

## SHARED FAMILY CARE EVALUATION PLAN

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### *Overview*

Shared Family Care (SFC) is an innovative model for serving parents and children together (see attached fact sheet). As an alternative to traditional family preservation services or out-of-home care, SFC promotes the safety of children while preventing the unnecessary and traumatic separation of parents and children. Its overall long-term intended effects are:

- safety of children in participating families;
- greater stabilization and self-sufficiency among participating families; and
- improved well-being of children and parents who participate in the program.

The model is based on the following principles:

- Every child deserves a safe, healthy, nurturing environment in which to grow.
- Most children are better off in a family setting.
- Families should remain together if at all possible.
- In order to support a child, it is necessary to support the child's parent(s).
- Parents' basic needs (e.g., food and housing) must be met in order for them to effectively address psychosocial, emotional or parenting issues.
- Families learn best from each other.
- Families should be placed in homes in which they are culturally comfortable, and in communities in which they can feasibly transition to independent living.
- Compatibility between mentor and participant families is important and is achieved through comprehensive, individualized assessment and careful matching.
- Relevant and accessible services and support may be needed to help families move toward independent living in the community.

SFC also is based on the following:

- a belief that, in some cases where in-home services (e.g., intensive family preservation) may not be enough to adequately protect a child, 24 hour support and supervision from a mentor may be effective in preventing unnecessary separation, and
- knowledge that inadequate housing or homelessness frequently is a primary factor leading to foster care placement or preventing reunification.

Based upon these premises, Shared Family Care refers to **a situation in which an entire family is temporarily placed in the home of a host family who is trained to mentor and support the biological parent(s) as they develop skills and supports necessary to care for their child(ren) and move toward independent living.**

Key elements of this model include:

- Mentor families from the community who are carefully screened and who receive extensive training in child safety and child welfare issues; child development; parenting; adult communication and conflict resolution; community resources; and other issues related to family preservation.

- Participating parents who demonstrate a desire to care for their children and a readiness to work on an individualized service plan, and who are homeless or marginally housed.
- Careful matching between mentor and participant families, a rights and responsibilities agreement between both families, and an individualized service plan developed jointly by the participant and mentor families, a case manager, a child welfare worker, and any one else involved with the participant family.
- Services which include: teaching and mentoring parenting and living skills necessary for adults to become adequate parents and maintain a household; clinical treatment and counseling to help parents address their own personal issues; and helping parents establish positive connections with community resources that are necessary for them to become self-sufficient.

### ***Anticipated Outcomes***

The two SFC programs that have been successfully implemented in the United States were developed through private non-profit organizations (a state-wide treatment foster care agency and a community center). To determine whether this model can effectively achieve its intended effects if administered through a public agency, and ultimately become a standard service in the public continuum of child welfare services, Zellerbach Family Fund awarded a planning grant to Alameda and Contra Costa County Social Service Departments to develop demonstration Shared Family Care projects, and to the National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center, at University of California at Berkeley, to evaluate the projects. The purposes of the evaluation are: (1) to provide information to interested parties about the effectiveness of shared family care (SFC) as an alternative to currently available services for keeping families together and developing safe, permanent plans for children; (2) to provide information--for expansion, replication or improvement--on what works and what does not work in the implementation of SFC; (3) to demonstrate comparative costs of the program; and (4) to understand characteristics of families most likely to benefit from SFC, and characteristics of individuals/families most likely to become mentors.

The evaluation plan has been designed to assess the following early, intermediate and long-term anticipated outcomes of the Shared Family Care demonstration projects.

### Early Outcomes

Early outcomes reflect the process and feasibility of establishing SFC projects through public child welfare agencies. Specific goals include:

- Develop an overall program plan that identifies the target population and what services will be provided by whom, and that determines licensing issues, time frames, and general procedures.
- Develop a budget and identify ongoing funding sources for operating expenses.
- Establish a contract (or some other form of agreement) with an implementing agency.
- Educate referral sources (e.g., county child welfare workers) about the program.
- Develop program tracking forms.

### Intermediate Outcomes

Once the programs are developed, the implementation process will be assessed to determine its effectiveness in meeting the following intermediate outcomes:

- Competent mentor families will be recruited, trained and certified (or licensed).
- Child welfare workers will refer appropriate participant families to the SFC project.
- Participant families will be matched with mentor families, and both parties will sign the Rights and Responsibilities Agreement prior to the family moving in.
- Within the first month of the placement, each participant family will work with their mentor, case manager, child welfare worker, and other service providers (e.g., AOD counselor, probation officer) to develop an Individualized Family Plan (IFP) which identifies the family's strengths, needs, goals, and activities to achieve those goals.
- Services will be provided (directly and through linkage with community resources) to families to address needs identified in their IFP, e.g., learning to make good decisions and to meet their children's needs, meeting their parental responsibilities, maintaining recovery, becoming self-sufficient, etc.
- Mentor families will receive ongoing training, support and respite.
- Participants will complete the placement within six months (up to 9 months in Oakland).

### Long-Term Outcomes

It is anticipated that SFC will result in the following long-term outcomes:

- Participants' parenting skills will improve, along with parent-child interaction and overall family functioning.
- Participant families will become more self-sufficient and more stable in the community.
- Participating families will have reduced recurrence of child abuse and neglect.
- The emotional and psychosocial well-being of participating children and parents will improve.
- Families will remain together, and children whose parents choose to or are forced to relinquish their parental rights while in placement will receive continuity of care and a permanent plan.
- Participants will meet their personal goals identified in their Individualized Family Plan.
- Mentor families will feel better about themselves as individuals and as members of the community, and feel more knowledgeable about working with high risk families.
- In the long-run, SFC will cost no more than traditional child welfare programs.

**Early outcomes** will be measured through notes from various planning meetings, reports and conversations with the program coordinator, contracts, and quarterly reports indicating the number of mentors recruited and trained. **Intermediate** and **long-term outcomes** will be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively as indicated in the following chart.

## OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS OF CHANGE IN THE EVALUATION OF SHARED FAMILY CARE

Theories of Change	Outcomes	Source of Information	Indicators
<p>By simultaneously protecting children and preserving families, Shared Family Care fills a critical service gap between traditional family preservation and out-of-home care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can SFC be incorporated into the standard continuum of county child welfare services?</li> <li>• Is there public money available to fund a SFC project?</li> <li>• Are there families in the community interested in and qualified to be mentors?</li> <li>• Are appropriate participants being referred to the project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes from planning meetings and project coordinator.</li> <li>• Project plans and budgets.</li> <li>• Quarterly reports.</li> <li>• Intake forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the time between receipt of the grant and placement of first family; how many meetings were held; and who was involved in what activities?</li> <li>• Who will provide the services and through what kind of agreement?</li> <li>• How much will the projects cost and what sources will be used to finance them?</li> <li>• How many mentors are recruited, oriented, certified and trained?</li> <li>• How many families are referred to the project and by whom?</li> </ul>
<p>Many families involved in the child welfare system require a variety of services in order to stabilize their lives and adequately care for their children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are participating families working with their mentors and other team members to develop an Individualized Family Plan?</li> <li>• Are participating families receiving necessary services as identified in their IFP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized Family Plans</li> <li>• Monthly Service Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is involved in the development of IFPs?</li> <li>• What services are being provided to participant families and by whom?</li> </ul>
<p>Mentors who receive training, support and supervision, and who are carefully matched with participant families, play a critical and unique role in helping families meet their goals by providing mentoring, support and guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are participant and mentor families being matched appropriately?</li> <li>• Are mentors receiving sufficient training and support to do their job?</li> <li>• Are participant families receiving necessary services and support from their mentor?</li> <li>• Are families meeting their personal goals?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor Applications</li> <li>• Participant Intake Forms</li> <li>• Mentor questionnaire</li> <li>• Participant questionnaire</li> <li>• Quarterly reports</li> <li>• Monthly Service Report</li> <li>• Mentor Weekly Log</li> <li>• Individualized Family Plans (IFPs) &amp; team meeting reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are characteristics of participant and mentor families, and how satisfied are they with their placement?</li> <li>• How many hours of training, support and respite are provided for how many mentors?</li> <li>• What types of services and support are mentors providing to participants?</li> <li>• To what extent are families progressing toward their goals?</li> </ul>

Theories of Change	Outcomes	Source of Information	Indicators
<p>Families are more likely to become self-sufficient and stable if their basic needs are met, and if a mentor teaches them (through modeling and education) how to maintain a home and helps them establish a positive network of community resources and supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are participants better able to manage a household after completing a placement?</li> <li>• Upon completing a placement, are participant families able to obtain the resources and supports they need to become more self-sufficient and stable in the community?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly progress reports</li> <li>• Mentor recorded tapes</li> <li>• Participant questionnaire</li> <li>• Participant interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does participants' ability to care for themselves and manage a household improve?</li> <li>• Do participants who complete a placement move into and maintain stable housing in the community?</li> <li>• To what extent do participants who complete a placement feel that they have sufficient social supports?</li> <li>• Are families more involved in the community after their placement?</li> </ul>
<p>Most individuals care for their children the way they were cared for, and many parents in the child welfare system did not receive appropriate or adequate parenting themselves. By nurturing and re-parenting these adults, and modeling and teaching them appropriate parenting skills, SFC helps parents better protect and care for their children and helps families interact in a healthier manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do participants' parenting skills and overall family functioning improve?</li> <li>• Are children in participating families safer and better cared for after a SFC placement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly progress reports</li> <li>• Mentor Weekly Report and recorded tapes</li> <li>• Participant interview</li> <li>• Social worker notes and team meeting reports</li> <li>• Automated child welfare system data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are parents caring for and interacting with their children more appropriately than before their placement?</li> <li>• Do participant families avoid subsequent reports of abuse or neglect at least up to one year after completing their SFC placement?</li> <li>• Do SFC participants maintain custody of their children at least up to one year after completing their SFC placement?</li> </ul>
<p>By keeping families together, providing a secure home and helping families meet their basic needs, SFC minimizes the emotional trauma to children and parents caused by separation, and improves the physical and mental well-being of participating children and their parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do participating parents have improved self-esteem and emotional well-being?</li> <li>• Do participating children demonstrate improved emotional well-being, healthy development and appropriate behavior?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant questionnaire</li> <li>• Participant interview</li> <li>• Monthly progress reports</li> <li>• Mentor Weekly Report and recorded tapes</li> <li>• Monthly team meeting reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are parents caring for themselves and their children?</li> <li>• Do parents feel better about themselves?</li> <li>• Are children behaving appropriately in school/day care and at home?</li> </ul>

Theories of Change	Outcomes	Source of Information	Indicators
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<p>Community members who mentor participant families have an opportunity to contribute to their community and acquire new skills, thereby improving their self-perception.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do mentors feel better about themselves as individuals and as members of their community as a result of their involvement in SFC?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do mentors indicate improved feelings of self-worth?</li> <li>• Do mentors continue to participate in the SFC program after their 1st placement?</li> </ul>
<p>If, after a 6-9 month placement, SFC is successful at keeping families together and preventing subsequent out-of-home placements, the long-term cost of the program will be significantly less than traditional foster care options (which often are longer than 9 months and, in as many as 25% of the cases, result in subsequent placements, and which do not include the cost of caring for the parents).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do families complete the placement within 6-9 months?</li> <li>• Do families who complete a program in this time period avoid subsequent abuse or neglect reports?</li> <li>• Is Shared Family Care more cost effective than more traditional out-of-home options?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant Intake forms</li> <li>• Participant interviews</li> <li>• Automated child welfare system data</li> <li>• Program budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long are families in placement?</li> <li>• How many SFC graduates have subsequent involvement with the child welfare system?</li> <li>• How much does each placement cost?</li> </ul>