

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
21ST ANNUAL PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY AWARDS PROGRAM

Fiscal Year 2006-07 Application

Title of Program or Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces): DCFS METRO NORTH PERMANENCY UNIT			
Date of Implementation/Adoption:		October, 2005	
Project Status:		X Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> One-time only
Did you submit this project before?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	X No
<p>Executive Summary: Describe the project in <u>15 lines or less</u>. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner.</p> <p>A top priority of the LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is to provide a permanent home for every young person in our care. Older youth in out of home care are less likely to have a permanent home by the time they "age out" or emancipate. Countless studies have shown that youth exiting foster care without family relationships are at very high-risk for homelessness, incarceration, welfare dependency, early pregnancy, unemployment, and loss of education. In October 2005, DCFS piloted the Metro North Permanency Unit (MNPU), a specialized unit of five case-carrying Children's Social Workers (CSWs), whose casework focuses on the permanency needs of older youth. The MNPU CSWs received specialized training by the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) to employ strategies that significantly increased legally permanent outcomes for eighty high-need youth. The MNPU pilot improved outcomes for children so successfully and provided significant fiscal savings, that Permanency Units are scheduled to be established department-wide.</p>			
(1) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ESTIMATED/ACTUAL BENEFIT
\$ 63,680.00	\$1,799,268.00	\$	\$1,862,948.00
SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS (INCLUDE TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBER) LOS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES 425 SHATTO PLACE LOS ANGELES CA 90020 (213) 739-6444 (213) 637-2565			
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME		TELEPHONE NUMBER	
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PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE		DATE SIGNED	TELEPHONE NUMBER
BEVERLY YATES			(213) 739-6444
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE		DATE SIGNED	TELEPHONE NUMBER
TRISH PLOEHN, LCSW DIRECTOR			(213) 351-5600

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✚ **Fact Sheet:** Describe the **Problem, Solution, and Benefits** of the project, written in plain language. The description should identify the link between this project and your department's performance measures (*Performance Counts!* represents the County of Los Angeles' focus on building an overall performance measurement framework for the County). **Fact sheet is limited to 3 pages only.**

Organizational Goals

- X Service Excellence
- Workforce Excellence
- Organizational Effectiveness
- X Fiscal Responsibility

Programmatic Goals

- X Children and Families' Well-Being
- Community Services
- Health and Mental Health
- Public Safety

Problem - The LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) believes that every young person is entitled to a legally permanent home and family relationship. Achieving timely permanence for every child in out-of-home care is a top priority. Historically older youth are the least likely group to exit foster care with a permanent family relationship, placing them at high-risk for homelessness, incarceration, welfare dependency, early pregnancy, unemployment, and loss of education. Former foster youth repeatedly state that a lifelong connection and a relationship with a supportive and committed adult related by blood or not, is one of the key factors associated with their resilience and the single greatest impact on their ability to navigate the transition to adulthood.

Older youth commonly present very unique challenges and require specialized attention. Many have been disconnected from family and friends for years, and have experienced multiple placements and endured ongoing trauma contributing to significant mental and emotional problems. Without the appropriate intervention, older foster youth often face increasing hopelessness and despair. They resort to running away, criminal activity, and drug abuse. Their feelings of loneliness, loss and grief are commonly misdiagnosed and the system frequently responds by psychiatrically hospitalizing and placing them in high-level institutional care. Effective or long-term solutions or plans infrequently materialize. These youth are often left to linger in care until they "age-out" without the preparation, support, and means to lead successful, healthy and happy adult lives.

Solution - In October 2005, DCFS piloted the Metro North Permanency Unit (MNPU). This Unit's focus is on older youth most at risk for lingering in care and exiting DCFS without a family. The MNPU is the only unit of its kind in LA County to standardize youth permanency and connectedness strategies into casework practice. Experienced and well-trained social workers design, provide and ensure effective services for older, high-risk youth that are essential to improving their outcomes.

Goals for youth assigned to the MNPU are:

- (1) Youth participate in planning for permanency;
- (2) Restored or strengthened connections, visits, or placement with birth parents, siblings, relatives and non-relative extended family member (NREFM), defined as any adult caregiver who has an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child;
- (3) Return to home of parents, if possible;

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- (4) Assessment and preparation for adoption or legal guardianship if return to home of parents isn't appropriate;
- (5) Permanent placement with relatives or NREFM;
- (6) At least one committed adult who will provide a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support; and
- (7) Placement in family-like settings as opposed to group care, a.k.a., reduction in level of care.

CSWs receive expert consultation and training to support the efforts of the Permanency Unit's goals. Due to its interest and capacity for sustainability, the Metro North office partnered with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) to ensure no youth leaves the California child welfare system without a permanent lifelong connection to a caring adult. Through a CPYP grant, provision of regular and ongoing management consultation and training on the most recent and successful youth permanency practices continues to be provided to the Permanency Unit social workers, unit supervisor, and regional office administration, which has resulted in significant cost avoidance and savings (outlined below).

In working with high-need youth, the MNPU social worker implements the following key practice methods:

- **Youth-Driven Plans**: Through the utilization of specialized techniques designed for older youth, social workers develop trusting relationships and empower youth to be the leader in their permanency planning process.
- **Family-Finding and Engagement**: Social workers increase youth's feelings of connection, belonging, and hopefulness through the search and engagement of family or other meaningful persons. Social workers (or those identified on the team to assist) complete in-depth interviews, mining of case records, and internet searches to establish regular contact/visitation schedules and the possibility of placement.
- **Loss and Grief**: Social workers recognize the pain youth face resulting from their significant loss of relationships and how that impacts a youth's ability to form trusting relationships with others.
- **Youth Permanency Teams**: Social workers develop, coordinate and lead youth permanency teams to identify and carryout the tasks or services deemed necessary to achieve the goals. The youth, family members, caregiver, social worker, attorney, and service providers comprise the team. Always from a youth advocate perspective, social workers help team members recognize strengths and needs, understand and normalize behavior, and develop effective responses, interventions and solutions to ensure stability and long-term success. Resources and service providers are engaged in the process as needed to complete specific activities designed to meet the goals.

Benefits – The following outcomes were achieved on behalf of the eighty high-need youth served by the MNPU from October 2005 to March 2007:

- **Fifty-five** youth found increased connectedness in that they have contact by phone/mail, visits or are placed with their parent(s), sibling(s), relative(s), or NREFM.
- **Eight** youth returned to the home of a parent or were in the process of reunification.
- **One** youth was adopted and **two** youth were adoptively placed.

“Leading the Quest for Excellence”

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- **Twenty-eight** youth were appointed a legal guardian or had a plan of legal guardianship and were proceeding through the Court system.
- **Twenty-nine** youth were replaced from high-level residential group home care or high-rate, non-relative foster family homes to family-like settings (a.k.a: reduced level-of-care).

As outlined above and in the charts below, the benefits to the youth and children placed in the MNPU are astonishing. In addition to quality of life enhancements for older foster youth's current and future circumstances, the MNPU work resulted in significant fiscal savings. The MNPU pilot project has been so successful that DCFS has plans to implement Permanency Units department-wide. In addition, other California Counties, including San Francisco plan to replicate the MNPU in their County.

A quilt was created depicting a tree to represent the increased connectedness established for MNPU youth after just four months of CSW's increased focus on Family Finding and Engagement. The quilt is striking in its symbolism for the life and beauty that can be achieved through finding permanent connections for children and youth (pictures below).



MNPU Sample Youth
Number of Connections October 2005



MNPU Sample Youth
Number of Connections March 2006

"Leading the Quest for Excellence"

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Cost Avoidance, Cost Savings, and/or Revenue Generated (Estimated/Actual Benefit): Use this form and provide details on the estimated/actual benefits. As a suggestion, work with your fiscal staff.

Cost Avoidance: Anticipated costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

(1) ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE \$ 63,680.00	(2) ANNUAL COST SAVINGS \$ 1,799,268.00	(3) ANNUAL REVENUE \$	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ESTIMATED BENEFIT \$1,862,948.00
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Annual Cost Avoidance: CPYP Grant Yields \$63,680 Cost Avoidance:

CPYP Grant Provides	# of Times	Rate	Monthly Total	Annual Total Savings
Management Consultation	24 hrs/month	\$150	\$3600	\$43,200
CPYP Travel Expenses	18 visits/year	\$360	-	\$6,480
Leadership Training	1 time/year	\$4,000	-	\$4,000
Staff Training	6 days/year	\$10,000	-	\$10,000
Total				\$63,680

Annual Cost Savings: 13 Youth Exit DCFS Yields \$887,796 Cost-Savings:

DCFS Exit Paths	Number of Youth	Average Cost of Care per Month per SED Child	Total Monthly Savings	Total Annual Savings
Returned to a Parent	6	\$5,691	\$34,146	\$409,752
Adopted	1	\$5,691	\$5,691	\$68,292
Relative Guardianship	6	\$5,691	\$34,146	\$409,752
Total	13	\$17,073	\$73,983	\$887,796

Annual Cost Savings: 29 Youth Reduce Level-of-Care Yields \$911,472 Cost-Savings.

# of Youth	Prior Level of Care	Prior Monthly Rate Per Child	Total Prior Monthly Cost of Care	Reduced Level of Care	Reduced Monthly Rate Per Child	Total Monthly Reduced Cost of Care	Total Monthly Cost Savings	Total Annual Cost Savings
1	FFA	\$1,589	\$1,589	NCLG	(\$425)	(\$425)	\$1,164	\$13,968
2	FFA	\$1,589	\$3,178	Adoptive Placement	\$0	\$0	\$3,178	\$38,136
1	FFA	\$1,648	\$1,648	NCLG	(\$500)	(\$500)	\$1,148	\$13,776
1	FFA	\$1,648	\$1,648	REL FH	(\$462)	(\$462)	\$1,186	\$14,232

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1	FFA	\$1,697	\$1,697	NCLG	(\$546)	(\$546)	\$1,151	\$13,812
1	FFA	\$1,697	\$1,697	REL FH	(\$546)	(\$546)	\$1,151	\$13,812
3	FFA	\$1,697	\$5,091	NCLG	(\$500)	(\$1,500)	\$3,591	\$43,092
1	FFA	\$1,787	\$1,787	NCLG	(\$597)	(\$597)	\$1,190	\$14,280
2	FFA	\$1,787	\$3,574	NCLG	(\$546)	(\$1,092)	\$2,482	\$29,784
1	FFA	\$1,865	\$1,865	NCLG	(\$597)	(\$597)	\$1,268	\$15,216
2	FFA	\$1,865	\$3,730	REL FH	(\$597)	(\$1,194)	\$2,536	\$30,432
1	GF GH	\$3,458	\$3,458	FFA	\$1,865	\$1,865	\$5,323	\$63,876
1	RCL 2	\$1,835	\$1,835	NCLG	(\$597)	(\$597)	\$1,238	\$14,856
1	RCL 8	\$4,102	\$4,102	FFA	(\$1,787)	(\$1,787)	\$2,315	\$27,780
1	RCL 11	\$5,234	\$5,234	NREFM	(\$546)	(\$546)	\$4,688	\$56,256
2	RCL 12	\$5,613	\$11,226	FFA	(\$1,865)	(\$3,730)	\$7,496	\$89,952
1	RCL 12	\$5,613	\$5,613	D-rate FFH	(\$1,132)	(\$1,132)	\$4,481	\$53,772
3	RCL 12	\$5,613	\$16,839	REL FH	(\$597)	(\$1,791)	\$15,048	\$180,576
1	RCL 12	\$5,613	\$5,613	NREFM	(\$597)	(\$597)	\$5,016	\$60,192
1	RCL 12	\$5,613	\$5,613	FFH	(\$546)	(\$546)	\$5,067	\$60,804
1	RCL 14	\$6,371	\$6,371	D-rate FFH	(\$1,132)	(\$1,132)	\$5,239	\$62,868
29		\$67,934	\$93,408		(\$12,250)	(\$17,452)	\$75,956	\$911,472