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FACT SHEET

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CCMS and Children in Foster Care

The California Court Case Management System (CCMS), a statewide technology initiative, will directly benefit children in foster care by bringing efficiencies to the courtroom, automating data exchanges and access to case data, ensuring the coordination of family members' court cases, and supporting mandated reporting capabilities. The CCMS seeks federal funding support in FFY 2011 to deploy the system.

CCMS

CCMS will replace case management systems that are not adequate for handling complex juvenile dependency cases. A 2005 assessment of juvenile dependency courts found that automated systems are used in only 36% of dependency courts to assign cases to judges and in fewer than half (46%) to produce minute orders. Only a few courts could identify related cases for individuals and family members and almost no courts had access to justice partner databases.

To realize the full potential of CCMS, deployment in all 58 counties is essential. Statewide implementation will enable cases and case participants throughout the state to be linked, which will ensure that judicial officers have complete information when they are handling foster care cases. Access to case data, while important on a local level, becomes a much more powerful tool for courts and child welfare partners when cases throughout the state are accessible based on secure login credentials. In addition, CCMS brings statewide standardization of business practices. Full statewide deployment maximizes the benefit of the standardization effort so that families and justice partners have a common experience when interacting with courts, regardless of the county.

Courtroom Efficiencies

In 2007, the California Judicial Council adopted statewide juvenile dependency forms to ensure that Title IV-E mandated orders were consistently made for all children in foster care. These forms can be generated by CCMS and populated with data that is entered into the system,

primarily during the courtroom proceedings. This capability will ensure that children in foster care and their families can leave the courtroom with their final orders.

The Juvenile Dependency Court Reassessment (2005) asked judicial officers and county child welfare directors the main reason for granting continuances and hearing delays: "Social worker report filed late" was the top reason reported by 61% of respondents. CCMS addresses this challenge by supporting electronic filing. Social workers will have the ability to file their reports electronically, making them accessible to judicial officers in near real time.

Data Exchange/Access to Case Data

CCMS's ability to electronically exchange data with justice partners will bring additional efficiencies for the courts and child welfare agencies. Currently, in the majority of cases, orders are generated during the courtroom process and finalized during or after the proceedings. With data exchange capabilities, child welfare workers can generate proposed orders in their automated system and electronically send those proposed orders to CCMS for use in the courtroom. The judicial officer and courtroom clerk will have the ability to modify the proposed orders during the hearings.

The dependency system includes approximately 70,000 active cases, resulting in over 275,000 court hearings per year. Each of these hearings involves numerous exchanges of court forms, notice, and case calendar information, and orders after hearing. Electronic exchange between the courts and the child welfare agencies will result in substantial savings of both court and county clerk processing time.

Children in foster care, their parents, their attorneys and social workers will have secure online access to their cases enabling them to check court dates and access documents.

Unified Courts for Families

Foster care children's family members and caregivers may have their own court cases pending. Handling complex family units with the potential for missing or conflicting information is an ongoing challenge for courts. CCMS supports case management for families by enabling family members and cases to be linked. Summary pages of court dates, orders, court programs such as batterer intervention and parenting classes, and assigned court

resources are available for judicial officers to review when hearing a case related to a child in foster care.

Juvenile Dependency Performance Measures

California law enacted in 2006 required the Judicial Council to adopt juvenile dependency court performance measures. The outcome measures, which are aligned with the outcomes measured by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child and Family Service Review (CSFR), were adopted by the Council with California Rule of Court, Rule 5.505 in January 2009. Full implementation of the rule is dependent on CCMS deployment.

The purpose of Rule 5.505 is to assist courts and the child welfare system to:

- (1) promote children's placement in safe and permanent homes, enhance well-being, and ensure timely and fair treatment;
- (2) meet mandated timelines for court hearings and ensure collaboration with all child welfare stakeholders; and
- (3) make well-informed resource allocation decisions.

Full implementation of the rule, which requires deployment of CCMS, will advance the goals of California's Program Improvement Plan pursuant to the CSFR, and improve outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system.

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