



24-5544

**DATE:** May 7, 2024 (Item No. 23)

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Daniel Little, Director, Social Services Agency

**SUBJECT:** Update on Strategies Relating to Timely Medical and Dental Examinations

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Receive report from the Social Services Agency, Department of Family and Children's Services, relating to timely medical and dental examinations for children in the County's child welfare system.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no fiscal implications associated with receiving this report.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND**

On February 06, 2024 the County of Santa Clara's Board of Supervisors (Board) received a quarterly update from the Social Services Agency's (SSA) Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) on strategies relating to timely medical and dental examinations (Item No. 26). This report provides an update on efforts towards ensuring all children in out-of-home placement receive required timely medical and dental examinations.

On December 12, 2023, the Board approved the removal of all DFCS items from CSFC and to present DFCS reports to the Board.

**Timeliness of Medical and Dental Exams**

Children in out-of-home care must receive timely and appropriate medical and dental care and are required to have exams during specific age periods. The timeliness of exams is determined by the American Association of Pediatrics Bright Futures Periodicity Schedule. Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations section 6847(c) defines when a medical or dental exam is considered overdue: "Persons eligible for periodic health assessments will receive one assessment during each age period [...and...] will be considered overdue for an assessment on the first day he or she enters a new age period without assessment being performed in the previous age period." Therefore, children, youth, and non-minor dependents (NMD) in the County's care must receive at least one health assessment (or equivalent) within the age periods listed in the Bright Futures Periodicity Schedule.

Medical and dental exams are a service available to every child in DFCS' care to provide timely health assessments and as such, are required to be offered to NMDs. A NMD is a person who is over the age of 18 and receiving services through DFCS. However, NMDs have reached the age of majority and therefore have all the legal decision-making authority as any other adult, including privacy regarding their healthcare records. While youth 18 or older are entitled to receive medical care with the frequency provided by the periodicity schedule, they must consent and agree to receive dental and healthcare treatment and services. DFCS cannot require NMDs to receive services at a particular frequency and they have the right to refuse an annual exam. Additionally, even if a NMD consents to services, they have a right to privacy and are not required to turn in documentation of completed exams to DFCS.

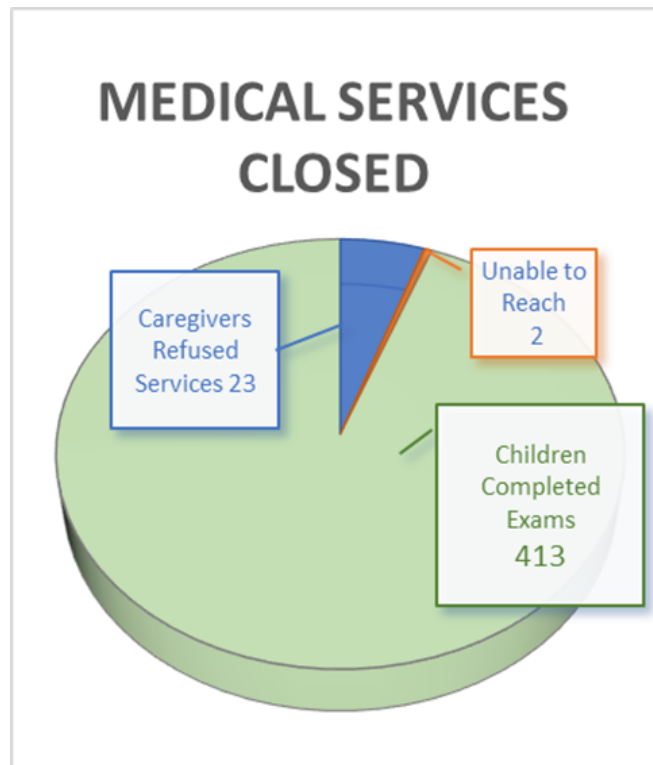
Further, Welfare and Institutions Code 16501.3 specifically states that public health nurses may only support NMDs "...At the request of and under the direction of a non-minor dependent, as described in subdivision (v) of Section 11400, assisting the non-minor dependent in accessing physical health and mental health care, coordinating the delivery of health and mental health care services, advocating for the health and mental health care that meets the needs of the non-minor dependent, assisting the non-minor dependent to make informed decisions about his or her health care by, at a minimum, providing educational materials, and assisting the non-minor dependent to assume responsibility for his or her ongoing physical and mental health care management."

#### Appointment Management Services Program

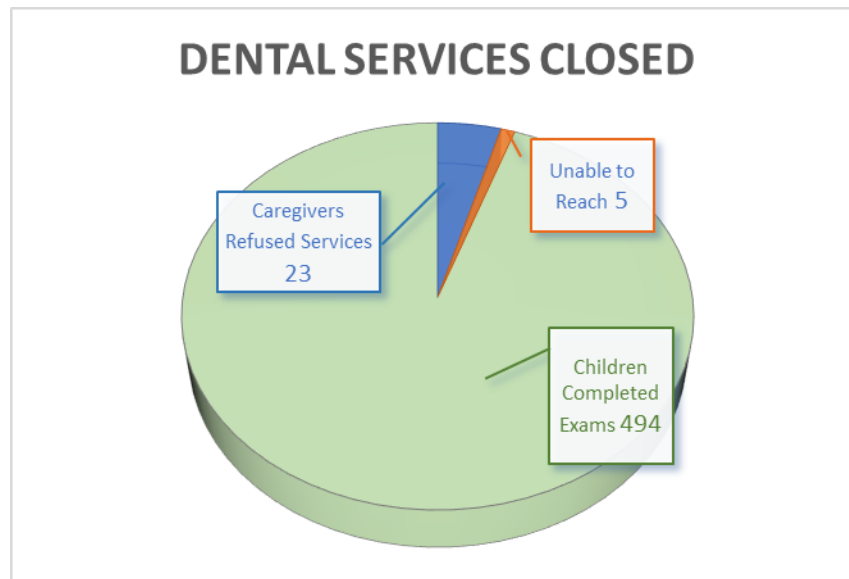
DFCS continues to partner with the Healthier Kids Foundation (HKF) on the Appointment Management Services Program (AMSP), which assists caregivers with scheduling and tracking medical and dental appointments and ensures that children referred to AMSP have a medical and dental home established for ongoing care. Caregivers receive assistance with scheduling appointments and reminders for the appointments via text message.

Implemented in November 2020, AMSP has received 1,137 referrals through March 31, 2024 for upcoming exams for children under 18 years of age residing with caregivers in Santa Clara County. Of the referrals, 499 were for medical well-being exams while 638 were for dental exams.

HKF continues to coordinate medical services for 23 children while 438 referrals were closed, as shown below. Of the referrals closed, 94.3% were due to successful completion of exams. There were 38 children who were no longer required to have a medical well-being exam, as a result of exiting the dependency system.



HKF continues to coordinate dental services for 41 children while 522 referrals were closed, as shown below. Of the referrals closed, 94.6% were due to the successful completion of exams. There were 75 children who were no longer required to have a dental well-being exam, as a result of exiting the dependency system.



HKF continues to partner with the Supporting Protecting and Respecting Kids (SPARK) Clinic. HKF reports the best availability in scheduling appointments for children is with the SPARK Clinic but other community clinics are also available and prioritize appointments for foster youth to ensure compliance. Caregivers continue to learn the new location of SPARK. HKF states they are experiencing challenges with scheduling dental appointments at SPARK due to changes in procedures. SPARK staff are no longer able to schedule dental appointments, resulting in caregivers having to call a different number to make two separate appointments. DFCS and Valley Dental are collaborating to streamline the process wherever

possible. Further, HKF reports that caregivers are experiencing challenges with scheduling dental appointments with Gardner Health Network (Gardner), as caregivers are booking anywhere from two to six months out and Gardner is still not able to accept new patients. HKF continues to make registration paperwork available to caregivers for the Indian Health Center but they report that in-person registration requirements are not suitable for all caregivers.

The contract amendment was finalized with HKF on the expansion of their services to include children placed outside of Santa Clara County. Further, the contract expansion includes HKF providing reminders to NMD youth to ensure they understand the timelines for their healthcare. DFCS is working closely with HKF to finalize scripts to remind caregivers and NMD of their upcoming exams and to launch the new Medical Dental Incentives Program via a text campaign.

### Medical and Dental Incentives Program

On February 6, 2024, the Board approved a report related to the Medical and Dental Incentives Program and directed DFCS to follow up on the implementation. Since then, DFCS has worked internally with SSA's Financial Management Services staff to receive approval from the County's Controller-Treasurer Department for the ordering of gift cards. Approval was received and DFCS has obtained the necessary equipment to ensure the gift cards are safely secured. Gift cards have been ordered and implementation will occur once the supply of gift cards is received. The data presented below will be used as baseline data to determine the effectiveness of offering incentives.

The data shows that 497 foster youth were required to have medical and dental exams during January 2024. Of those youth, 199 missed dental exams, of which 98 or 49% were 18 or older. Further, there were 118 youth who missed medical exams, of which 66 or 56% were 18 or older.

As of January 31, 2024, point-in-time data shows that 382 children ages 0-17 in out-of-home placement were required to have medical and dental well-being exams. Of these, 52 missed medical exams, representing 13.6% of the total children ages 0-17. In the same period, 311 youth completed medical exams, representing 81.4% the total children ages 0-17. At the same time, 101 children missed dental exams, representing 26.4% of the total and 237, or 62%, completed such exams.

The data shows that dental exams continue to be more challenging for NMDs. DFCS is exploring the feasibility of a program to educate NMDs about the value of addressing their oral health needs. DFCS continues to work with the Public Health Department and the Local Oral Health Collaborative. The next meeting is being scheduled for May 2024 and will focus on launching the Medical and Dental Incentives Program to improve compliance.

### Public Health Nurses

The public health nurses (PHN) in the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPFC) provide health care consultation and guidance to case workers as well as caregivers to address the health needs of foster children. PHNs also assist caregivers with

finding specialty providers but do not assist with scheduling well-being exams that HKF supports in Santa Clara County. The HCPCFC PHNs also do not visit children in the home. DFCS families are supported by PHNs in the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County (FIRST 5) Home Visitation Program (HVP). The HVP supports families with children under the age of six with nursing visits to families with children in foster care and parents caring for children in their own home, with either a court or voluntary case. The HVP includes six public health nurses and one PHN manager. However, most recently, the program has experienced several vacancies and is facing significant funding reductions that will then reduce for HVP. As a result, there are currently only two filled PHN positions in the program and the PHN manager has been on long term leave. There is a waitlist of over 120 children waiting to be served and the County's Public Health Department has notified the relevant bargaining unit to provide services through the Public Health Regional Nursing Program. A meet and confer with the union is to be scheduled.

### **CHILD IMPACT**

The recommended action will have a positive impact on the **Healthy Lifestyle** indicator by ensuring that children in the child welfare system receive timely medical and dental examinations.

### **SENIOR IMPACT**

The recommended action will have no/neutral impact on seniors.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

The report will not be received as a consequence of negative action.

### **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

The Clerk of the Board will follow the usual process for this type of legislative file.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Timely Medical Dental Presentation