

County Substance Use Disorder Services

FY 2016-17

FAMILY PRESERVATION COURT

Family and Children's Services (aka Child Welfare) partners with County Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS) to provide "treatment on demand" services for parents with Dependency Court involvement, due to suspected abuse and neglect. County SUDS provides comprehensive assessment and ongoing service coordination to hundreds of parents each year. Of that population, those families with at least one child under the age of eight are invited to join Family Preservation Court (FPC), which is a voluntary, therapeutic court program that partners the County Substance Use Disorder Services and its treatment providers, Superior Court, Family and Children's Services (Child Welfare), and the Parents Center, in the implementation of a family drug court model. The primary goals of FPC are to promote family wellness, stabilize and preserve intact families and help facilitate family reunification for those families involved in Dependency Court cases where children have been temporarily removed from the custody of the parent(s). The program is in its 12th year.

FPC provides a continuum of SUD treatment services, parenting education, individual and family therapy, and linkages to various other supportive services for parents and children. Most participants attend a treatment program using the Matrix model, which combines a minimum of four months of intensive outpatient treatment (9+ hours per week) with eight months of regular outpatient treatment or "aftercare" (less than 9 hours per week). Many participate in residential treatment prior to Matrix, while a few participants move across the continuum of care, engaging in withdrawal management, residential, and perinatal residential treatment, while in Family Preservation Court.

Family Preservation Court works in conjunction with the Leaps & Bounds program, staffed by the Parents Center, with oversight provided by Family and Children's Services. Since September 2014, nearly all participants of FPC have also participated in Leaps & Bounds, which offers an array of assessments of child development and family wellness, linkages to medical resources, home visits and family therapy. Essentially, the two program function as one, from the participants' perspective.

The FPC operational team is richly staffed and diverse, including therapists from Leaps & Bounds, a visitation and counseling coordinator from the Parents Center, treatment providers from Janus Perinatal Residential and Sobriety Works, social workers from Family & Children's Services, and the County SUDS program manager and service coordinators. Judge Ariadne Symons has presided over the Court since November 2014 and will continue in service until January 2018. Additional regional partners include Encompass Community Services, several sober living housing facilities and the "Triple P" parenting education program. The operational team meets weekly, and closely monitors the progress of participants in aspects of recovery,

employment, education, physical and mental health, family and social relationships, and housing. Staff provide guidance and support, as participants embark upon new paths that are often as challenging as they are rewarding. Parents learn accountability, and how to be honest without fear of sanctions being issued by the Court. The weekly hearings provide participants an opportunity to share with other participants, and to receive guidance and feedback from the operational team. They also get the opportunity to connect with each other for support in getting to 12-step meetings, to share information about employment opportunities, or simply be inspired by each other. Many graduates return to court from time to time to encourage those still in the program.

The greatest challenge participants face is housing, as most properties in the community are unaffordable. Eighty-four percent of those who left the program during this reporting period needed at the time of program entry, and received housing services during their participation. Programs like Families Together and Families in Transition offer financial assistance, but finding approved homes is often difficult. Many participants are eligible for Section 8 vouchers, but there's an 8-10 year wait list for them; and, few landlords are willing to accept them. This past year, only two facilities in Santa Cruz County could be accessed that provide temporary housing that allow children, Pajaro Valley Shelter for Women & Children and Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Some families have been able to access Pueblo Del Mar in Monterey County. Waiting lists are long for all three facilities. One sober living environment, the Evolving Door, takes families with young children; and many of our participants benefit from rent subsidies provided by FPC in order to live there with their children, but only for a brief time; so they are pressured to find employment, while carrying out all the activities of their Dependency Court case plan. The fact of the matter is, homelessness is not a reason to remove a child from its family, but it is a reason to prevent reunification.

Adult Data (7/1/16 – 6/30/17)

Number of adults served: 55

Female: 46

Male: 9

Number of adults discharged: 19

Graduated: 8

Mutual agreement - goals partially met: 7

Family withdrew – goals not met: 4

Services received:

Primary medical care: 16

Dental care: 8

Transportation: 18

Mental health: 4

Child care: 8

Housing: 16

Parenting education: 19

Domestic violence (counseling or classes): 5
Employment: 10
Recovery services: 19

Child Data (7/1/16 – 6/30/17)

Number served: 99
Number discharged: 20
 Graduated: 8
 Mutual agreement – goals partially met: 3
 Mutual agreement – goals not met: 3
 Family withdrew – goals not met: 2

Services received:
 Development: 16
 Mental Health: 5
 Pediatric care: 1
 Education: 14
 Neurological: 12
 Dental care: 0