

Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability Quarterly Data Report

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CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Welfare Outcomes & Accountability Report (OAR) provides a quarterly update on Santa Clara County's (SCC) progress toward continuous child welfare improvements.

The Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) shows improvement over baseline for all five priority measures selected for inclusion in the System Improvement Plan (SIP). The magnitude of change for these improvements ranges between 0.2 - 20.8 percent. While SCC bases its performance evaluation on the State-enhanced measures, the Agency is doing well and shows continued improvement across the six Federal measures, as well. Although the State measures are the focus of this report, tracking the County's performance on the Federal measures is important as the State and counties face potential sanctions for failure to demonstrate improvement on these measures. Notable progress and continuing areas of concern are highlighted below.

IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS

Child Safety: "Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect."

- Social workers respond in a timely manner to immediate and 10-day referrals. Data entry and timely response training efforts have been successful in improving timely response. Timeliness to immediate response referrals has historically been strong and has increased by 2.8 percent from baseline to a present rate of 94.0 percent. Timeliness to 10-day referrals has reached stability and has markedly increased by 20.8 percent from baseline to a present rate of 95.5 percent (see p. 7).
- More children receive timely home visits from their social workers. Again, data entry and timely response training efforts helped improve timely social worker visits with children. The rate for timely social worker visits has reached stability and has markedly increased by 18.3 percent from baseline to a present rate of 91.2 percent (see p. 7).

Permanency & Stability: "Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing entry into foster care."

- Children and youths in the foster care system experience greater stability in their placements. Efforts to increase the use of joint decision making meetings, which may include the participation of family, community partners, youths, and Agency staff, to develop placement plans likely contributed to the observed increase in placement stability. The percent of children and youths with 1-2 placements in 12 months continues to increase and has markedly improved by 12.1 percent from baseline to a present rate of 52.9 percent (see p. 8).
- Black and Hispanic children experience more placement stability (i.e., 1-2 placements in 12 months) compared to their respective baselines. The use of joint decision making meetings and the Agency's efforts to reduce disproportionality are likely reasons for observed improvements for Black and Hispanic children's placement stability in foster care. For Black children and youths, placement stability increased by 6.7 percent from baseline to a present rate of 42.9 percent. For Hispanic children and youths, placement stability increased by 18.6 percent from baseline to a present rate of 54.0 percent (see p. 14).

Child and Family Well-being: “The family relationships and connections of children will be preserved, as appropriate.”

- At any point-in-time, approximately 80 percent of all children and youths in foster care experience family placements such as with relatives and foster parents (including Foster Family Agency homes). Children and youths in SCC experience more family placements than the average foster youth in California who experiences family placements at a rate of 72 percent. More importantly, 45 percent of children and youths in SCC experience placements with relatives. Comparatively, 37 percent of children and youths in California experience placements with relatives (see p. 16).

CONCERNS

- Children continue to re-enter foster care at a rate that has not improved much over baseline. Reducing re-entry is a SIP priority. To reduce re-entry, an effective strategy is the use of joint decision making meetings at point of exit to inform a family’s reunification plan. DFCS is also at the planning stage to develop and implement after care services for children and their families exiting the child welfare system.
- The placement stability (i.e., 1-2 Placements in 12 Months) of children and youths in foster care is 14.8 percent lower than the State’s rate of 67.7. However, as noted earlier, placement stability for SCC has increased markedly from baseline and is on an upward trend (see p. 8). To strengthen the placement stability of children entering foster care, DFCS set up an Assessment Center where children coming into care or in between placements receive physical, mental health, and other services needed while social workers convene joint decision making meetings to develop a best placement plan.
- The incidence rate for substantiated referrals shows an upward trend. There is an increase of 0.6 more substantiation per 1,000 children from a baseline incidence rate of 6.7. However, while an increase in the incidence rate for substantiated referrals is observed (see p. 4 & 6), this does not necessarily lead to an increase in entry into foster care. In fact, there is a slight but consistent decline in first entries from a baseline incidence rate of 2.3 to the present incidence rate of 2.1. A contributing factor that may account for the decline in entries in light of the increase in substantiated referrals may be the partnership between DFCS and law enforcement to jointly respond to potential situations of child abuse or neglect. Joint Response aims to intervene and provide families with needed services and supports to prevent children from entering foster care.

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INTRODUCTION

The Child Welfare Outcomes & Accountability Report (OAR) provides a quarterly update on Santa Clara County's (SCC) progress toward continuous child welfare improvements.¹ The OAR is also a tool for the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and the Agency to help guide management actions. Through dialogue with DFCS and other Agency stakeholders, the report may help elicit analytic questions to better understand and continue to improve outcomes and performance, as appropriate.

SCC CHILD WELFARE IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

There are several strategic efforts taking place across DFCS to improve child and family outcomes. Eight SIP workgroups were formed to develop and implement improvement plans. Key improvement objectives follow (***target measures follow each area of improvement***):

- **Reduce first entry into foster care with a focus on children of color.** Reducing disproportionality remains a top priority and major concern for SCC. The *Children of Color Workgroup* has engaged in several analytic efforts to better understand the disproportionality of children of color in the child welfare system. Presently, a contract with the SPHERE Institute is set to investigate the referral process and child welfare entry, and whether there are ethnic variations.

Culturally competent assessments and services, joint decision making, early strength-based interventions, and preventative community-based services are among the skills and resources used by social workers and community partners to keep children with their families whenever appropriate. Specific tools and programs include the risk and safety assessment tool implemented in early 2007, which includes cultural-specific assessment questions; Team Decision Making (TDM); Early Intervention Services to divert children in temporary custody at the Shelter; and Differential Response to connect families at risk of entering the child welfare system with community-based services. These best practice strategies are aimed at providing families and children with appropriate, culturally competent, and equitable services.

- First Entry into Care (see p. 6)
- **Increase placement stability.** DFCS staff is committed to convening joint decision making meetings to inform children's case plans. Specifically, TDM meetings, a Family-to-Family best practice, bring together child welfare staff, family supports, community partners, and other stakeholders to the table to inform placement plans. In addition, the *SIP Data Team* investigated multiple placements in order to improve stability and family reunification outcomes. As a result, two support teams, composed of former and current resource families, were formed; improvements have been made to social workers' response to resource families' needs; and stronger links have been made between resource families' needs and community resources.
 - 1-2 Placements in 12 Months (see p. 8 & 14)
 - Reunification within 12 Months (see p. 12)
 - Absence or Re-entry within 12 Months of Reunification (see p. 8 & 14)

¹ State Accountability Act, Assembly Bill (AB) 636, California-Children & Family Services Review, 2001.

- **Improve timely response and visits.** The *Timely Visits and Response* and *Quality Assurance Workgroups* have implemented successful data entry and timely response trainings for DFCS staff.
 - Timely Response: Immediate and 10-day Referrals (see p. 7)
 - Timely Social Worker Visits with Child (see p. 7)

- **Improve connections to family.** The *Family Finding* and *Joint Decision Making Workgroups* have improved the approval process for relative placements, developed permanency and resiliency training for staff, and developed and implemented Emancipation Conferences for youths exiting the child welfare system in order to support family connections, educational goals and job-skills, and to offer other supports and services.
 - Children Placed with Some or All Siblings (see p. 15)
 - Relative Placement, point-in-time (see p. 16)

STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

To report on child welfare outcomes and performance, the OAR is divided into three sections:

Section I presents Child Welfare Outcomes at a Glance; these are outcome summaries for SCC's five SIP priority measures, magnitude of change for State-enhanced measures, and federal measures.

Section II presents historical charts for the five SIP priority measures.

Section III presents historical charts & ethnic breakdowns for the State-enhanced measures.

To measure performance, SCC focuses its evaluation on entry cohort data (i.e., the State-enhanced measures). An important strength of using entry cohorts has to do with the ability to assess *all* children's experiences longitudinally, which provides a more comprehensive understanding of children's experiences in the child welfare system. Exit cohorts (i.e., the Federal measures) assess children's experiences as they exit the child welfare system. The experiences of children in exit cohorts are more likely to be varied than in entry cohorts.

Two methods are used to evaluate performance. First, present performance is compared to baseline; SCC previously established a baseline for improvement across all State measures. Secondly, SCC performance is compared to State performance.² Data used in the present report was provided by the Center for Social Sciences Research, UC Berkeley.³

While SCC tracks performance using the State-enhanced measures, the OAR also provides outcome data for the Federal measures (see p. 5). The federal government is set to roll-out changes to the methodology of the federal measures. The following three items summarize these changes. In preparation for these upcoming changes, the first item listed below is implemented in the OAR. More information will be presented as it becomes available.

First, strengths-based language is used to interpret outcomes. As appropriate, measures in the report are reverse coded to ease interpretation. Higher rates point to better outcomes.

Second, the bar will be raised for two measures (i.e., *absence of recurrence of maltreatment within 6 months* and *absence of maltreatment in foster care*).

Third, composite scoring will be used to evaluate the overall experiences of children.

² Caution is advised for measures or descriptive categories (e.g., maltreatment in foster care, Native Americans receiving child welfare services) with statistically small numbers.

³ To learn more about California child welfare performance data, visit <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports>.

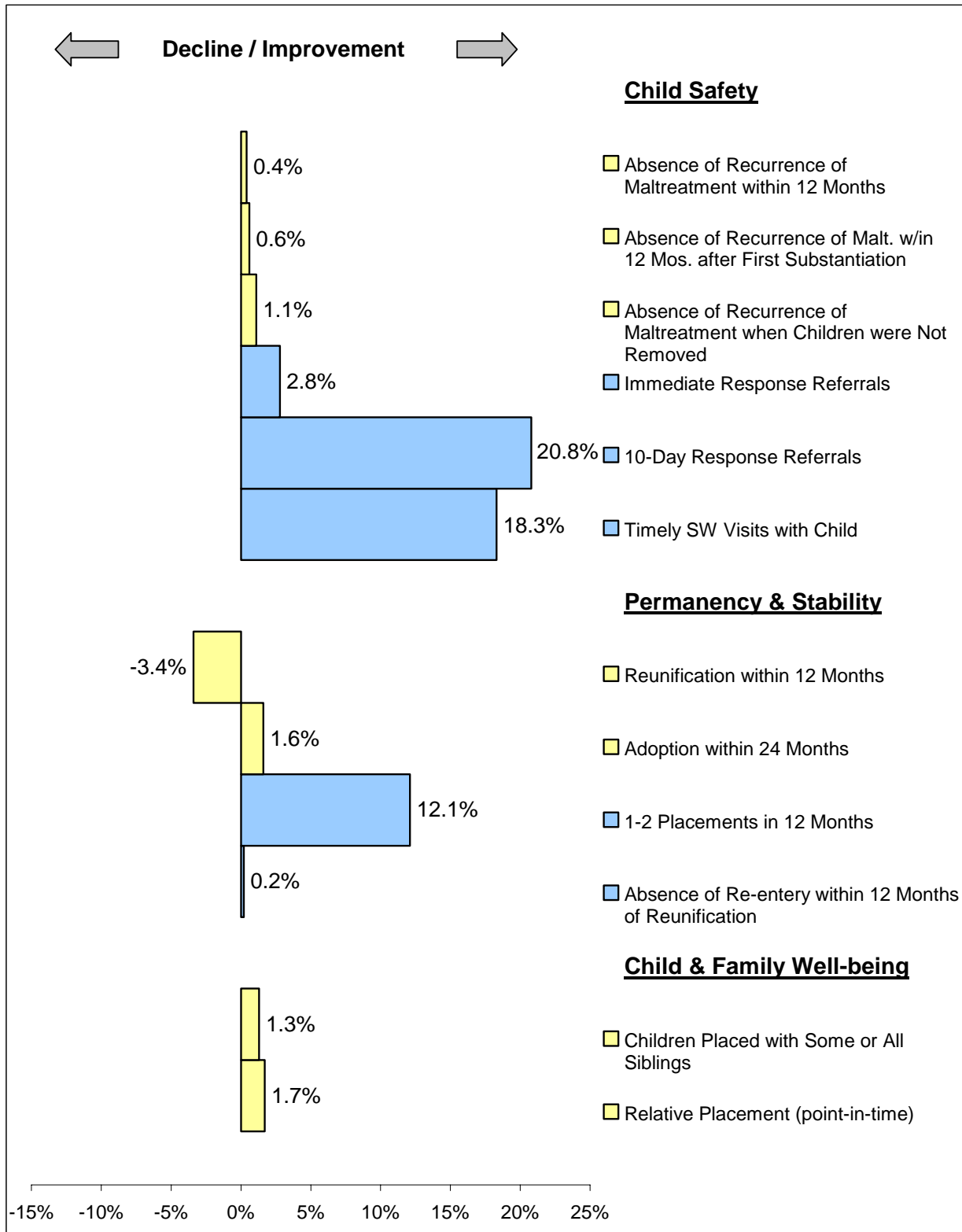
CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES AT A GLANCE

Five SIP Priority Areas

SIP Indicators		Baseline		Last Year			Current Period		
		Period	Rate	Period	Rate	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from SCC Baseline	Period	Rate	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from SCC Baseline
Participation Rates *									
1	First Entries (Stay ≥ 5 days; Incidence per 1,000)	2002	2.3	2004	1.8	✓	2005	2.1	✓
Child Safety									
2	Timely Response								
	Immediate Response Referral	Q2 2003	91.2%	Q3 2005	91.6%	✓	Q3 2006	94.0%	✓
	10-day Response Referral	Q2 2003	74.7%	Q3 2005	96.6%	✓	Q3 2006	95.5%	✓
3	Timely SW Visits with Child	Q2 2003	72.9%	Q3 2005	92.5%	✓	Q3 2006	91.2%	✓
Permanency									
4	1-2 Placements in 12 Months	7/01-6/02	40.8%	10/03-9/04	46.7%	✓	10/04-9/05	52.9%	✓
5	Absence of Re-entry within 12 Months of Reunification	7/00-6/01	85.9%	10/02-9/03	84.8%	X	10/03-9/04	86.1%	✓
Improve from SCC Baseline :				5 of 6			6 of 6		

*The SCC SIP Priority is to measure and analyze ethnic/racial disproportionality for children entering the foster care system for the first time. Only overall participation rates for First Entries are provided in the summary table. For ethnic/racial disproportionality data for first entry into foster care, please review Section III of the report.

Magnitude of Change for State-enhanced Measures (Compares SCC Baseline with Most Recent Reporting Period)



Legend:
 Blue (or darker shade) bars = SCC SIP Priority measures.
 Yellow (or lighter shade) bars = All other State-enhanced measures.

Federal Measures

Federal Indicators	Standard	Last Year ^a		Current Period ^b		Improvement or Standard Met (✓) or Not (X)	
		SCC Rate	Federal Standard Met (✓) or Not Met (X)	SCC Rate	Federal Standard Met (✓) or Not Met (X)		
Child Safety							
1A	Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment within 6 Months	≥ 93.9%	93.6%	X	92.0%	X	X
1C	Absence of Maltreatment in Foster Care	≥ 99.43%	99.97%	✓	100.00%	✓	✓
Permanency & Stability							
3B	1-2 Placements in 12 Months	≥ 86.7%	77.5%	X	77.7%	X	✓
3D	Adoption within 24 Months	≥ 32.0%	38.2%	✓	32.4%	✓	✓
3E	Reunification within 12 Months	≥ 76.2%	76.5%	✓	80.0%	✓	✓
3F	Absence of Re-entry within 12 Months of Reunification	≤ 91.4%	88.3%	X	89.9%	X	✓
Standards Met or Improved:		3 of 6		3 of 6		5 of 6	

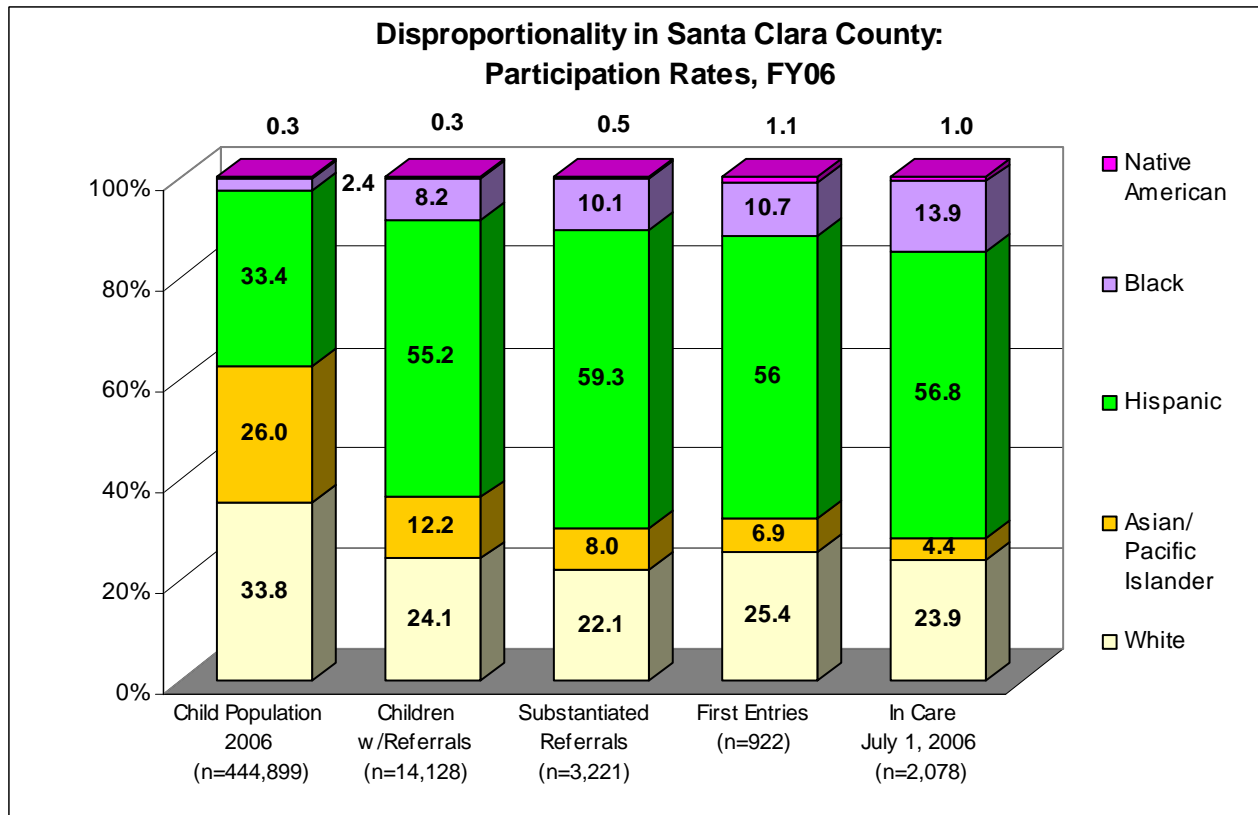
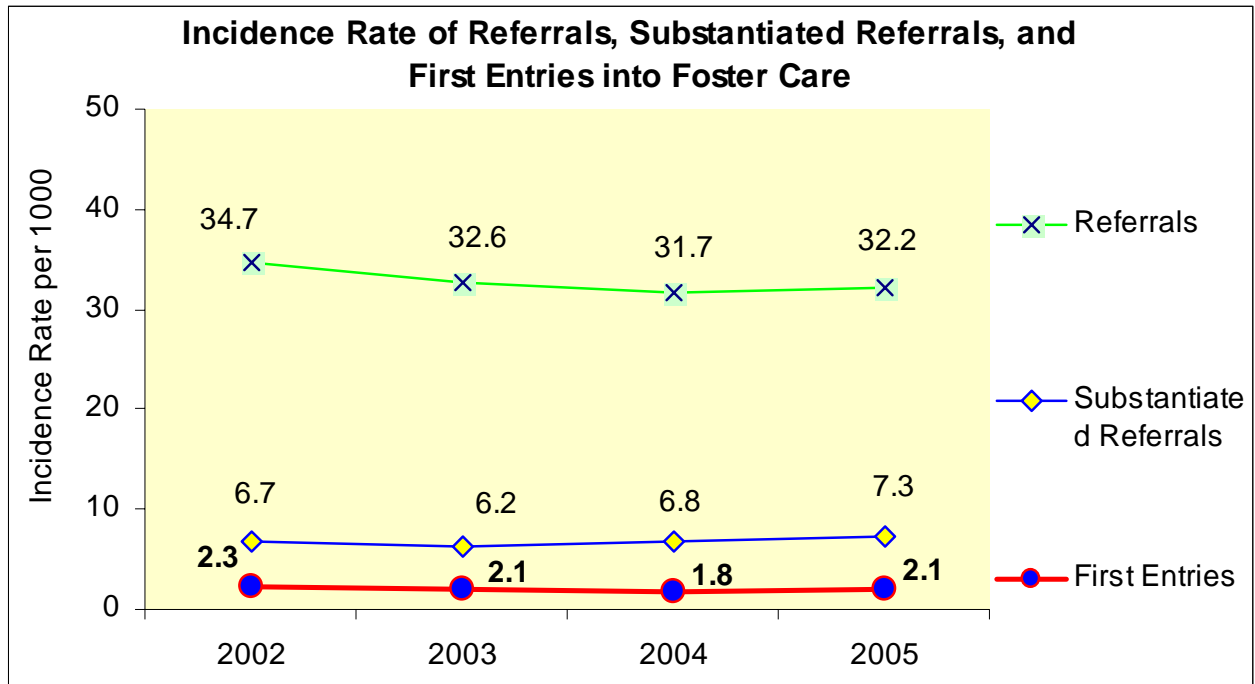
a Data source: Outcome & Accountability County Data Report (April 2007), CSSR UC Berkeley.

b Data source: Outcome & Accountability County Data Report (April 2006), CSSR UC Berkeley.

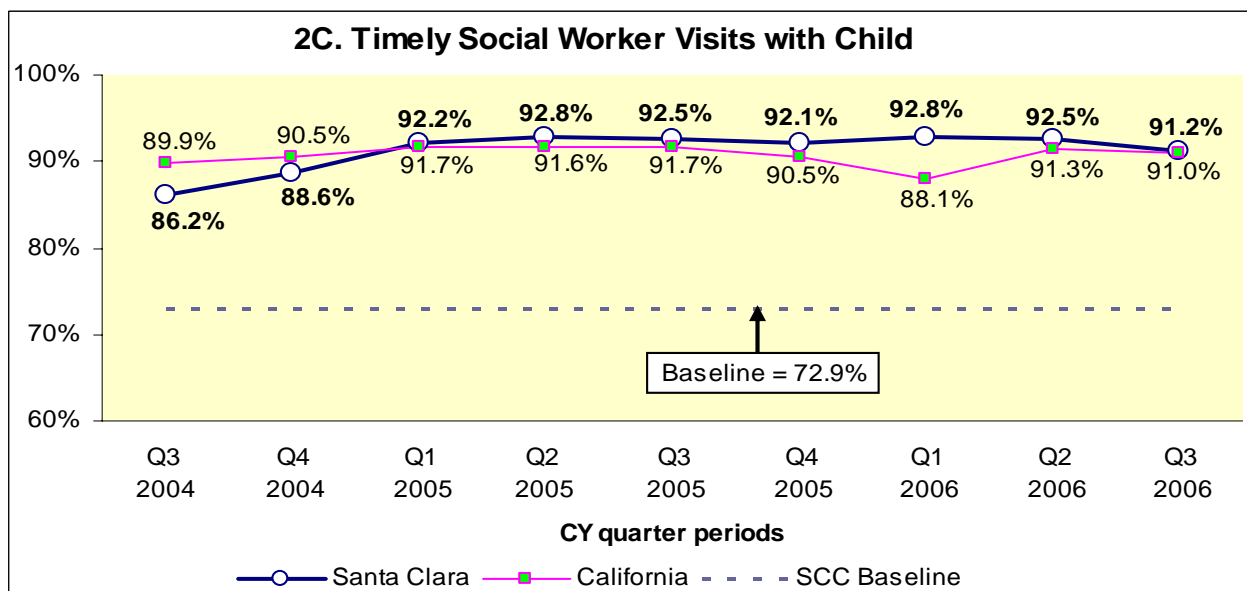
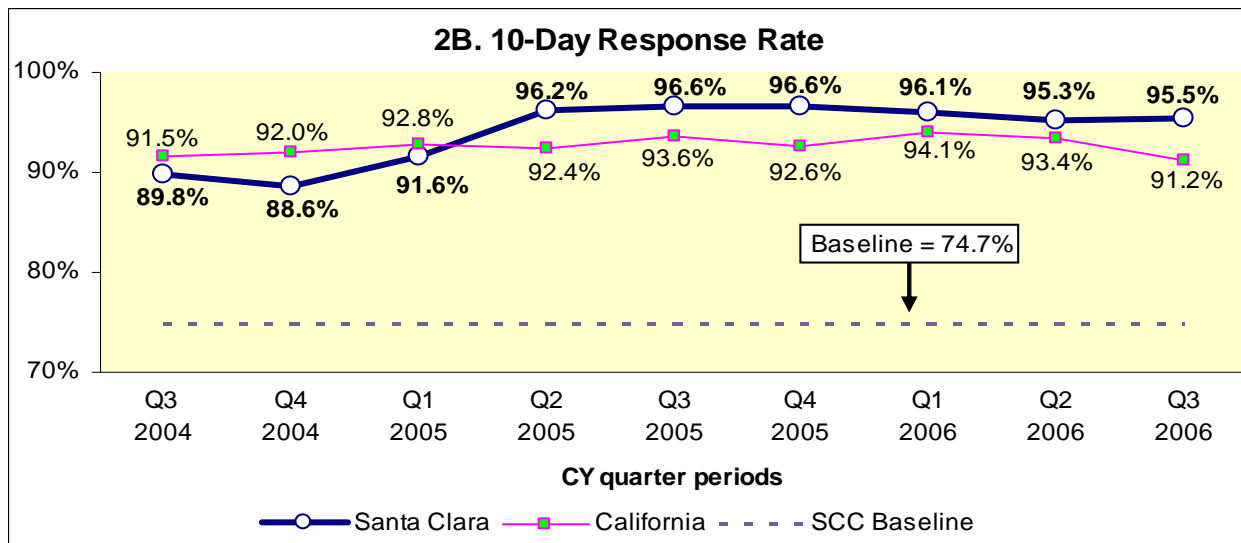
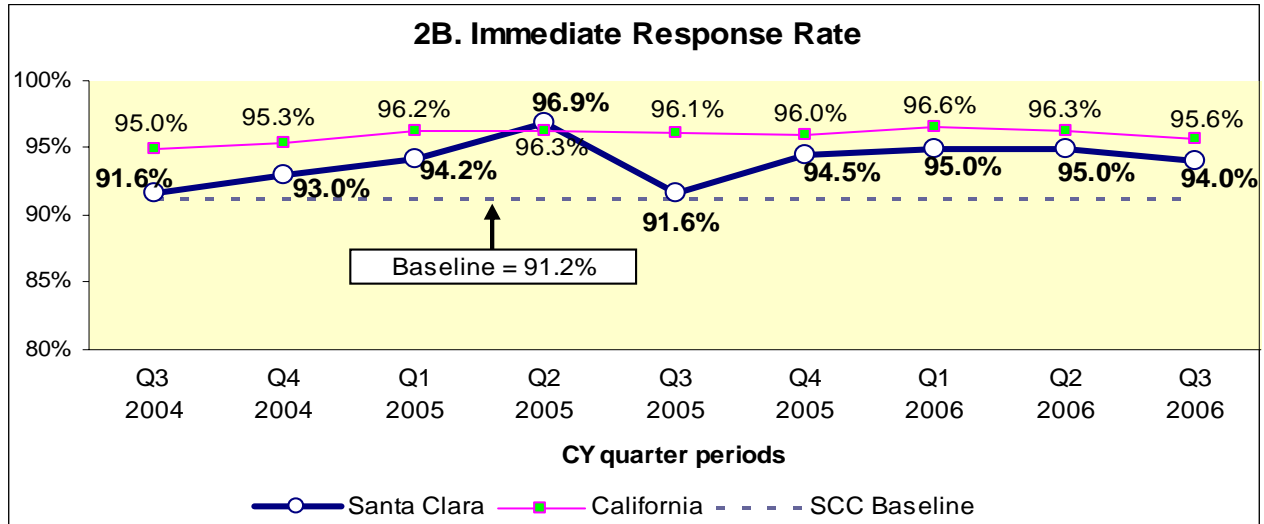
Note: Where standard is not met in current period, highlighted rows draw attention to areas of improvement.

FIVE SIP PRIORITY AREAS

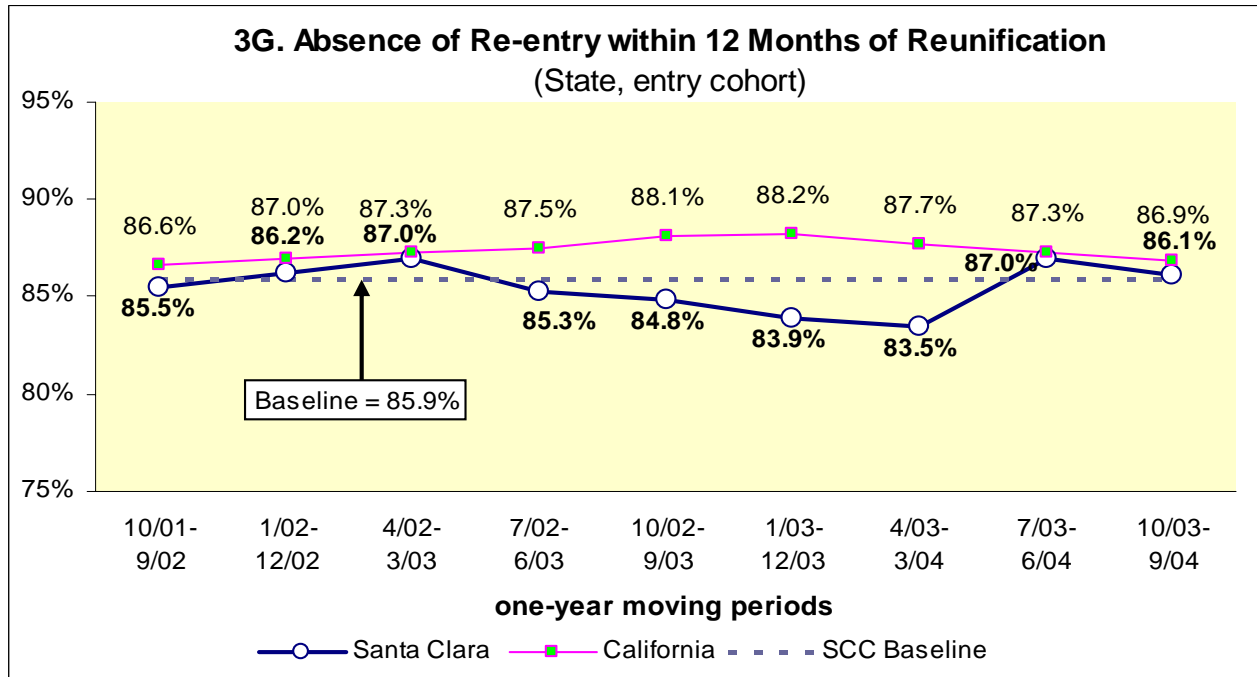
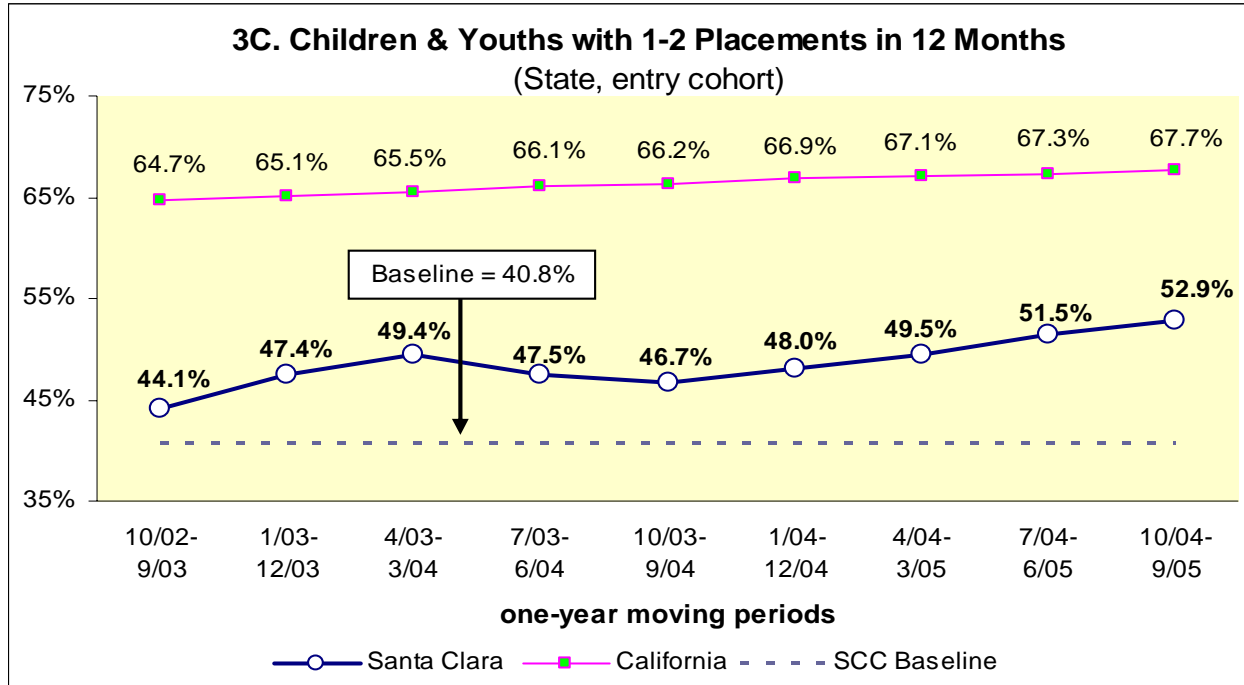
Participation Rates



Child Safety

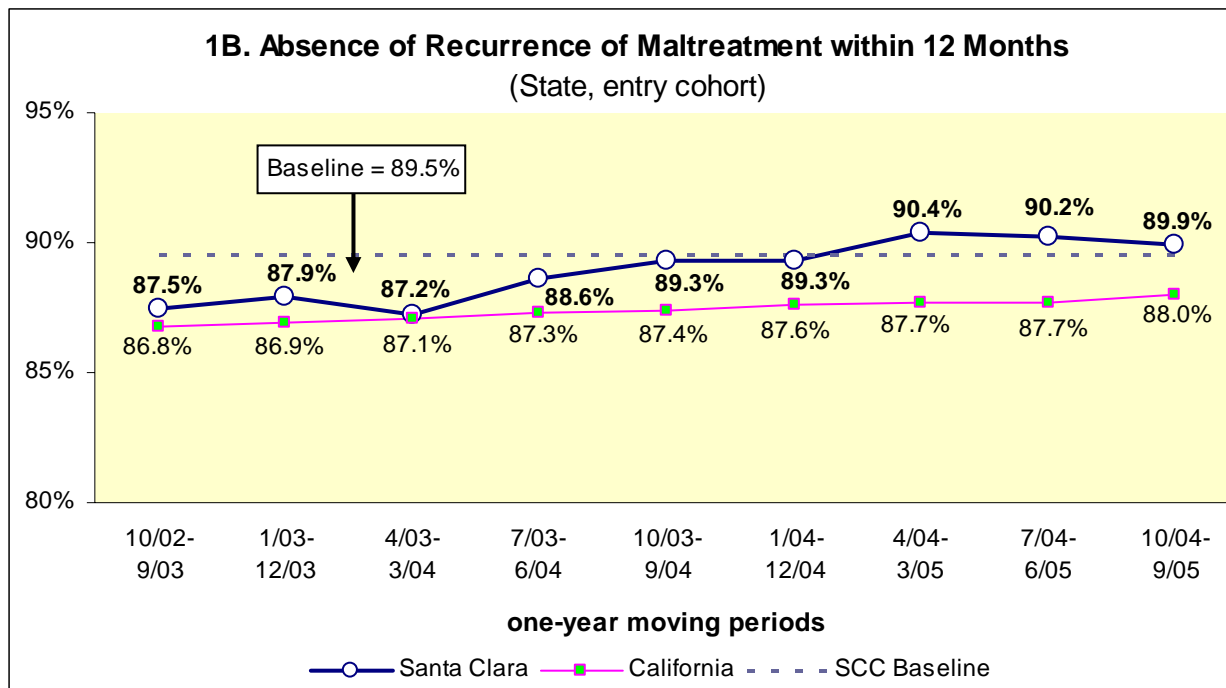


Permanency & Stability

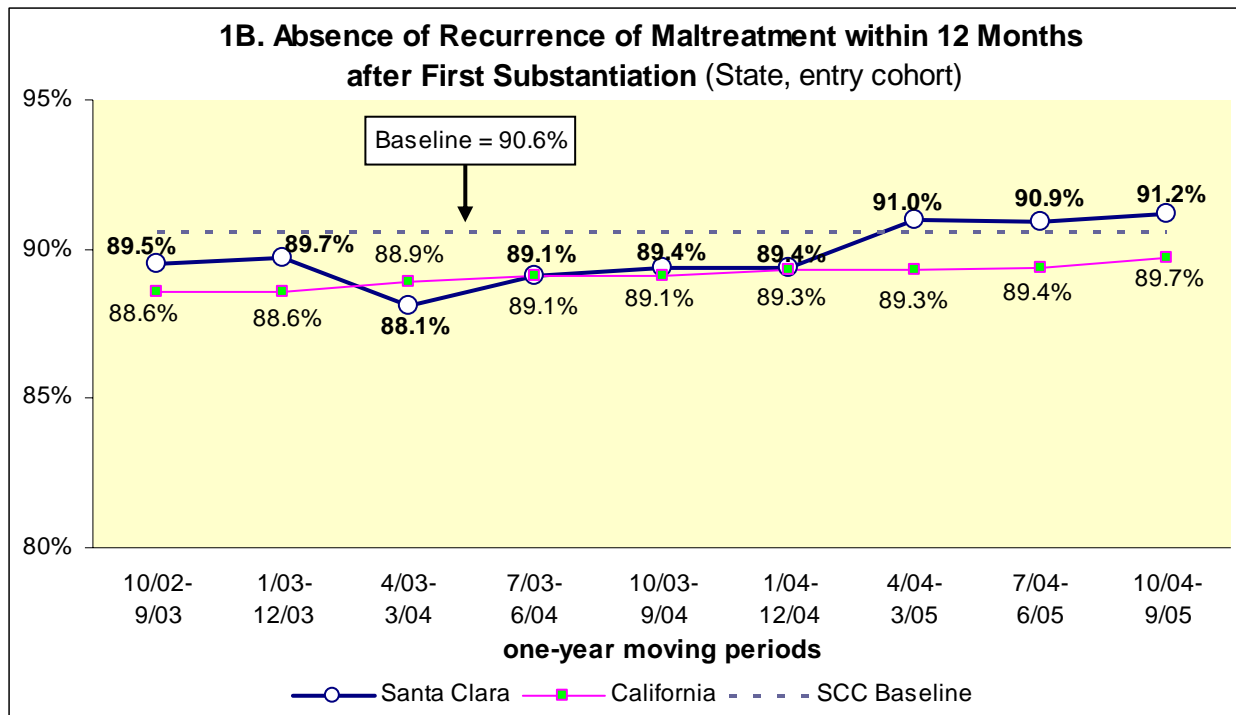


STATE-ENHANCED MEASURES & DISPROPORTIONALITY

Child Safety

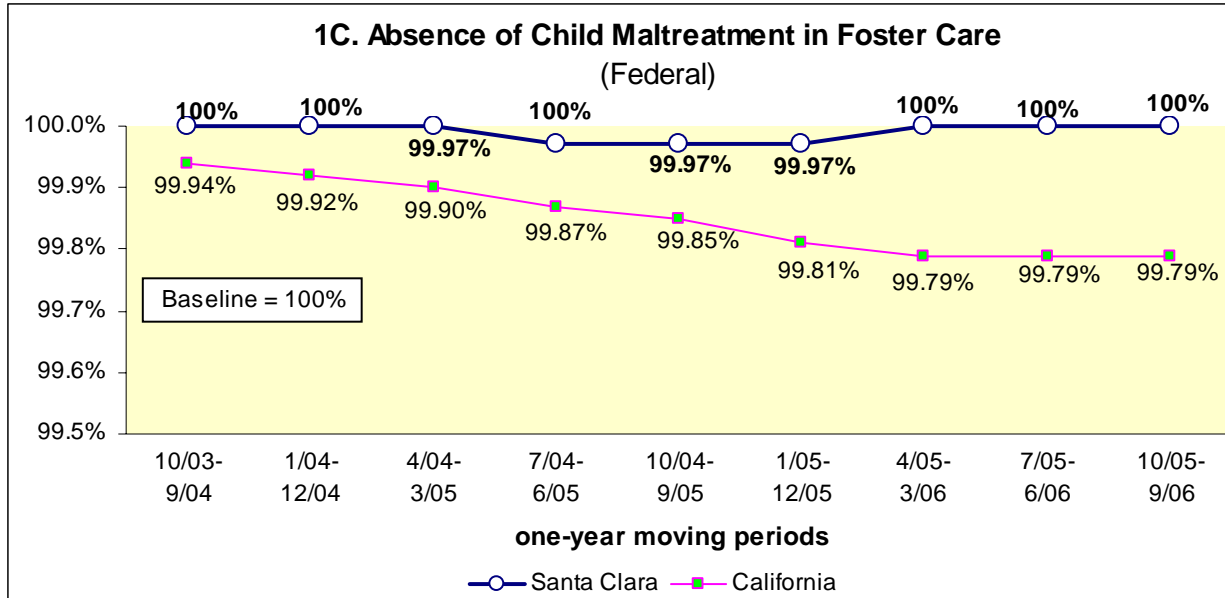


1B. Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 Months by Ethnicity					
Ethnicity	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
	Rate (7/01-6/02)	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/04-9/05)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	92.3%	86.6%	X	89.6%	X
White	89.0%	89.5%	✓	88.9%	X
Hispanic	89.2%	89.4%	✓	89.5%	✓
Asian/Other	89.4%	90.8%	✓	94.9%	✓
Native American	100.0%	88.9%	X	100.0%	No change
Total	89.5%	89.3%	X	89.9%	✓

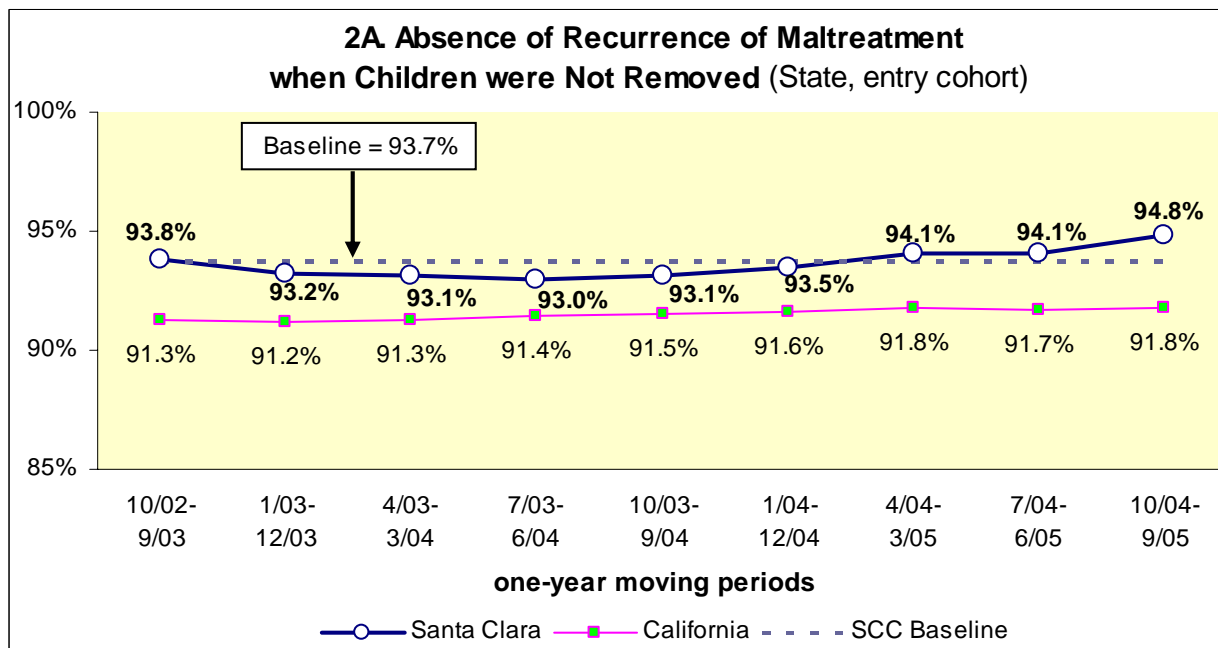


1B. Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment within 12 Months after First Substantiation by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
	Rate (7/01-6/02)	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/04-9/05)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	92.4%	87.5%	X	92.7%	✓
White	89.7%	89.1%	X	89.3%	X
Hispanic	91.0%	89.4%	X	90.7%	X
Asian/Other	88.5%	90.4%	✓	96.2%	✓
Native American	100.0%	100.0%	No change	100.0%	No change
Total	90.6%	89.4%	X	91.2%	✓

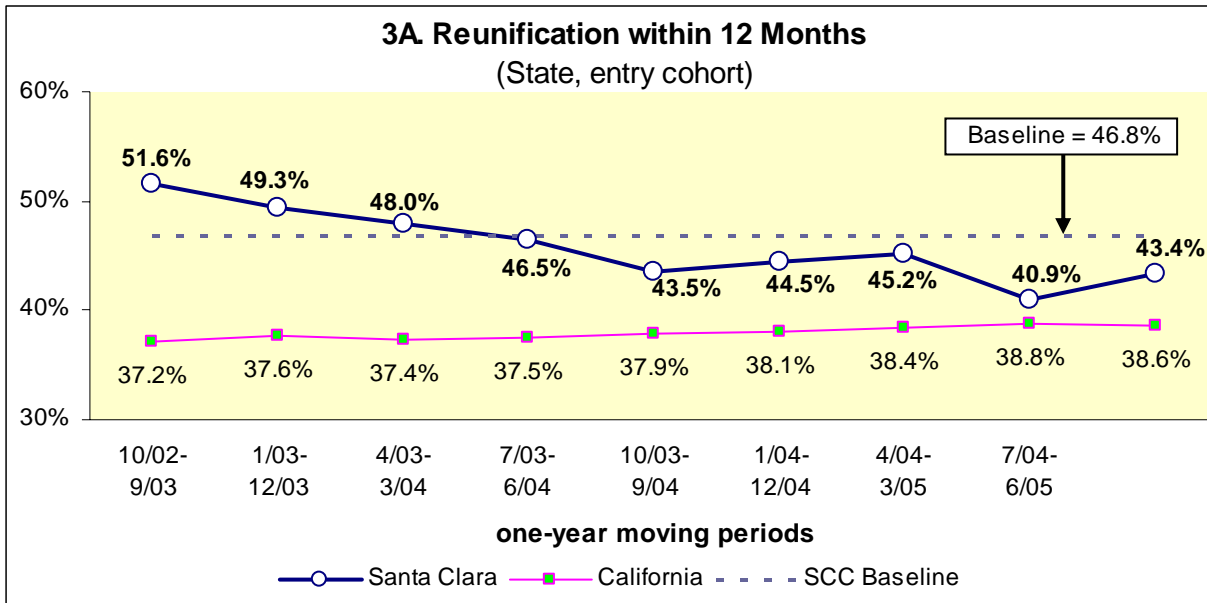


Note: No State measure on child maltreatment is available. Ethnicity data is unavailable.

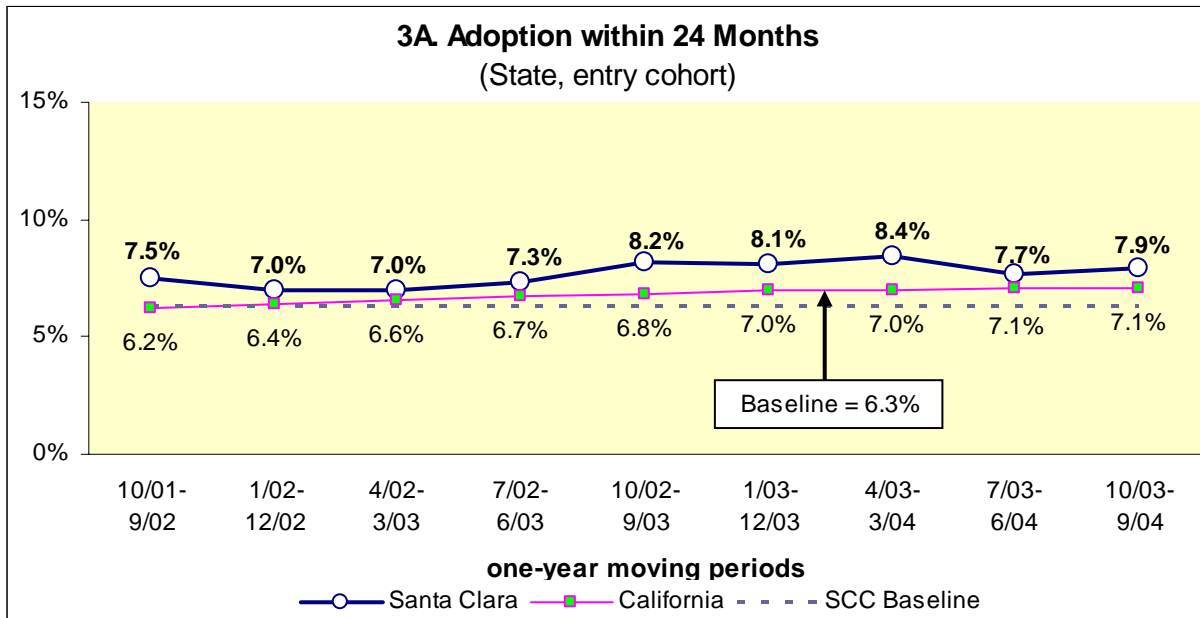


Note: Ethnicity data is unavailable..

Permanency & Stability



3A. Reunification within 12 Months by Ethnicity					
	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
Ethnicity	Rate (7/01-6/02)	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/04-9/05)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	45.1%	36.1%	X	36.5%	X
White	46.0%	39.7%	X	45.7%	X
Hispanic	46.4%	44.3%	X	43.2%	X
Asian/Other	53.6%	62.5%	✓	50.0%	X
Native American	40.0%	42.9%	✓	0.0%	X
Total	46.8%	43.5%	X	43.4%	X



3A. Adoption within 24 Months by Ethnicity					
	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
Ethnicity	Rate (7/00-6/01)	Rate (10/02-9/03)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	5.1%	6.1%	✓	2.8%	X
White	9.4%	10.7%	✓	9.0%	X
Hispanic	5.0%	7.1%	✓	8.3%	✓
Asian/Other	8.5%	11.0%	✓	8.2%	X
Native American	0.0%	0.0%	No change	0.0%	No Change
Total	6.3%	8.2%	✓	7.9%	✓

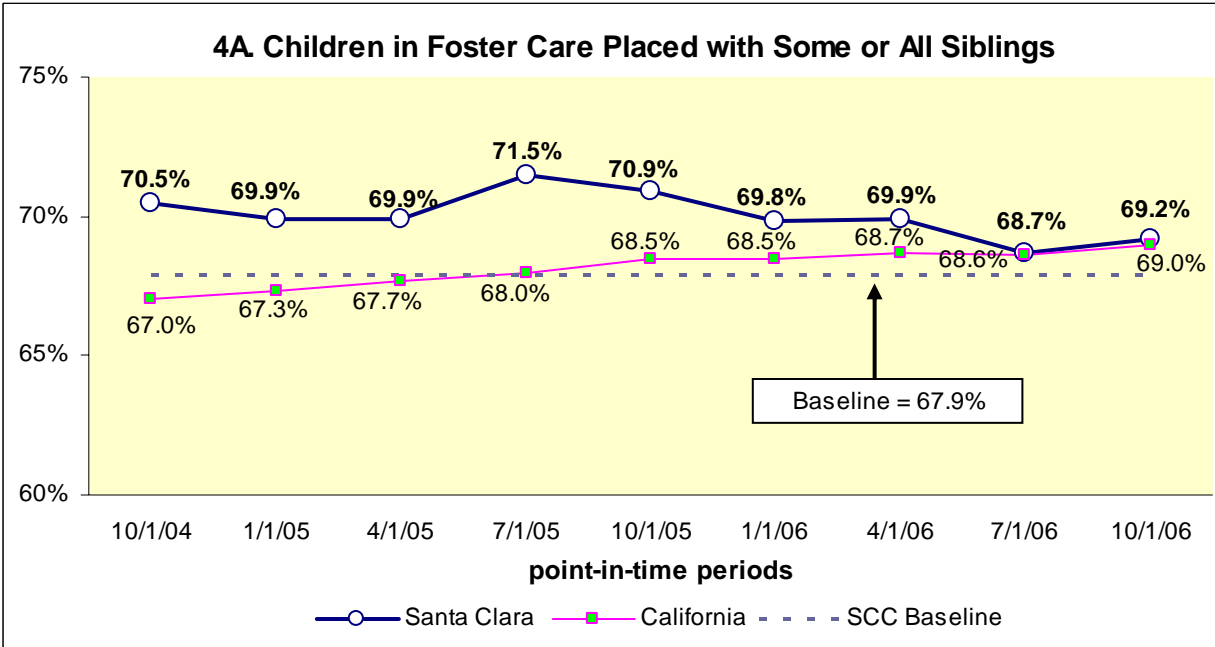
3C. Children & Youths with 1-2 Placements in 12 Months*For historical charting, please refer to p. 8*

3C. Children & Youths with 1-2 Placements in 12 Months by Ethnicity					
	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
Ethnicity	Rate (7/01-6/02)	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/04-9/05)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	36.2%	53.3%	✓	42.9%	✓
White	52.6%	42.3%	X	52.4%	X
Hispanic	35.4%	49.2%	✓	54.0%	✓
Asian/Other	47.1%	38.9%	X	48.5%	✓
Native American	0%	0%	No change	100%	✓
Total	40.8%	46.7%	✓	52.9%	✓

3G. Absence of Re-entry within 12 Months of Reunification*For historical charting, please refer to p. 8.*

3G. Absence of Re-entry within 12 Months of Reunification by Ethnicity					
	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
Ethnicity	Rate (7/00-6/01)	Rate (10/02-9/03)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/03-9/04)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	81.8%	84.5%	✓	80.8%	X
White	85.6%	81.3%	X	91.0%	✓
Hispanic	85.4%	85.8%	✓	84.8%	X
Asian/Other	90.8%	89.1%	X	86.7%	X
Native American	100%	100%	X	66.7%	X
Total	85.9%	84.8%	✓	86.1%	✓

Child and Family Well-Being



4A. Children in Foster Care Placed with Some or All Siblings by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Baseline	Last Year		Current Period	
	Rate (7/01/2003)	Rate (10/1/2005)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline	Rate (10/1/2006)	Improve (✓) or Decline (X) from Baseline
Black	68.3%	68.4%	✓	63.9%	X
White	55.7%	64.9%	✓	64.4%	✓
Hispanic	71.6%	73.0%	✓	71.9%	✓
Asian/Other	70.0%	72.7%	✓	66.0%	X
Native American	60.0%	81.8%	✓	90.0%	✓
Total	67.9%	70.9%	✓	69.2%	✓

