

2022

Annual Report

Department of Family and Children's Services



County of Santa Clara

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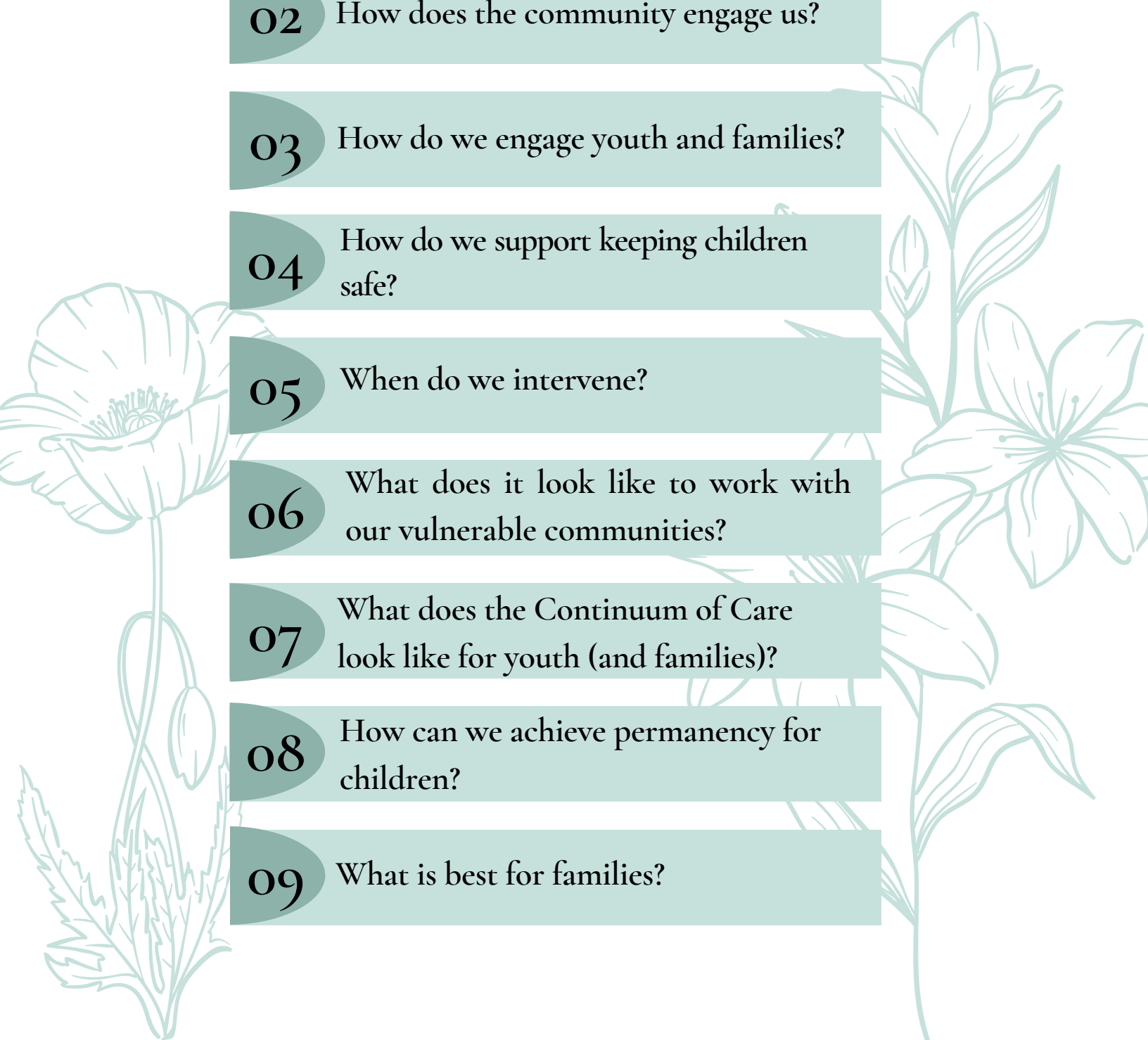
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01 Director's Message

VISION & EVOLVING LANDSCAPE



Daniel Little
DFCS Director

During the last year, DFCS further strengthened our efforts on family engagement and healing as well as came to understand the negative effects of child separation. Based on the incredible work of social workers, community providers, and most importantly, families in our community, we saw 106 children placed in foster care in 2022.

This compares to 176 children in 2021, 457 children in 2020, and 567 children in 2019. While the overall outcomes are amazing, it's important to consider the actual impact. Since 2021, more children in our county have maintained relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and communities. More children have started first days of school with a parent dropping them off. More children have said their first words or have taken their first steps while in the loving care of their parents. In short, our community's well-being has improved. This would not be possible without the incredible advocacy, diligence, and dedication of families, social workers, and community members. I'm very optimistic about the work happening within our communities and very excited to see how Santa Clara County re-envision child welfare.

“*Since 2021, more children in our county have maintained relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and communities.*”



02

How does the community engage us?

Child Abuse and Neglect Center (CANC) Process

1

Hotline receives calls of reports of child abuse or neglect. (Law enforcement has priority access)



2

Social Worker answers the call



3

Social Worker enters report into CWS/CMS



4

If law enforcement is requesting joint response, hotline processes immediately



6

Social Worker determines if report meets legal definition of abuse or neglect and assigns an appropriate response time



5

Social Worker generates report, ensuring accuracy



7

If screen out is recommended, community resources may be provided



8

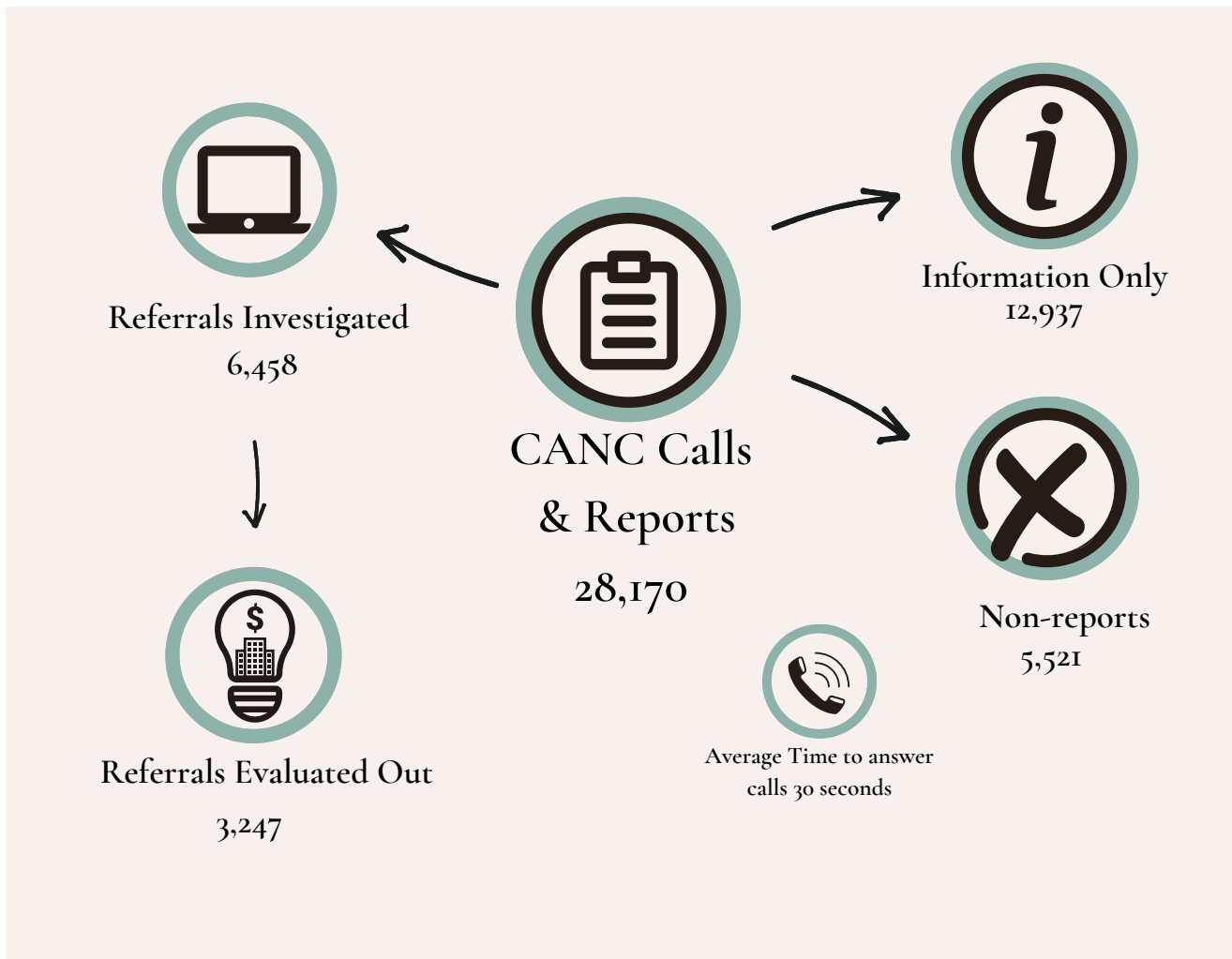
CANC supervisor reviews and approves response time of immediate or within 10 days of report



9

Referral is assigned to an Emergency Response social worker who will respond in an appropriate time frame

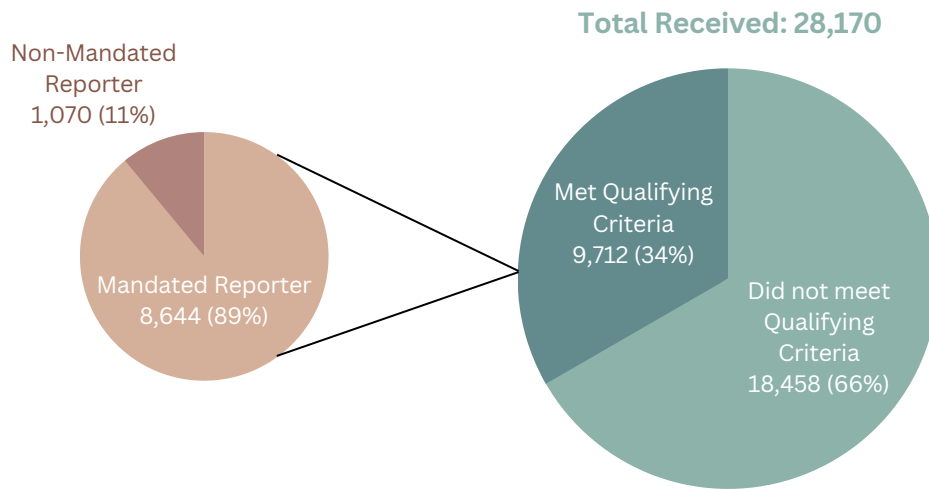




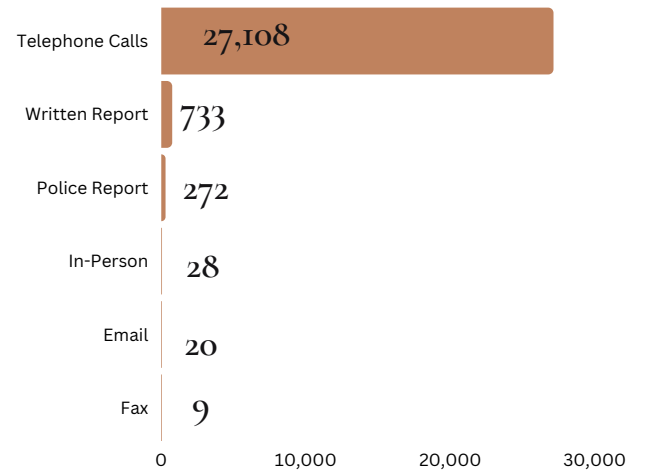
Response Determinations

Investigation	A Santa Clara County Social Worker responds to investigate a generated referral. The timeline for investigation is either within 24 hours or 10 days with priority based on the specifics of the referral.
Evaluate Out	A child abuse report does not require an in-person investigation. The family may be referred to services based on the information shared in reporting.
Information Only	A report taken for information only and referred to community services. (Differential Response Path o)
Non-reports	Report not taken as a child abuse report as there is no child abuse or neglect reported. Family can still be referred to service, based on information shared in reporting.

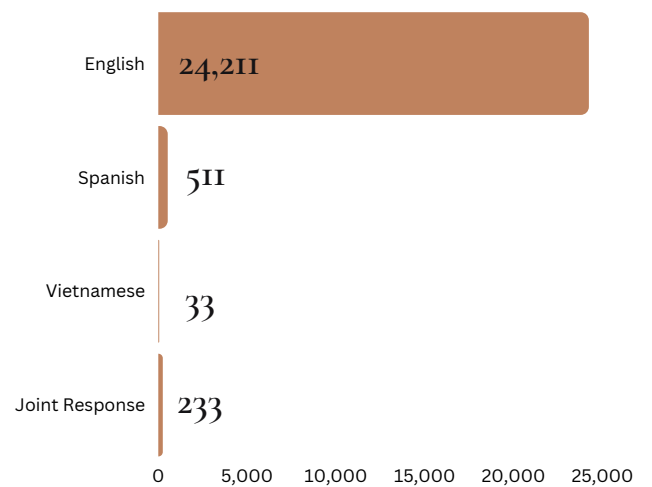
Child Abuse Calls & Reports Received



Methods Used



Language Calls



03

How do we engage youth & families?

Prevention

The mission of DFCS is to keep children safe and families strong. DFCS recognizes that the best ways to confront child abuse and neglect are prevention efforts. DFCS is focused on preventing children and families from coming into the Child Welfare system. We enhance healthy parent, family, and community-based relationships. We share responsibility for Child and Family Well-Being. We protect children through strengthening families.

Example Prevention Programs:

- Safe, Secured and Loved: Resilient Families Program
- New Hope for Youth
- Mandated Report Training
- Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program
- Differential Response

PARADIGM SHIFT - Sharing Responsibility for Child & Family Well-Being

STRENGTHEN FAMILIES IN COMMUNITY / CHILDREN
REMAINING WITH FAMILY WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Parent resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete supports
- Knowledge of child development
- Able to solve problems
- Children's healthy social and emotional development

What makes a
FAMILY strong

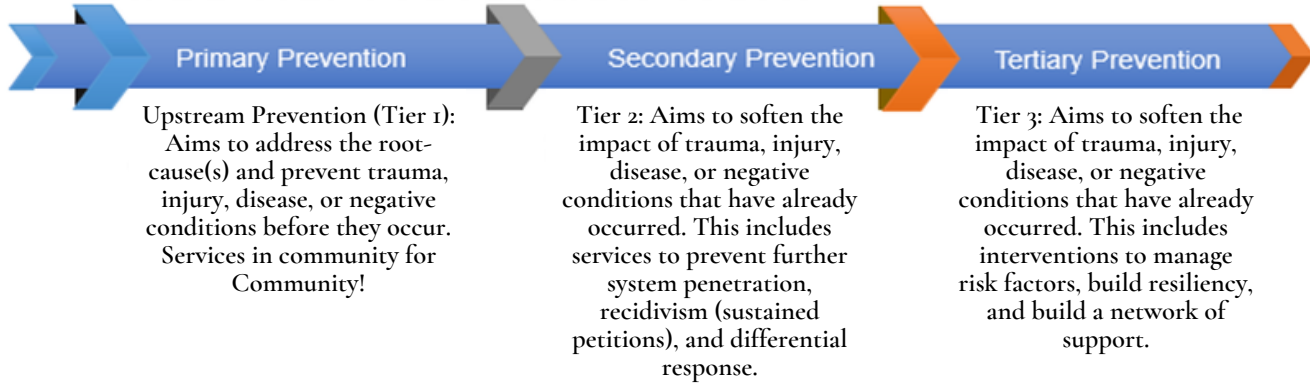


- Community Associations
- Local institutions
- Personal connections
- Community based organizations
- Language and cultural considerations
- Basic needs being met

What makes a
COMMUNITY
strong

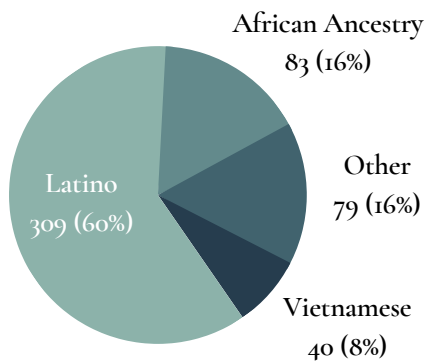


Three Tier Prevention Work



Cultural Broker Program

Total Cultural Broker Program Referrals for Families: 511

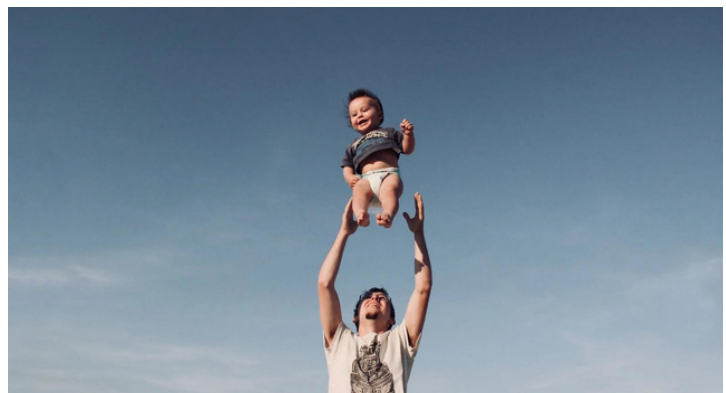


Cultural Broker program served by:

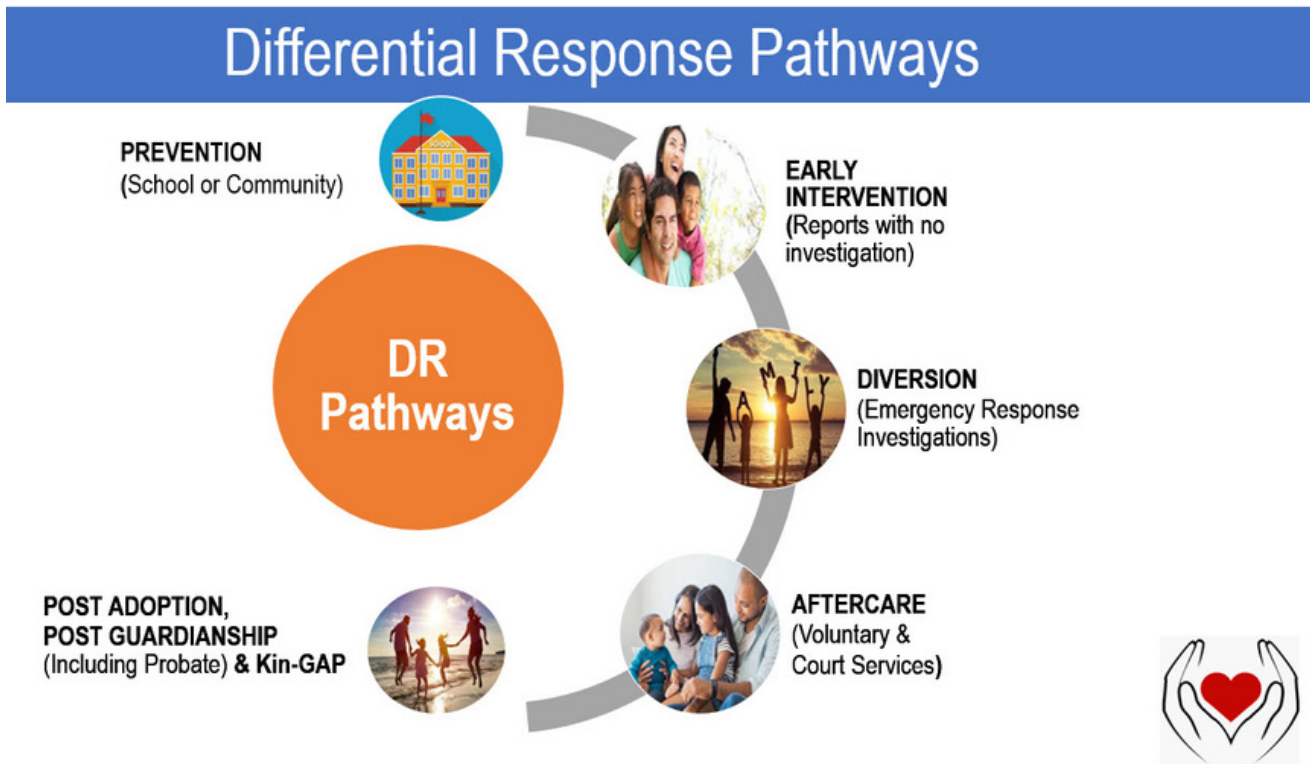
- Alum Rock Counseling Center (ARCC)
- Culturally Coordinated Services (CCS)
- ConXion to Community (CXN)
- Gardner Health Network (GHN)
- International Children's Assistance Network (ICAN)

Family First Prevention Services Act

Santa Clara County DFCS and Juvenile Probation departments have jointly opted into the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The FFPSA was enacted to turn the focus of the current child welfare system toward keeping children safely with their families to avoid the trauma that results when children are placed in out-of-home care. To increase the number of children who are safe at home with their families, the law provides families with greater access to mental health services, substance use treatment, and/or resources to support the improvement of parenting skills. The efforts of FFPSA will support all three prevention tiers. Santa Clara County is continuing to develop a comprehensive Prevention plan for FFPSA by July 31, 2023.

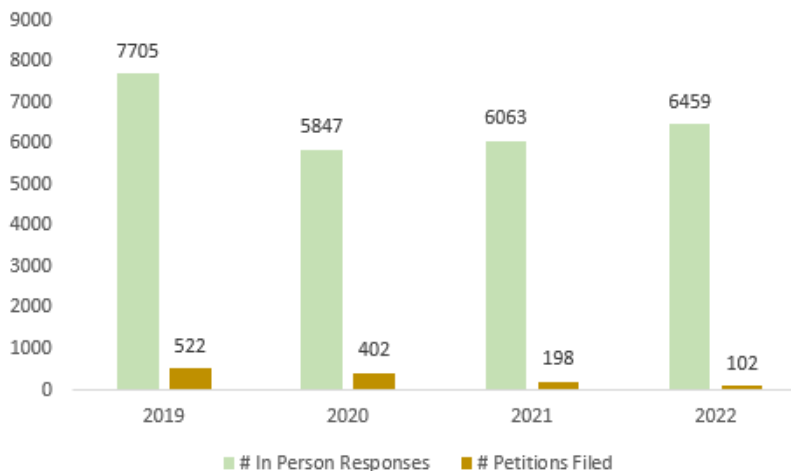


Examples of some of the prevention pathways and supports:



In Person Responses & Petitions Filed

During the past two years, DFCS has actively supported more children remaining in home with families, greater connections with community-based resources, and the filing of fewer petitions in court.



04

How do we support keeping children safe?



Safety Planning

Safety plans are made when a social worker discovers that there is a concern to a child's immediate safety and that without an identified plan, the child would not be safe to remain home. The social worker engages the family in creating a Safety Plan. This helps the family identify their natural supports (e.g., friends, family, neighbors) and enlist them to help lessen the current safety threats until a Child and Family Team (CFT) can identify a more permanent solution or way forward.

Guiding Principles

Children do best with their families.



Family Engagement is non-negotiable.



Families have the tools to solve their own problems if given the opportunity.



There is no safety without healing.



The proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” strongly applies to child welfare work and is evident when a caregiver needs support to address concerns regarding child safety and to reduce future risks. DFCS supports families to build a circle of support around the child to implement a plan to keep the child safe.

Safety Planning with Families



Initial Engagement

- Use safety planning in the field with family/support network
- Hold CFT with the family's circle of support
- Use Structured Decision Making (SDM) risk and safety tools
- Use Safety Organized Practice (SOP) tools for engagement with all families
- Recognize and support cultural and family differences while ensuring safety



Use of Community

- Identify community partners to enhance safety plans
- Use Cultural Brokers to bridge relationships and specific resources for families
- Use Flex Funds to obtain immediate resources to allow children to be with family/in community of origin
- First Call for Families for legal support prior to court intervention



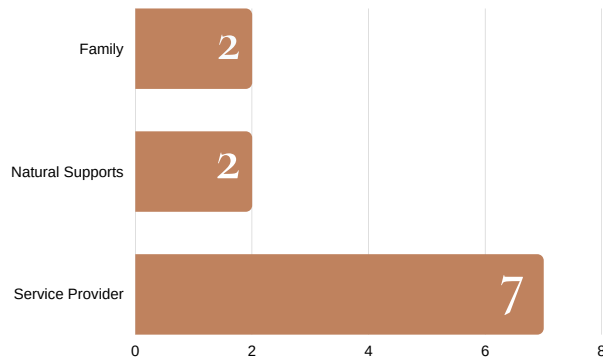
Follow Up

- Offer ongoing voluntary supports to families to address concerns and minimize the likelihood of returning to the attention of DFCS
- Follow up with families to see what is needed to sustain and maintain the plan of safety

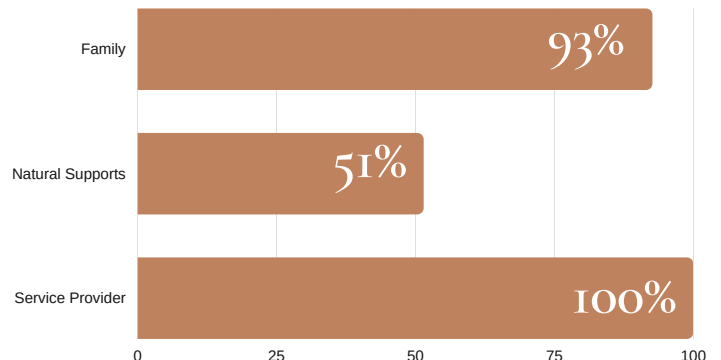
Total Number of CFTs: 1,931

Number of children served: 1,831

Average number of supports per CFT



Percent of supports attending CFTs

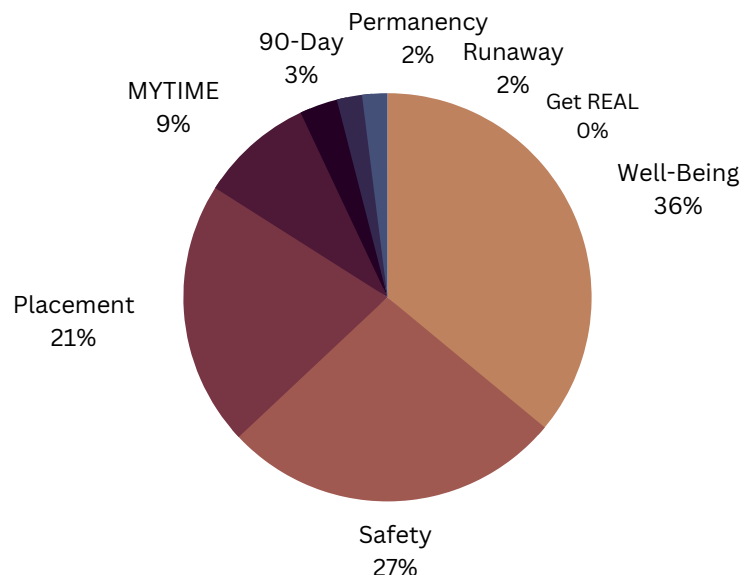


Typical Topic Areas of CFTs

- Well-Being - visitation, custody, mental health, medical needs, case planning, after care
- Safety - safety plan development
- Placement - possible placement change: STRTP, Relative/NREFM, 14-day notices
- MYTIME - independent living/self-sufficiency skill building and future goal planning
- 90-Day Transition Plan - supportive planning prior to case dismissal; Youth turning 18 & doesn't want Extended Foster Care (EFC) or is a Non-minor Dependent (NMD) within 90 days of dismissal
- Permanency - relating to Legal Guardianship or Adoption
- Runaway - child/youth is actively on the run or is missing
- Get REAL- pregnant or parenting youth supportive planning

CFT Attendees

- Family: child, biological parents, and/or other parent or guardians
- Natural Supports: clergy, siblings, other family members, relative caregiver, and other supports identified by family (not professional employees or child welfare staff)



05

When do we intervene?

Structured Decision Making (SDM)

Critical key decisions need to be considered in every child welfare case. This includes opening and closing a case, bringing a child into care, documenting a case plan, and creating a plan of safety to allow children to remain in their community/familial environment. We utilize the evidence based SDM tools to ensure these important decisions are consistent with both research and policy as well as mindful of cultural consideration. Santa Clara County has worked over the past year to make sure all efforts are made to reduce safety concerns to support children from coming into the care of DFCS and at a minimum, support placement with family. In the past year, DFCS has focused efforts on prevention and connecting families to community.





What's working to keep families safe and supported?

- Voluntary and Involuntary or Court Services
- Specific case plans that meet a family's needs
- Aware of unintended consequences of family separation and trauma and removal only when safety cannot be mitigated
- Wrap Around Services – up to 6 months of in-home support (Voluntary and Post Adoption)
- Placement Support Services – short term 30-60 days immediate in-home support (Voluntary, Post Adoption and in Emergency Response)



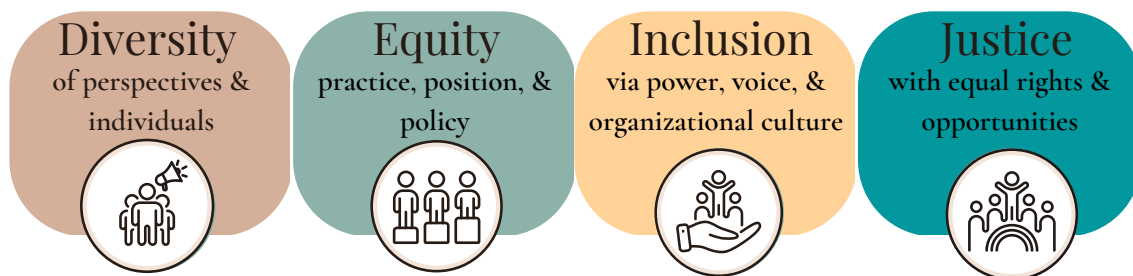
- Child Abuse Center (CAC) partnership
- Build out of Differential Response programs
- Moving prevention further upstream
- Coordinated cross-systems efforts
- Primary interventions in the community and further upstream from Child Welfare
- Increased partnership with Valley Medical Center and infants born substance exposed
- Neighbor-to-Neighbor Initiatives

06

What does it look like to work with our vulnerable communities?

Racial Equity Agency Leadership (REAL) Team

Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone (Source: *Race Forward*). The Racial Equity and Social Justice initiative is an agency wide effort to end institutional racism and race-based disparities within Social Services Agency (SSA). The goal is to change the underlying system that creates race-based disparities in our community in order to achieve racial equity and social justice. The DFCS Racial Equity Agency Leadership Team was formed in 2020 and created a Racial Equity Action Plan. This past year, the lessons we have learned center on normalizing conversations regarding race, equity, and justice. This is key to improving service delivery to diverse families that are served by government institutions and disproportionately over-represented.



To begin normalizing conversations, the DFCS REAL Team and Staff Development established the SSA Equity and Justice Series to increase employee understanding of the needs of vulnerable communities and children served. The first training series offered was in partnership with the Native American Employee Committee (NAEC) and DFCS Immigration Services Committee. They cultivated and informed the trainings as well as offered experiences so that employees can begin to shift social work practice with children and families.

Offerings:

- La Cultura Cura Philosophy Overview National Compadres Network
- The Native American Experience in the U.S. and California, Past and Present - Sylvia Deporto
- ICWA discussion led by the California Tribal Families Coalition
- The first annual Native American Resource Fair - NAEC
- Understanding Immigrant and Refugee Trauma - AACI



Family Seeing

The County of Santa Clara invites in culture, capabilities, healing, equity, and justice. Collectively, professionals in service to our community have an opportunity to learn, grow, and refine family engagement strategies to better serve children, individuals, and families.

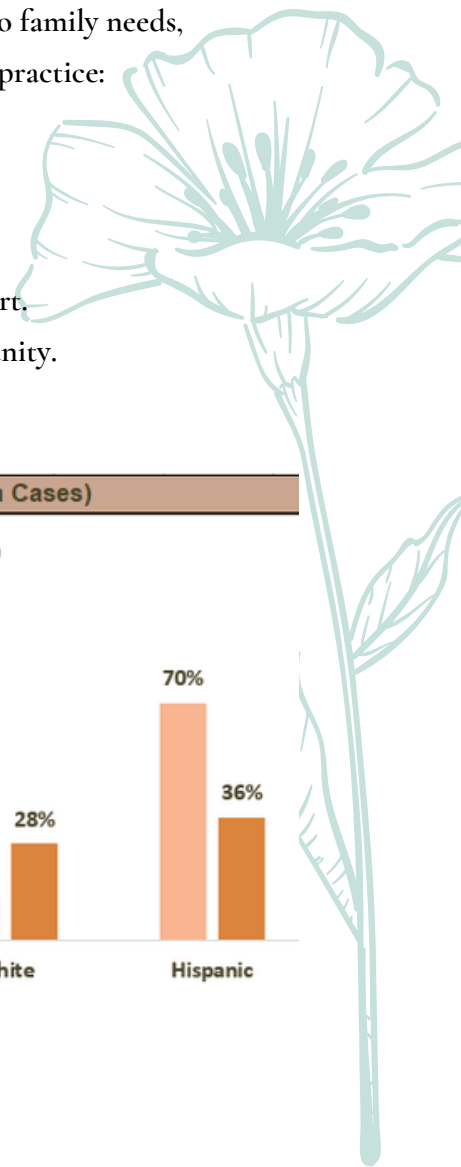
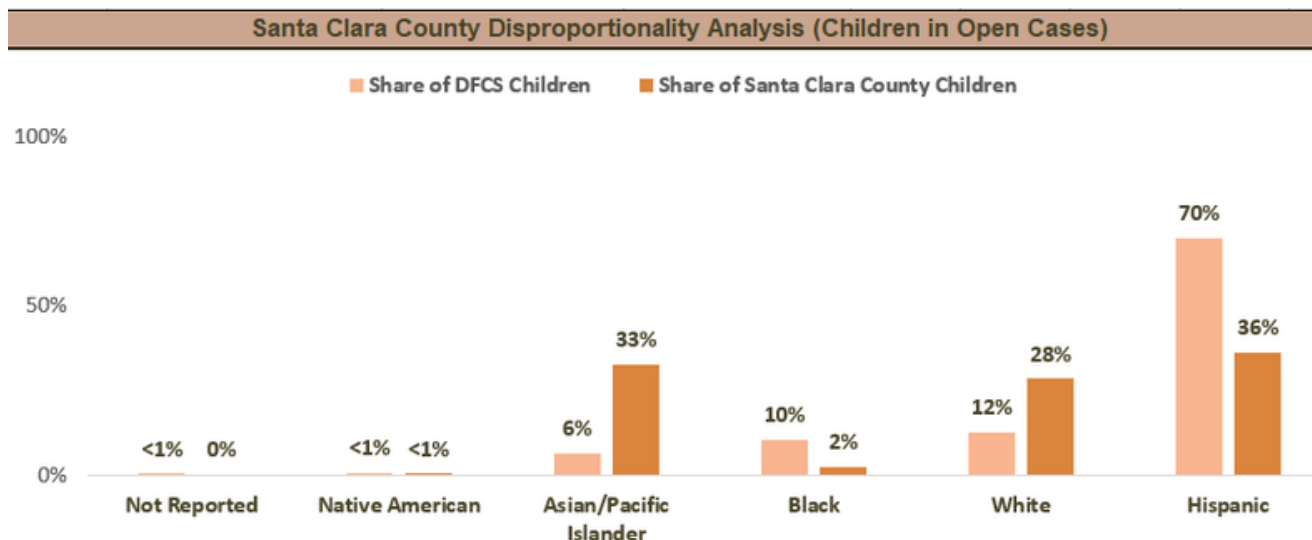
Family Seeing deepens family engagement through recognizing the Power of Family as an essential element of healing and wellbeing.



The Power of Family invites us all to truly see families as sacred, authentic, and culturally rich units and honors the wisdom individuals hold in identifying and attending to family needs, child safety, and healing. Family Seeing calls for activating key principles in practice:

- Children do the best with their families.
- Family engagement is non-negotiable.
- Healing is always possible, and safety is temporary without healing.
- Placing children in protective custody is not harm-free and is a last resort.
- Families have the tools to solve their own problems if given the opportunity.

Disparity and Disproportionality



07

What does the Continuum of Care look like for youth (and families)?



Continuum - Specialized Placements

- Seneca Family of Agencies
 - 12 youth in Intensive Services Foster Care Plus (ISFC+)
- Pacific Clinics
 - 16 youth in ISFC+
 - 1 youth in Placement Supportive Services (PSS) 60 -day home

Relative Placement

Relatives play an important role in the lives of children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system. Children and youth thrive when they live with families they know and love and experience more stability and permanency when they remain connected to relatives and non-relative extended family members (NREFM). Through Family Finding and Family Seeing and Engagement, DFCS is striving to increase the number of children who are placed with relatives/NREFM as well as helping the family increase and build their natural circle of support in order to achieve the reunification of children with parents or permanency with relatives/NREFMs.

of Relative Placements

166 youth in care were placed with relatives

of youth in Short Term Residential Treatment Program

In December 2022, 5 youth were placed in a Short-Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP)

of youth AWOL

10 children were on runaway status



High Level Staffings

High-Level Staffings allow for child welfare professionals to come together and discuss placement and permanency planning for hard-to-place youth. These staffings include child welfare staff, supervisors, managers, other County Departments, and service providers as needed. The staffings allow for collaboration and multi-disciplinary teaming to support high acuity youth or high-need youth and their families.

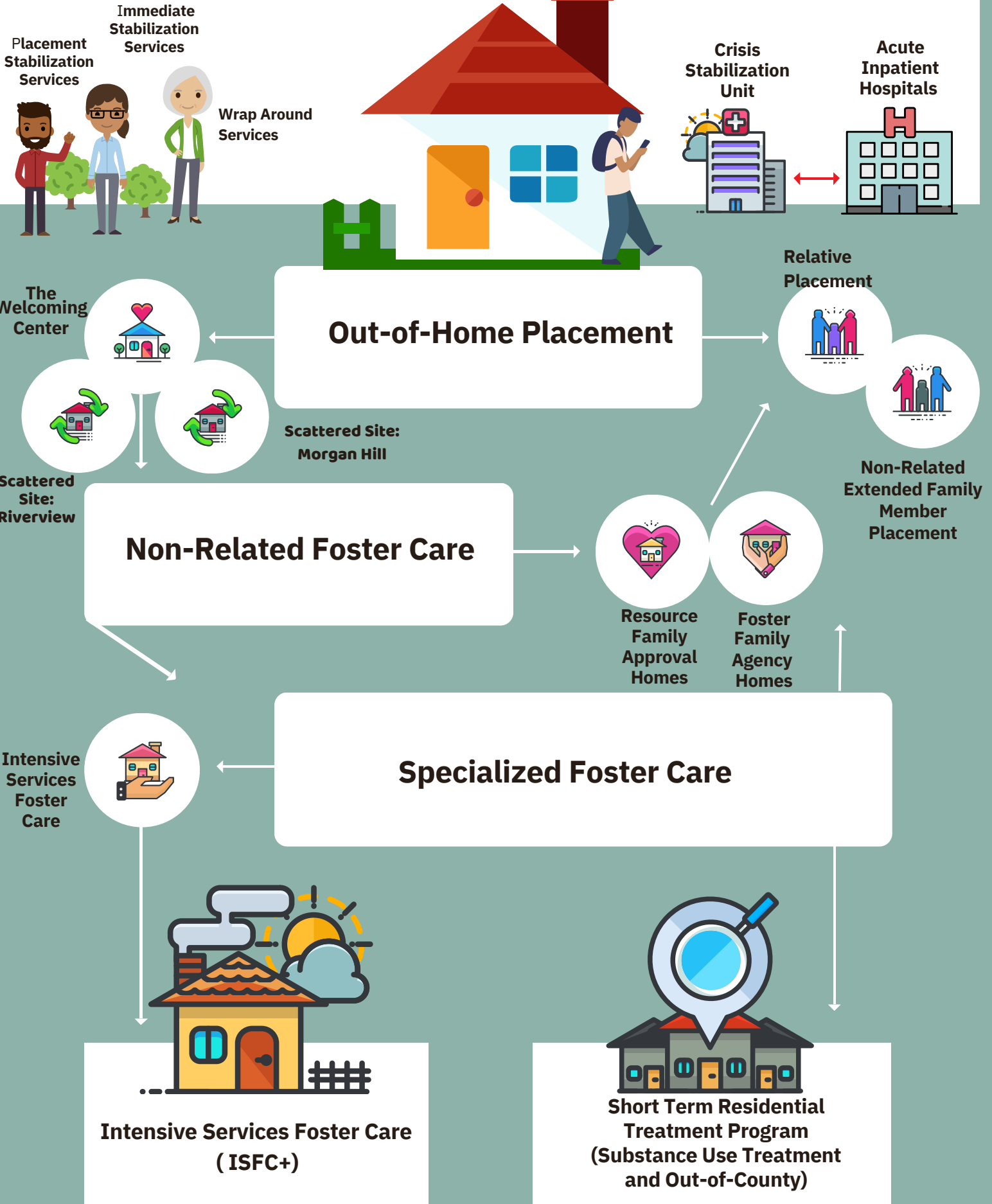
- Successes: 2 youth and families successfully maintained children in their home with support services and were not referred to Dependency Court.
- Outcomes: Several youth were placed with relatives with housing support and services.

Placement Coordination Meetings bring DFCS staff, Juvenile Probation Department (JPD), and Behavioral Health (BH) together to discuss placement barriers, solutions, and options for placement. They create a placement plan for youth who are at The Welcoming Center (TWC), Scattered Sites, or are given notice that there are barriers to locating another placement. This team meets until viable placement is found.

- Successes: 2 youth were placed with relatives and were able to reside in County leased homes in order to provide support and housing stabilization while relatives obtained their own affordable housing.
- Outcomes: More youth with complex trauma histories and higher needs are placed with relatives or parents with stabilization services and wrap around services.



Santa Clara County - Continuum of Care



08

How can we achieve permanency for children?



Achieving Permanency

DFCS believes that safety, permanency, and well-being for all children and families occurs through social work practice that involves the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM). Within the ICPM framework, DFCS promotes the establishment of collaborative partnerships with youth, families, and communities to support wellbeing and permanency.

In efforts to achieve well-being and permanency through family stabilization, family reunification, adoption or guardianship, DFCS focuses on collaborating with the family and their safety and support network. DFCS wants to empower families and extended kin, maternal and paternal, as they are the experts of their family.



Total number of permanency CFTs: 38

DFCS social workers utilize their clinical expertise and social work knowledge along with Structured Decision Making (SDM) and Safety Organized Practice (SOP) tools to work with children, youth, and families to help highlight their strengths and needs.

In addition, DFCS facilitates CFTs to further engage families and support them around permanency planning. DFCS ensures that children, youth, and families have a voice while also increasing its efforts for relative and kin placement.

DFCS is expanding its programs to support increased family search and engagement efforts. DFCS wants all possible relatives, family, and youth connections identified for each child and youth to have as many opportunities as possible for connection, placement, and permanency.



09

What is best for families?



Overall Permanency Measures Data

DFCS is committed to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families and ensures that safety standards for children are maintained. During the 2022 calendar year, 1,831 children received supportive services to address the identified needs of families. Efforts were made to engage families to help children remain connected to their parents and their community. As part of its permanency efforts, DFCS developed a plan to address factors associated with child abuse and neglect to reduce the need for out-of-home placement.

DFCS has met or exceeded all federal safety measures and continues to work on improving the permanency measures with its core commitment of permanency for children. In the evolving landscape of delivering child welfare services and the shift in the risk profile, DFCS will continue to focus on the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children it serves every day.





What Cases have had the best results?

The national standard for rate of reentry in to foster care is 8.3%. The County made substantial progress in lowering the rate from 13.2% in 2018-19 to 7.9% in 2019-20. Regarding reentry cases, Safety and Well-being social workers, Dually Involved Youth (DIY) social workers, and Probation Officers have had lower caseloads which allow immediate engagement with the families.

DIY social workers and Probation Officers are both committed to working together to address behaviors and are proactive to learn about each other's system. They visit homes together and apply resources from their systems jointly to meet the needs of the youth.



THANK YOU!

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