

FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION PLACER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Summary

This is a follow-up to the 1998-99 Placer County Grand Jury report regarding the Family Support Division (FSD) which is a component of the District Attorney's Office. Several new laws became effective on January 1, 2000 which will change the way each county and the State handles family support issues. These new laws will take many years to implement. FSD is the child support enforcement agency for Placer County. The Department has 86 funded positions and handles 12,000 cases annually.

The FSD locates absent parents, establishes paternity, obtains court orders for support, increases collection of on-going support, and recovers and avoids costs incurred by the public in funding programs that support minor children and their families.

The 1999-2000 Grand Jury's focus was on three issues:

1. KIDZ Computer system;
2. Policies and Procedures Manual for the FSD staff; and
3. A formal training program for all levels of the FSD staff.

The Grand Jury interviewed five FSD staff members.

Despite assurances from FSD to the 1998-99 Grand Jury that formal departmental Policies and Procedures Manuals already existed, the manuals were not introduced until mid-1999 and the KIDZ Computer System Procedures Manual did not exist until late 1999/early 2000.

According to personnel interviewed only new employees are trained using the new computer training manuals. There is still no formal training program for KIDZ and other general department training at all levels of the FSD staff. KIDZ will eventually be replaced by a statewide system that has yet to be developed. In the meantime, Placer County FSD will continue to operate with the KIDZ system.

While the Grand Jury recognizes that the KIDZ system divides the tasks into individual functions performed by specific units, the Grand Jury recommends that appropriate and up-to-date system-wide training be conducted for all employees.

Discussion

Excerpts from the new laws effective January 1, 2000 that affect family support issues are as follows.

- ❖ Assembly Bill 196, "Child Support Enforcement." This bill establishes "a Department of Child Support Services to administer all services and perform all functions necessary to establish, collect, and distribute child support." In addition it designated "the Department of Child Support Services as a single organizational unit to administer the state plan for securing child and spousal support, medical support, and determining paternity.... The Director of Child Support Services [is required to] develop a plan for consolidating state and local child support...and submit the plan to the Governor, the Legislature, and the public by January 1, 2001."

Other provisions of this bill include (1) the Director will convene a task force by September 1, 2000; (2) the task force is required to report its findings and recommendations by July 1, 2001; (3) each county is to "establish a county department of child support services referred to as the local Child Support agency, to which the Department of Child Support Services has delegated" these provisions; and (4) it imposes a state-mandated local program.

- ❖ Assembly Bill 150, "California Child Support Automation System." This bill "requires the state agency designated as the single state agency be responsible for operating the child support enforcement program, through the Franchise Tax Board as its agent, to be responsible for procuring, developing, implementing, and maintaining the operation of the California Child Support Automation System in all California counties."
- ❖ Senate Bill 542, "Child Support Enforcement." This bill recasts the provisions and makes conforming changes of existing law, which provides for the implementation and administration of procedures for securing child and spousal support and determining paternity and sets the duties and functions of specified state and local entities for this purpose.

Placer County FSD had been using the ill-fated Statewide Automated Child Support System (SACSS) which had many inherent failings. When the Statewide Automated Child Support System (SACSS) was scrapped, Placer County joined other counties to develop a viable alternative. The KIDZ system was selected in a partnership (a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)) with Kern, Ventura, Shasta, Mendocino, and Imperial Counties. Placer County's share is between \$8,000 and \$9,000 per month. These monies come from a federal grant. About 17 Counties are either using the system or have expressed interest in using it. Training, conversion, and implementation were completed June 1, 1999. However, there continue to be some problems transferring data between two separate platforms on which the system operates.

There are also some operational problems within the system due to different procedures utilized by each county. As a result, a committee comprised of the partnership counties works together to resolve problems and formulate program changes. Any changes must be agreed upon and prioritized by the JPA. Placer County has some difficulty in the accounting system and problems with transferring data between the two platforms.

The two-volume KIDZ training manual is comprehensive and is used to train new employees. Kern County trained approximately 75 Placer County employees at the time of the KIDZ conversion. Since that time those employees have not had follow-up training or training on all elements of the system.

The Grand Jury had the opportunity to review the FSD-prepared Policies and Procedures Manuals and the KIDZ computer training manuals. While the Grand Jury is not technically competent to evaluate the content, the manuals appear to be comprehensive. The Grand Jury commends the Compliance Outreach Coordinator for her efforts and work in preparing these manuals.

Training for FSD staff should be an ongoing, formal, documented, and comprehensive program. While formal training exists for new employees, a commitment to additional training for all staff appears to be a low or non-existent priority.

Supervisors and managers that attend off-site conferences and seminars should make a greater effort to share information obtained with all staff.

Finding 1

While a formal KIDZ training manual exists, system-wide training is not being conducted for all employees.

Recommendation 1

Appropriate system-wide training should be conducted for all employees.

Finding 2

FSD has developed six binders of training materials on the Policy and Procedures manual and the KIDZ system. The Grand Jury commends the Compliance Outreach Coordinator for her efforts and work in preparing these manuals.

Recommendation 2

None

Respondent

Placer County District Attorney

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

The Honorable Larry D. Gaddis
Presiding Judge, Superior Court
County of Placer
Historic Courthouse
101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603