



Rolling Out the Resource Family Approval

***CWDA Conference
10/9/14
Sheraton Anaheim***



Presenters:

- Moderator: Karen B. Gunderson, MSW, Chief, California Department of Social Services/Child and Youth Permanency Branch
- Linda Belch, Program Manager, San Luis Obispo Social Services Department
- Tina Garcia, ACSW, Deputy Director, Kings County Human Services Agency, Social Services Division
- Amy Krueger, Division Chief, Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services, Adult and Children's Services



Objectives for Today

- Provide Overview of RFA
- Describe Components of RFA
- Review Roles of State and Counties
- Report on Early Implementation County Experiences
- Discuss Next Steps in Implementation of RFA

Agenda

- Resource Family Approval (RFA) Background
- What is RFA?
- Key Messages
- County and State Roles
- Implementation Status
- Next Steps



Highlights of RFA

- New Foster Caregiver Approval Process
 - Replaces licensing, relative approval, adoption and guardianship processes
 - Applies to all related and non-related families providing care in child welfare and or probation
- Tribally Approved Homes, procedures remain the same
- Early Implementation in 5 counties (early implementation phase for 3 full fiscal years to be followed by statewide implementation)
- Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16519.5

*Authorized by Assembly Bill 340 Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007) and reauthorized by Senate Bill 1013, (Chapter 35, Statutes of 2012)





What is RFA?

RFA Legislative Intent

To develop a unified, family friendly, and child centered resource family approval process that:

- Eliminates duplication
- Increases approval standards
- Incorporates a comprehensive psychosocial assessment of all families
- Includes approval for: foster care, adoption, guardianship

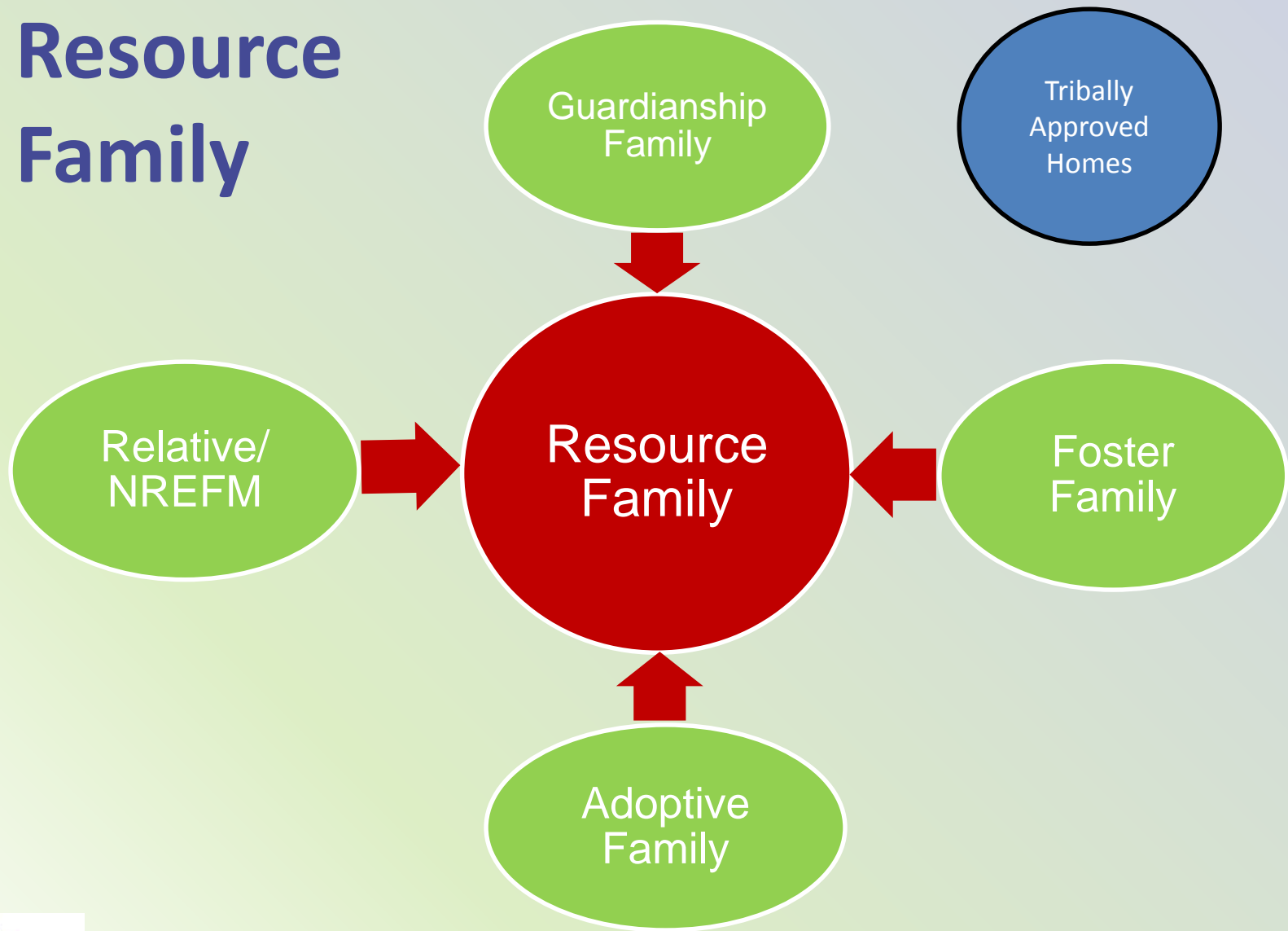


What is a Resource Family?

- A “Resource Family” is an individual or couple that a county determines to have successfully met both the home approval standards and the permanency assessment criteria necessary for providing care for a related or unrelated child who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, or otherwise in the care of a county child welfare agency or probation department.



Resource Family



Elements of RFA

One approval standard:

- One application
- One criminal background check
- Combined home environment and psychosocial assessment
- Pre- and post-approval training for all families
- Includes procedures for the placement of a child prior to completion of resource family approval
 - Emergency Placement
 - Compelling Reason



RFA Key Messages

Focuses on Lifelong Relationships & Quality Parenting

- No additional assessment for adoption or guardianship.
- Considers ability to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

Achieves Results for Children and Families

- Families are better prepared and supported
- Less intrusive to family
- Training and support for all families → more stability, fewer moves.

Improves Efficiency

- Eliminates redundant processes

Approval Standards and Qualifications

Approval Standards	Adoption (Exisitng)	Relative/NER FM (Existing)	Foster Home (Existing)	RFA
Criminal Records/Child Abuse Review	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standardized Criteria for Criminal Record Exemptions		✓	✓	✓
Homes and Ground Safety Check	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training Required			✓	✓
Psychosocial Assessment	✓			✓
Screen for Risk Factors (DM, S, MH, PH)			MH and PH Only	✓
Applicant References	✓			✓
Annual Review of all families		✓		✓

Resource Family Qualifications

[Welf & Inst. Code 16519.5(c)(1)(A)-(E)]

- Capacity to meet developmental, safety, permanence, and well-being needs of children
- Capacity to act as a Prudent Parent
- Ability to cooperate with agency and service providers
- Ability to provide and maintain financial stability
- Ability to maintain the least restrictive and most family-like environment
- Support system



Component 1: Home Approval Standards

[Welf. & Inst. Code 16519.5(d)(1)(A)-(C)]

- Criminal Records Clearance *
- Buildings & Grounds - California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Foster Family Homes
- Personal Rights
- Maximum Capacity
- Understanding Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

**A RF applicant whose criminal record indicates a conviction for any offenses in Health and Safety Code § 1522(g)(1)(A)(i) may not be approved*



Component 1: Home Approval Standards cont.

- Caregiver risk assessment
 - Physical & mental health
 - Alcohol & other substance use and abuse
 - Family & domestic violence

Placement Prior to Full Resource Family Approval

Compelling Reason:

- Based on needs of child
- After home approval completed
- Permanency assessment to be completed within 90 days

Emergency Basis:

- Must be with relative or nonrelative extended family member
- May occur prior to completion of home approval and/or permanency assessment (home approval process must be initiated within 5 business days)

***Note: AFDC-FC funding is not available to families until full approval has been achieved [Welf. & Inst. Code section 16519.59(e)(5)(E)].*



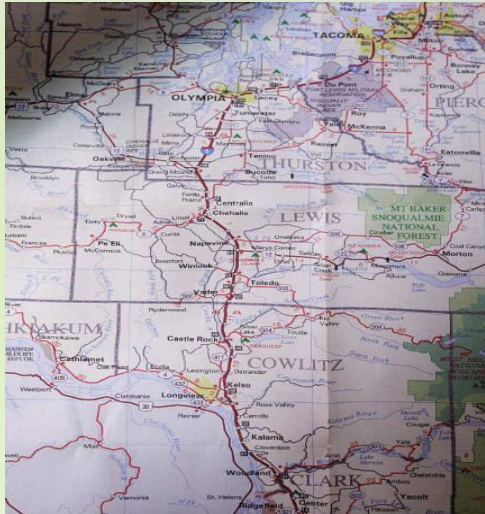
Component 2: Permanency Assessment Standards

[Welf. & Inst.Code 16519.5(d)(2)(A)-(C)]

- Caregiver training
- Psychosocial assessment
- Any additional activities deemed necessary

Responsibilities and Implementation

Shared Responsibilities



Counties



State

State Responsibility

[Welf . & Inst. Code 16519.5 (f)(1)-(9)]

- Administer RFA through issuance of Written Directives
- Monitor county systems and operations
 - Review sample of resource families for compliance with approval standards
 - Review county reports of serious complaints and incidents*
 - Investigate unresolved complaints against counties
 - Require corrective action of counties not in full compliance
- Prepare and submit report to Legislature

**CDSS may conduct independent investigation of a Resource Family and may change the findings depending on the results of the investigation.*



County Responsibility

[Welf & Inst. Code 16519.5(g)(1)-(11)]

- Ensure staff have appropriate education and experience
- Approve, deny, rescind RF applications
- Monitor RF on continual basis by requiring RFs to:
 - Meet approval standards
 - Comply with corrective action plans
 - Report incidents with consistent reporting requirements for licensed foster family homes.
- Investigate complaints against RFs and take necessary action*
- Provide RFs information on due process
- Update RF approval annually

**A child's social worker shall not conduct a formal complaint investigation. This should be handled, whenever possible, by a different worker than the one who originally approved the home.*



Implementation Phases

- Early Implementation Counties:
 - San Luis Obispo – 11/1/13
 - Kings - 1/15/14
 - Santa Barbara – 3/1/14
 - Santa Clara – 7/31/14
 - San Francisco – 8/1/2014

**Implementation
of 53 remaining
counties begins
2015**

Early Implementation Phase

Currently in Early Implementation:

- CDSS to administer RFA through issuance of Written Directives
- Data collection and review
- Assess challenges & successes
- Work with stakeholder groups for further input
- Prepare for statewide implementation
- Report to Legislature



Resource Family Approval Implementation Process

County of San Luis Obispo



FIRST STEPS

- Internal steering committee convened to develop an action plan and establish an implementation timeline.
- Subcommittees identified to focus on specific areas
- Lead person identified for each subcommittee.
- Developed SLO's implementation plan
- Presented implementation plan to CDSS
- Obtained BOS approval and signature on MOU
- Developed needed forms, policies and procedures
- Staff training
- Implementation

County of San Luis Obispo



Subcommittees

- Home Approval/Home Study
- Renewals
- Forms and Packets
- Database
- Complaint investigations
- PRIDE training

County of San Luis Obispo



Home Approval/Home Study Subcommittee

- Created the Combined Comprehensive Permanency Assessment from existing home study models
- Created the Self Assessment form
- Worked with partner agencies to develop their role

County of San Luis Obispo



Forms and Packets Subcommittee

- Reviewed all currently used forms and packets
- Identified which existing forms would be used, and recommended new RFA forms be developed such as:
 - Health Screening Assessment
 - Release of information
 - Pre-Service Training class agreement
- In all over 30 new forms were developed

County of San Luis Obispo



Database Subcommittee

Created database to:

- Track RFA applicants through the entire application process, as well as alert when renewals are due.
- Generate the RFA ID number which replaced the old license number
- House complaint information

County of San Luis Obispo



Pre-Service Training

- Reviewed curriculum to meet both relative and non relatives training needs
- Contracted with a health care professional to attend one of our training sessions to complete the health screening
- Contracted with a certified phlebotomist to draw blood and submit samples for TB screening
- Mobile Livescan unit is brought to one of the training sessions
- One session is dedicated to completing First Aid and CPR training
- Food and child care is provided
- Taught by a Social Worker with a Foster Parent as the co-facilitator

County of San Luis Obispo



Challenges of Implementation

- Alleviating the concern that we would lose relative placements
- Finding the middle ground between relative and adoption standards
- Helping staff navigate the challenge of changing how we approve homes
- Motivating caretakers who have a child placed with them on an emergency basis to complete all RFA requirements in a timely manner

County of San Luis Obispo



Benefits of RFA

- Concurrent plans established with no concern that family won't be able to pass the adoption home study
- Relative placements are being better assessed up front
- Relatives have stated they really like the training they receive
- Caregivers without placement receive pre-service training with relative caregivers
- A natural fit with QPI – healthy families and strong connections

County of San Luis Obispo



Post Implementation

- On going monitoring and responding to staff needs
- Meet with our partner agencies once a month to review how the permanency assessments are working
- Internal steering committee still meets monthly to address barriers

County of San Luis Obispo



RFA Funding

- Federally eligible relatives: EA Funds first 30 days, then County funds until approved.
- Federally eligible non relatives: EA funds up to one year, switched to Federal funds once RFA approved
- Non Federally eligible relatives: County funds only
- Non Federally eligible Non-Relatives: EA funding up to one year

County of San Luis Obispo



RFA Statistics

November 1, 2014-August 21, 2014

Total Applications received: 141

Emergency Placements: 41

Total homes approved: 28

(18 licenses issued for the comparable previous period)

Relative Homes approved: 15

Non-Relative Homes approved: 13

Withdrawals: 36 (child returned home most common reason for withdrawal)

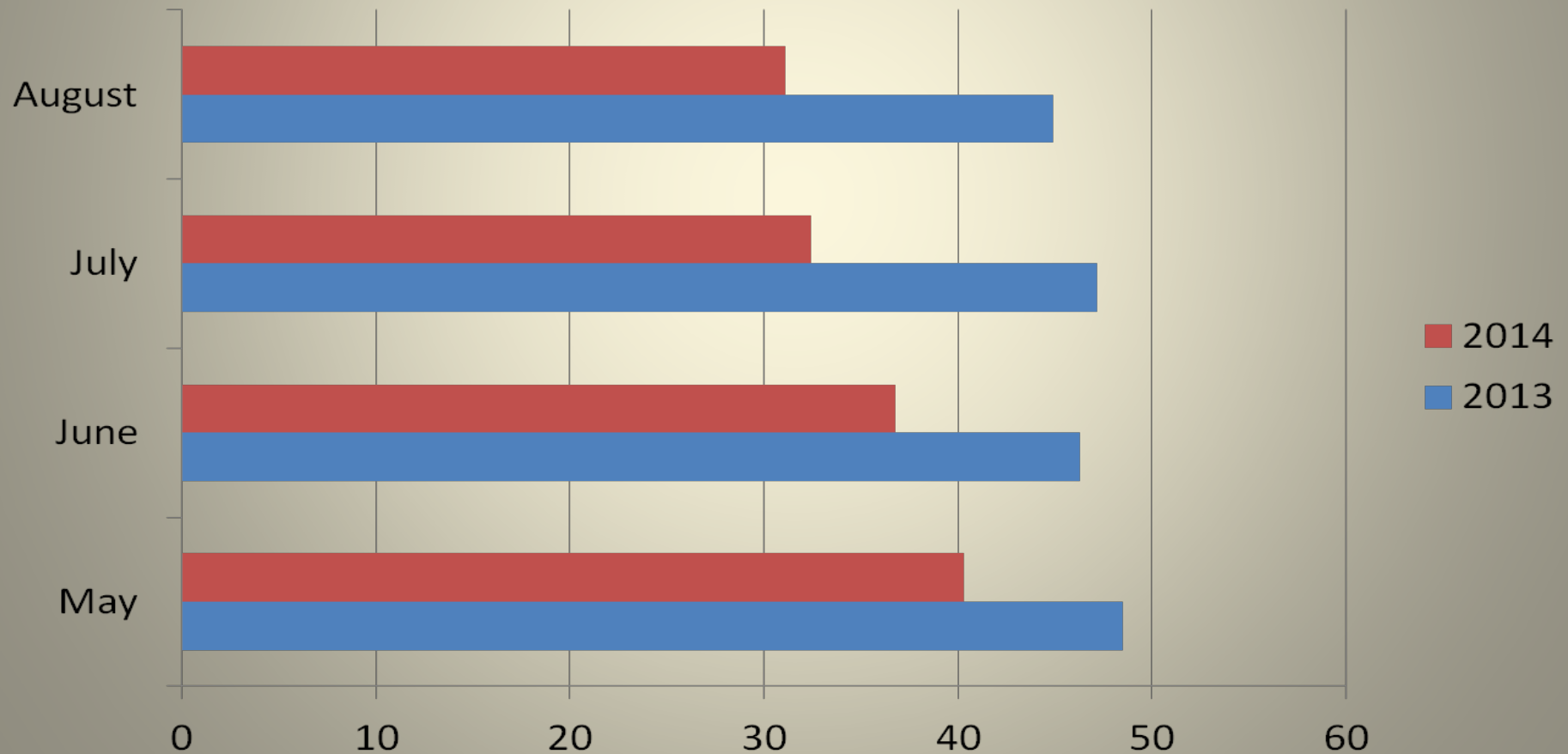
Denials: 1 (Criminal history)

Complaints: 0

County of San Luis Obispo

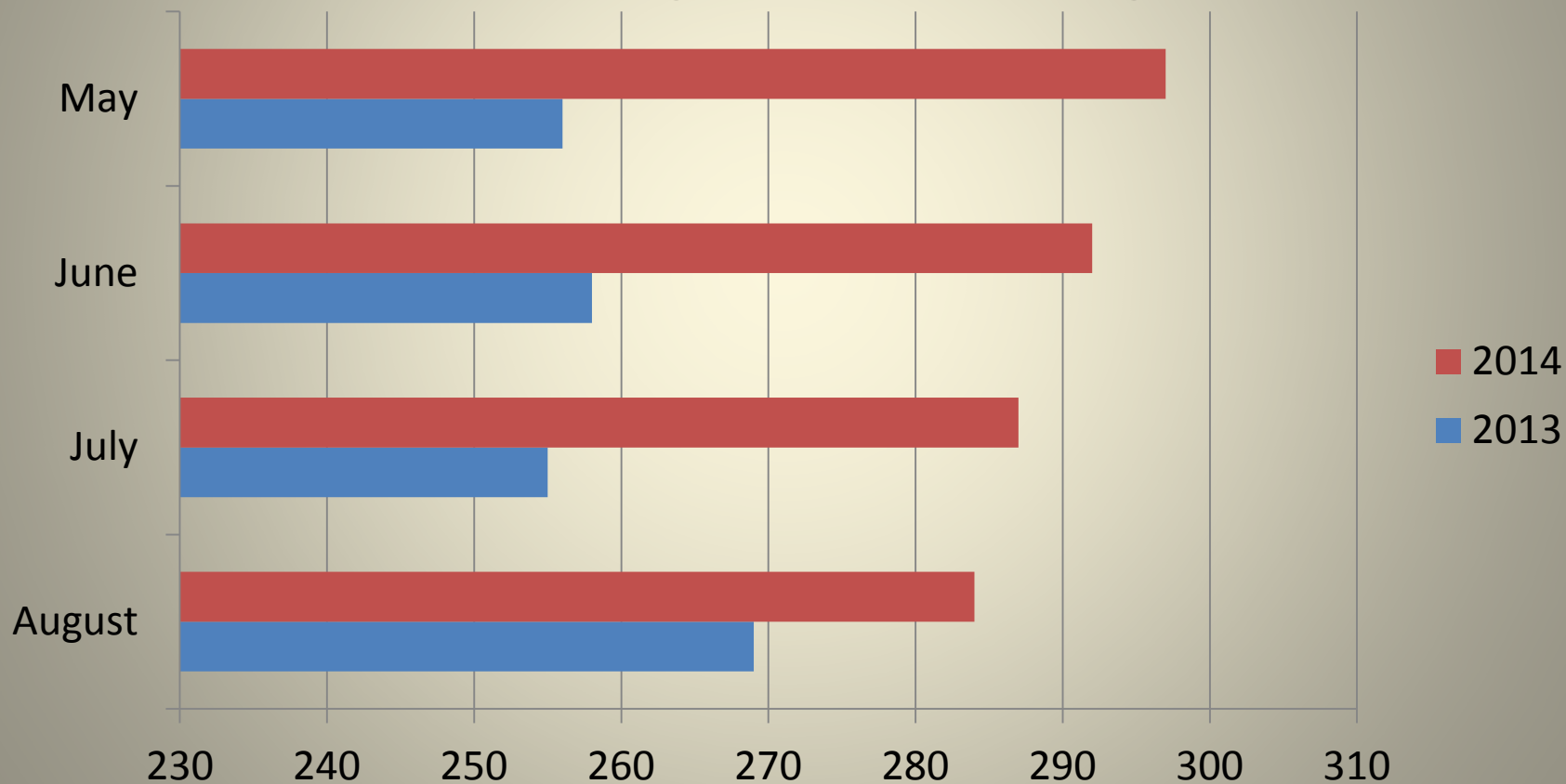


Relative Placements





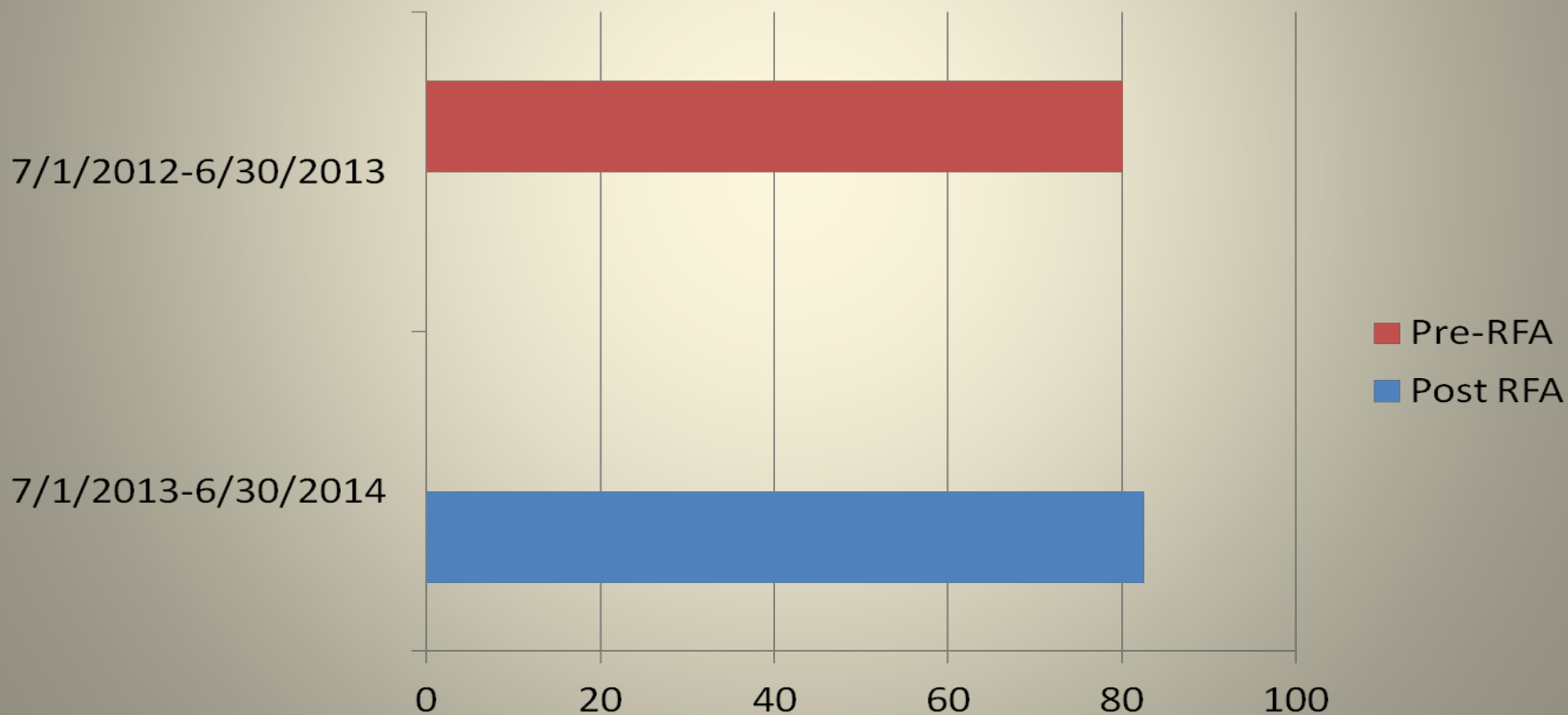
Facility Capacity



County of San Luis Obispo



Placement Stability C.4-1 8 days to 12 months in care





KINGS COUNTY *California*



Kings County's RFA Implementation Process

1. Kings opted in on 2/28/13. Implementation planning began on 10/15/14 for a “go live” date of 1/15/14.
2. Organizational assessment
3. RFA Implementation Plan with P&Ps and forms went to CDSS in 11/13. CDSS TA ????
Plan approved by CDSS on 1/14/14. RFA was operational on 1/15/14.
4. Met with CAO to discuss amending the FY 13/14 Budget to add 2 FTEs & BOS approval.
5. Created 41 RFA forms in English & Spanish. Developed transition plan to stop licensing, relative approvals, and adoption home studies.
6. Incorporate RFA into existing organizational structure.





KINGS COUNTY *California*



Kings County's RFA Challenges & Resolutions

1. Time to approval extends past 60 day requirement. County has to add supports, resources, and flexibility to its program.
2. Funding for relatives/NREFMs for ER placements & Program. 3rd & 4th quarter FY 13/14 administrative expenditures totaled \$199,260. Relatives/NREFMs get 30 days of EA and county general funds until approved. CWS realignment growth funding makes it a wash. 14 cases transitioned from FFA to relative approved RFA homes resulting in cost savings of 51% ($20,642 - 10,189 = 10,453$ per month).
3. PRIDE sessions not offered enough for increase in attendees. Enhanced PRIDE program.
4. Out of county applicants & military. Leveraging other county resources & creativity!



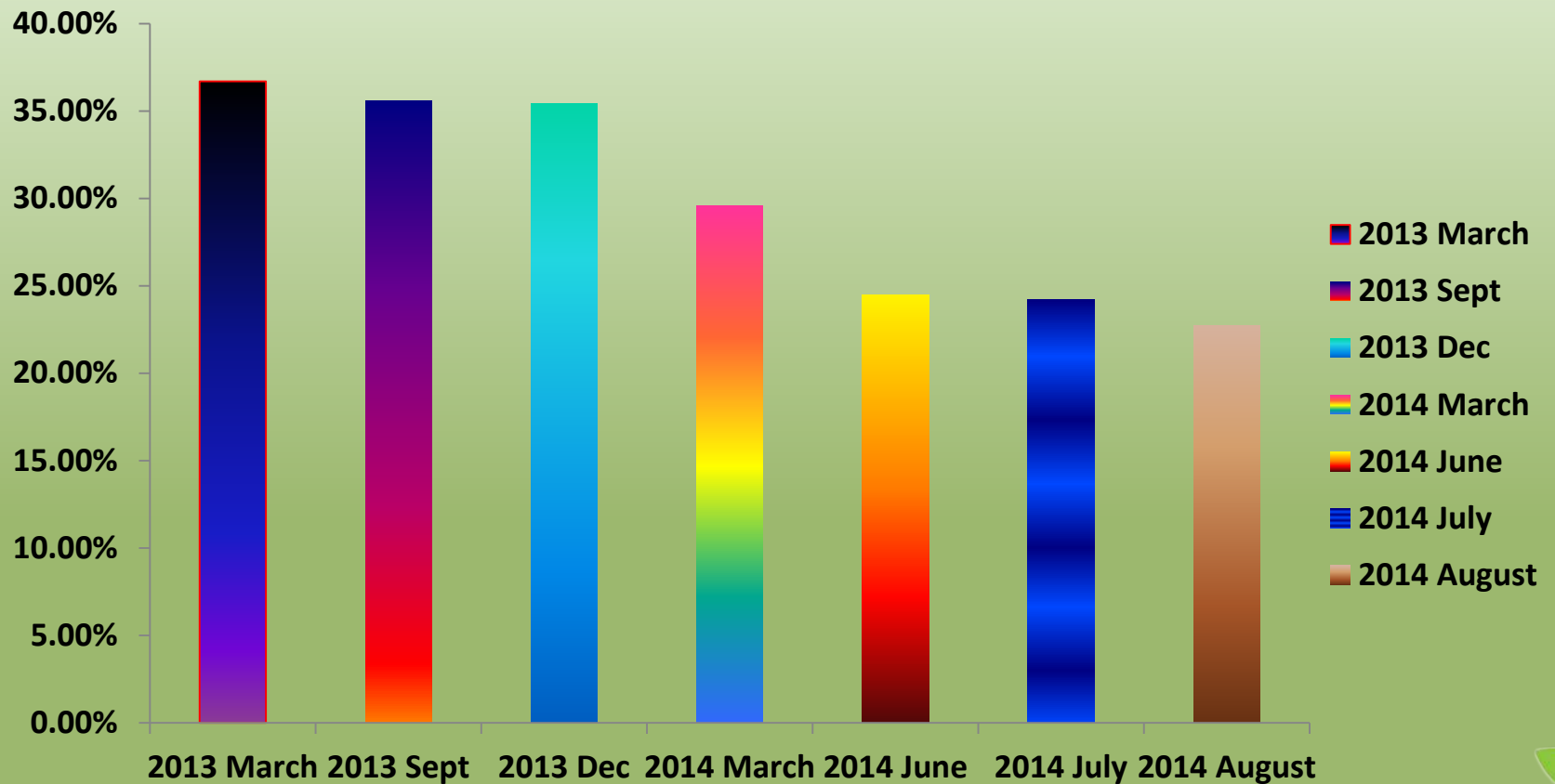


KINGS COUNTY

California



Pre & Post Relative/NREFM Placement Data





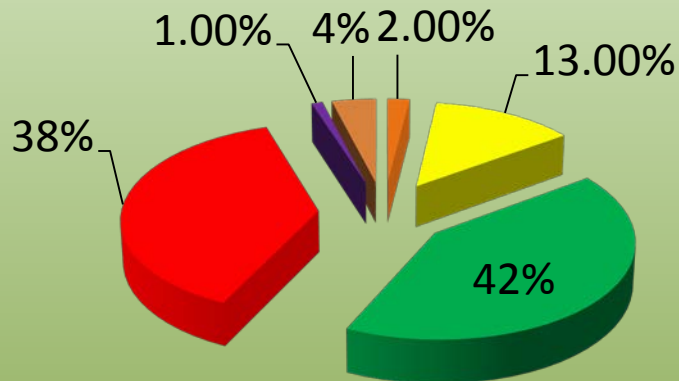
KINGS COUNTY

California



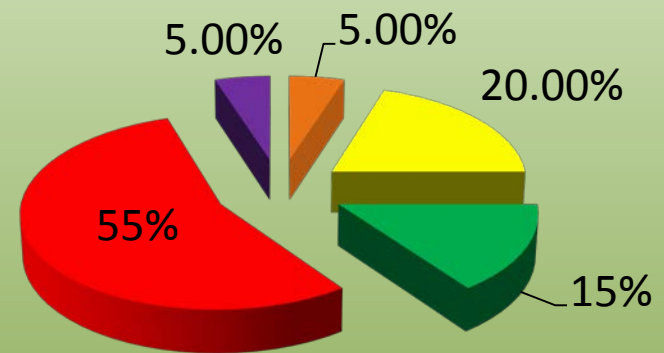
Pre & Post RFA Ethnicity Placement Data

Post Child Ethnicity in Relative Placement



Native American African-American
Caucasian Hispanic
Asian Multi-Ethnic

Pre Child Ethnicity in Relative Placement



Native American Multi-Ethnic
Caucasian Hispanic
Asian



KINGS COUNTY *California*



Kings County's RFA Caseload & Application Data

1. Total applications received 1/15/14-8/31/14 = 144
2. Average applications per month = 18
3. Applications withdrawn = 45 (illness, child reunified, family agreements, job loss, declining the criminal background process, & separation of applicants)
4. Applications denied = 8 (criminal histories and failure to live scan)
5. RFAs approved = 28 (24 relatives & 4 non-relatives)
6. Average time to approve = 79 days (ER placements) & 105 days (Non-ER)
7. 4 SSWs (ACSW, MSW, & BSW) & 1 Supervisor (ACSW)
8. Average caseload per SSW = 18





KINGS COUNTY *California*



Kings County's RFA & QPI Integration

Halted QPI Implementation

Upon RFA Implementation Modified QPI Plan

Incorporation of RFA into QPI

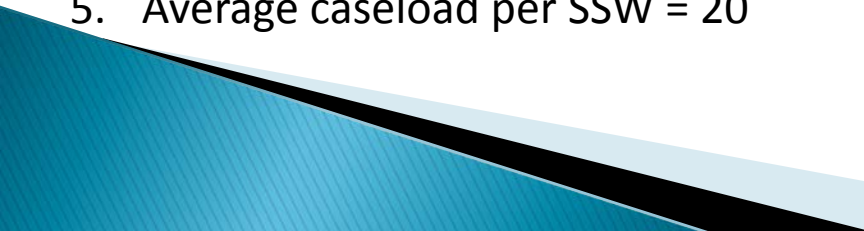




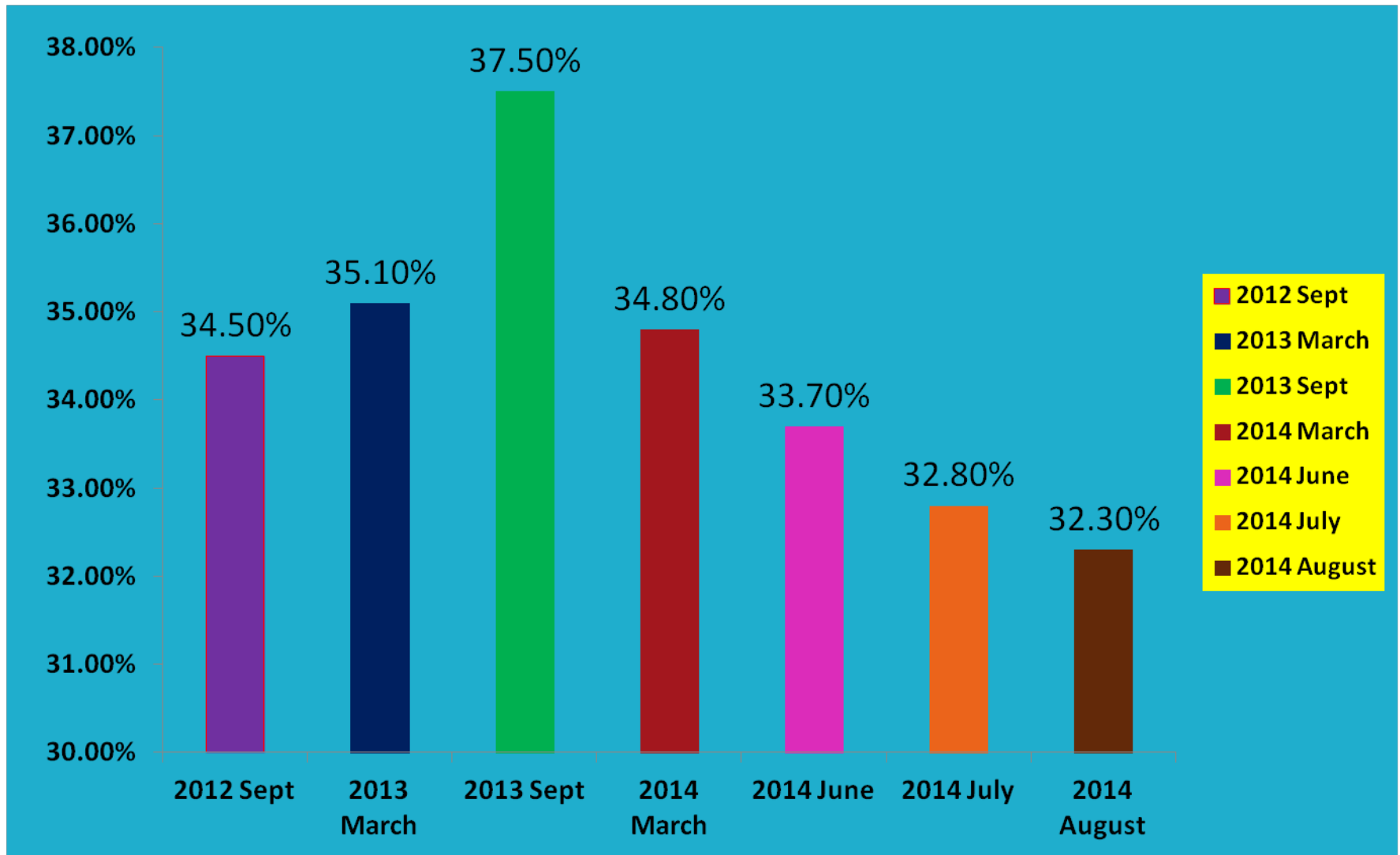
Santa Barbara County RFA Implementation Process

1. Santa Barbara County Implementation planning began in September 2013 for “go live” date of March 1, 2014.
2. November-December 2013 - Steering Committee formed and organizational assessment completed.
3. December 2013-February 2014 - RFA forms, policies, and business processes developed. MOU’s with cooperative agencies for permanency assessments completed. Contracts for RFA Curriculum development and training finalized. Transition plan to stop licensing, relative approvals, and adoption home studies formalized.
4. January – February 2014 - All Staff Trainings conducted.
5. RFA Implementation Plan submitted to CDSS on 2/13/14. Plan approved by CDSS on 2/27/14. RFA was operational on 3/1/14. MOU with CDSS finalized 8/19/14.
6. Received BOS approval for 2 additional RFA SSW FTE’s for FY 14/15 Budget.

Santa Barbara County's RFA Caseload & Application Data

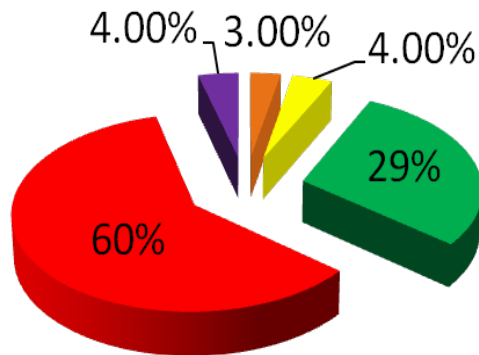
1. Total applications received 3/1/14-9/30/14 = 107
 2. Average applications per month = 15
 3. Applications withdrawn = 26 (child reunified, TDM agreements, inadequate housing, declining to proceed with process)
 4. Applications denied = 0
 5. RFAs approved = 10 (6 relatives & 4 non-relatives)
 4. Average time to approve = 113 days (ER placements) & 114 days (Non-ER)
3/14-4/14 = 139 days & 5/15-9/30 = 96 days
 4. Unit Staffing = 1 Supervisor & 4 Social Services Workers (Licensing/Relative/RFA)
 5. Average caseload per SSW = 20
- 

Pre & Post Relative/NREFM Placement Data



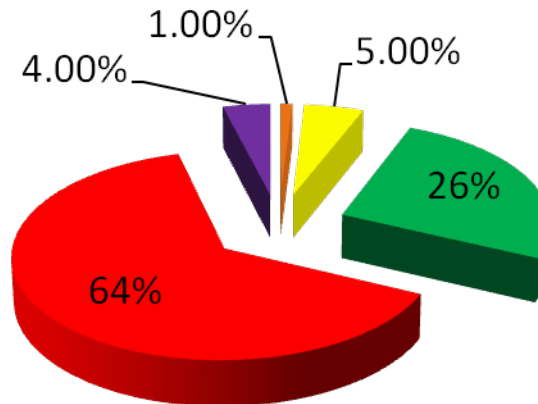
Pre & Post RFA Point in Time Relative Placement Data By Ethnicity

January 2014 N=170



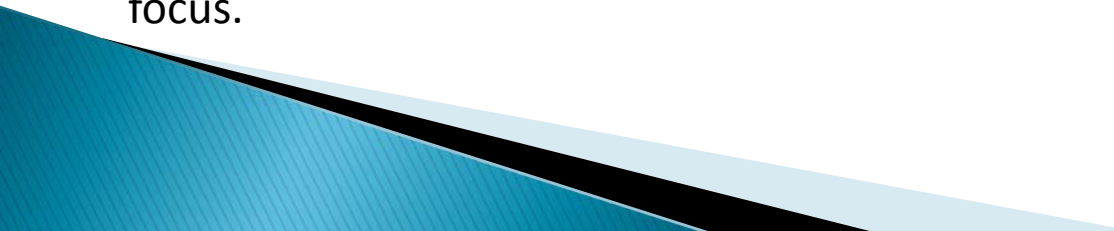
Native American African-American
Caucasian Hispanic
Asian

August 2014 N=164



Native American African-American
Caucasian Hispanic
Asian

Santa Barbara County's RFA Challenges & Resolutions

1. Challenging to meet 90 day time frame for approval. Through continuous process improvement average time to approval has decreased.
 2. Funding for relatives/NREFMs for ER placements. Relatives/NREFMs get 30 days of EA and combination of EA/CWS realignment after 30 days until approval.
 3. PRIDE training offered by community colleges Foster Care Kinship education programs insufficient to meet needs due to increase in attendees and shorter time frames. Contracts developed for new RFA trainings provided countywide in English and Spanish.
 4. Difficulty in obtaining timely medical clearances for applicants. Contract being developed with community medical clinics.
 5. Temporarily Suspended QPI Meetings in 2014 due to focus on RFA implementation. Reconvened QPI beginning September 2014. Incorporated QPI language and Partnership Plan into RFA Process. Joint trainings between resource families and CWS staff current focus.
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Implementation Challenges

- Different for Early Implementation Counties
 - Flying the Plane while Building it
 - Developing Forms and Processes
 - Working with Flexible Written Guidelines
- For New Counties
 - Will have Tools and Templates to Aid implementation
 - Can learn from the experience of the Early Implementers
 - Will need to assess when they are ready to begin

Discussion with Counties

- Any surprises?
- Any regrets?
- Benefits of implementing RFA
 - For Families
 - For Staff
- What's your overall impression of RFA?

Next Steps

- Work with Early Implementation Counties to:
 - Develop communications tools to engage remaining 53 counties
 - Develop Readiness Assessment for new counties
 - Develop RFA Implementation Toolkit for new counties
 - Provide TA and Peer Mentoring for new counties
- Work with CWDA to Enlist Second Cohort of Counties
 - November All-County Meeting at Children's Ops Committee
- Work with Private Providers to bring RFA to FFA's

Resources

- Welfare and Institutions Code Section 16519.5
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>
- Quality Parenting Initiative – QPI
www.qpiflorida.com
- Resource Family Approval Program – RFA*
<http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG3416.h>
- Senate Bill 1460
[SB 1460 \(Chapter 772, Statutes of 2014\)](#)

**Link to Written Directives is on the RFA website*



Questions?