.4.11: Recommendation of Change of Placement TDM Meetings by Cohort—Orange County, CA				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Move less restrictive	7%	11%	8%	9%
Move more restrictive	12%	12%	12%	13%
Move Same Level	25%	20%	18%	19%
Maintain Placement	51%	50%	52%	48%
Other / Missing	6%	7%	11%	11%

Self-Evaluation

The site coordinator reported that self evaluation has evolved into a vital segment of the Family to Family concept in Orange County. The self evaluation team provides the data necessary to measure what has been accomplished, identify challenging areas and what must be addressed to ensure safe and stable placements. Data are shared regularly with community partners, other strategy groups and staff. Orange County also has a taskforce looking at issues of disproportionality that is reviewing data and considering related policies and training curriculum.

The Self Evaluation Team engaged in a number of important activities over the past several years, including: creating geo-maps to target areas of high client activity, producing the “At A Glance” report, and “CWS Outcomes Trend Report;” tracking trends in data that “flagged” the need for corrective action; providing data to other strategy groups; assessed disproportionality of African American children in the Orange County Child Welfare System and lead the development of the Disproportionality Strategy Group; completed in-depth analyses using data and case record reviews to examine factors leading to two consecutive referrals in a relatively short time period, factors associated with timely family reunification, and re-entry of children to protective custody from Family Maintenance Court status.

The Evaluation of the Anchor-Site Phase of Family to Family

In 1992, the Annie E. Casey Foundation embarked on an initiative entitled *Family to Family: Reconstructing Family Foster Care*. By the time it concluded in 2009, dozens of large urban areas in more than 20 states had participated in Family to Family. The final phase from 2006 through 2009 focused on a smaller set of “anchor sites” in nine states. Drawing on earlier experience with the initiative, each anchor site developed a workplan to integrate efforts across four core strategies designed to achieve the transformation of policy and practice envisioned for Family to Family. To assess the impact of resulting changes in policy and practice on outcomes for children and their families, the Foundation sponsored an evaluation by a team of researchers from the University of North Carolina, Wildfire Associates, the University of California at Berkeley, and Case Western Reserve University. The evaluation team included: Judith Wildfire of Wildfire Associates, Inc., Co-Principal Investigator; Daniel Webster of the Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) at the University of California at Berkeley, Co-Investigator; David Crampton of Case Western Reserve University, Co-Investigator; and Lynn Usher of the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina, Principal Investigator.

Reports from the evaluation include an executive summary, a comprehensive report with technical appendices, and profiles of each anchor site. Each report is available online at:

<http://www.unc.edu/~lynnu/f2feval.htm>

The evaluation team appreciates the cooperation it received from Family to Family participants in each site and from state child welfare officials who provided the data on which this evaluation is based. We also appreciate the efforts of Regional Operations Managers and Site Team Leaders in coordinating the review of draft site profiles, including: Suzanne Barnard; Bill Bettencourt; Fred Harris; Lisa Paine-Wells; Jana Rickerson; Sheila Spydell; and Kate Welty.

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