



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/25/2019

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File #: 19-907

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** DHHS: Social Services

**Agenda Section:** Consent

**SUBJECT:**

Professional Services Agreement with Changing Tides Family Services for the Provision of Supervised Visitation Services

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve, and authorize the Chair of the Board to execute, the agreement with Changing Tides Family Services for fiscal year 2019-20 to provide supervised family visitation services to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - Children and Family Services clients, referred by Child Welfare Services in an amount not to exceed \$529,441; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to route the fully executed agreement to DHHS - Contract Unit for further processing.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

Social Services Fund

**DISCUSSION:**

Supervised visitation is required by court mandate. It is also the best practice for families to reduce trauma faced by children who have been removed from their homes, and move toward reunification as appropriate. Supervised visitation is required during an ongoing investigation when a child has been removed from a home due to alleged abuse and/or neglect. Any child taken into temporary custody is required by Juvenile Court rules to have supervised visitation with one or both parents or guardians before a detention hearing takes place. The court may further require supervision for visitation after a detention hearing based on the best interests of the child. This court mandate for supervision continues until the court determines that it is no longer needed.

DHHS-Child Welfare Services (CWS) is required to provide the supervision for family visits in compliance with the court orders which dictate frequency and other provisions. This has presented a challenge to the department. Supervised family visitation encompasses more than just the time spent in the actual visit; transport time can be considerable to and from the rural areas of the county. For example, one supervised visit for a child in Hoopa or Southern Humboldt could require 3 hours of

drive time round trip coupled with a 1-2 hour visit, plus time spent in the office documenting the visit. The time required for this type of a rural visitation places extreme time demands on DHHS-Child Welfare Services staff working diligently to provide services to all of the families that need supervised visitation.

DHHS-CWS strives to facilitate supervised family visitation with children in foster care as frequently as possible. However, caseload size and DHHS staffing shortages make it difficult for DHHS to meet the need for supervised visitation. Despite additional staff positions being made available and ongoing recruitment, there remain a number of vacant CWS social worker (SW), social service aide (SSA) and vocational assistant (VA) positions. Some of those positions were originally approved to provide support to case carrying units; however, due to the urgent need for supervised visits, these SSAs have been used to supervise visits full-time. The agreement with Changing Tides Family Services (Changing Tides), if approved by the Board, will provide a longer-term solution to the issue and allow the department to meet its court mandate.

Changing Tides has worked with DHHS-CWS to address the immediate need for additional supervised visitation. Changing Tides will provide supervised visitation services and transportation for supervised visitation to families who have been referred by the court for supervised visits. DHHS-Children and Family Services staff at the Family Connections Center (FCC) will provide an initial assessment of the family and their needs in order to create the visitation plan. The FCC will provide supervised visits for the family and will make referrals to Changing Tides for ongoing supervision, as appropriate. The FCC will continue to supervise visits for ongoing cases as the staffing allows, and Changing Tides will provide vital assistance to meet the requests and mandates for visitation as needed.

Changing Tides will provide supervised visitation services in the least restrictive setting possible, such as in the community or in the parent's home, unless there are restrictions noted by CWS or the court. In order to facilitate visits that accommodate a variety of schedules, Changing Tides will provide supervised visits Monday through Saturday from 8 am to 6:30 pm for up to 1,404 service hours each quarter. The qualifications and training requirements for the Visitation Specialists hired by Changing Tides Family Services meet all of the specifications for professional supervised visitation staff outlined in Family Code section 3200.5.

The expansion of supervised visitation and transportation services provided for in this amendment will be integral to meeting the mandates of the court. Visitation is a key component of any successful case plan and it maintains the vital link between children and their families. DHHS-CWS is committed to providing these services and this agreement with Changing Tides will greatly assist the department to meet expectations and mandates.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The cost associated with the Changing Tides agreement for the provision of supervised visits has been included in the proposed county budget for fiscal year 2019-20 in the amount \$529,441 in fund 1160, budget unit 508 - Child Welfare Services. Funding for this agreement is a combination of federal, state and local dollars. There is no negative impact to the county General Fund.

**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:**

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by protecting vulnerable populations while providing community services in a cost-effective manner.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

None.

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Board could choose to not approve the amendment with Changing Tides Family Services for the provision of supervised visitation; however, this is not recommended. The supervised visitation services are mandated by law to be provided and current caseloads coupled with staffing levels prevent the department from meeting this mandate consistently.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Professional Services Agreement with Changing Tides Family Services for the Provision of Supervised Visitation Services

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Board Order No.: C-21; C-19; C-16

Meeting of: 06/28/16; 06/06/17; 06/12/18; 05/07/19

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