

# Management Audit of the County of Santa Clara Juvenile Probation Division's Quality Systems Unit

Prepared for the Board of Supervisors of the  
County of Santa Clara

January 11, 2023

JUVENILE CENTER



Prepared by the  
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# County of Santa Clara

## Board of Supervisors

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January 11, 2023

Supervisor Otto Lee, Chair  
Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, Vice Chair  
Board of Supervisors' Finance and Government Operations Committee  
70 West Hedding Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Supervisors Lee and Ellenberg,

We have completed the Management Audit of the Probation Department's Juvenile Probation Division's (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU). This audit was added to the Management Audit Division's work plan by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Clara, pursuant to the Board's power of inquiry specified in Article III, Section 302(c) of the Santa Clara County Charter. This audit was conducted in conformity with generally accepted government auditing standards as set forth in the 2018 revision of the "Yellow Book" of the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The purpose of this audit was to examine the operations, management practices, and finances of the JPD QSU to identify opportunities to increase the Unit's efficiency, effectiveness, and economy.

This report includes three findings and seven recommendations related to the following: increasing Title IV-E trainings for JPD Officers; analyzing summary reports and audits from the Probation Department's Title IV-E contractor; making the JPD QSU's training program compulsory for all new JPD Deputy Probation Officers; verifying the accuracy of central training logs; creating an updated formal description and prioritization plan around its roles and responsibilities; and creating official JPD QSU contact channels for Department staff seeking technical assistance. We estimate implementation of these recommendations to generate up to \$200,000 of additional Title IV-E reimbursement annually.

In the attached responses to this audit, the Probation Department agrees with five of seven recommendations and disagrees with one recommendation. The Department also responded "neutral" to one recommendation.

If implemented, these recommendations would:

**Board of Supervisors:**

Sylvia Arenas  
District 1

Cindy Chavez  
District 2

Otto Lee  
District 3

Susan Ellenberg  
District 4

S. Joseph Simitian  
District 5

**County Executive:** Jeffrey V. Smith

- Help reduce errors in Title IV-E case plans, fluctuations in eligible cases claimed, and ultimately maximize Title IV-E reimbursement.
- Better equip new JPD Deputy Probation Officers with skills specific to the Division.
- Reduce the amount of JPD QSU staff time spent on correcting Officer errors.
- More clearly define the scope of the JPD QSU and provide direction for “mission-critical” responsibilities in the event of workload and staffing fluctuations.

We would sincerely like to thank the Probation Department and its staff for their thoughtful, patient, and professional cooperation and assistance throughout this audit.

Respectfully submitted,



Cheryl Solov  
Management Audit Manager

CC: Supervisor Sylvia Arenas  
Supervisor Cindy Chavez  
Supervisor S. Joseph Simitian  
James R. Williams, County Counsel

**Board of Supervisors:**

Sylvia Arenas  
District 1

Cindy Chavez  
District 2

Otto Lee  
District 3

Susan Ellenberg  
District 4

S. Joseph Simitian  
District 5



**County Executive:** Jeffrey V. Smith



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## Executive Summary

### **Finding 1: Title IV-E Case Plans**

The Federal Title IV-E Foster Care Program, established under the Social Security Act, provides funding to state and local governments for portions of maintenance and administrative costs related to working with children in or at imminent risk of foster care. Justice Benefits Inc. (JBI) contracts with the Probation Department to perform a quarterly time study, which identifies Juvenile Probation Division (JPD) Officer time spent on Title IV-E-eligible activities through “random moment” emails to Officers. JBI also audits Title IV-E case plans (used to document eligibility) to remove ineligible activities from claiming; flag case plans that need correcting; and identify any additional time eligible for reimbursement. JBI’s reviews and audits have found recurring issues with JPD case plans and incorrectly claimed random moments. For instance, over a three-year period, 363 of 3,650 (9.95%) time study moments claimed to Title IV-E were associated with case plans that had an issue that made them ineligible for reimbursement—an estimated \$617,000 in net foregone revenue. The Quality Systems Unit (QSU) should establish an annual training requirement to help JPD Officers remain up-to-date on Title IV-E case plan eligibility and claiming. The Unit should also monitor JBI audit reports and provide targeted technical assistance to Officers exhibiting recurring issues.

### **Finding 2: The New Deputy Probation Officer Training Program**

The QSU is responsible for developing and implementing a standardized training curriculum for Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) new to the JPD. The QSU’s DPO development training consists of 16 modules covering topics such as the intake process, court reports, Title IV-E case plans, youth case management, and other areas specific to the JPD. However, this training program is not mandatory for new JPD DPOs, and in the absence of coursework requirements, training rosters show that at least half of the 76 DPOs that took courses from June 2019 to October 2022 took eight or fewer of 16 courses. This lack of required trainings for officers new to the JPD may contribute to various DPO errors such as case plan and report writing mistakes. Auditors also identified inaccuracies in central training records, which did not always capture all names from training sign-in sheets. The QSU should make its DPO development training program mandatory for all DPOs new to the JPD and require refresher courses on these topics every three years. On a quarterly basis, the Unit should cross-check its central training logs against its session sign-in sheets to verify accuracy and review these records to ensure that all DPOs have completed all 16 modules.

### **Finding 3: Improving Written Guidelines for the Quality Systems Unit**

When the JPD QSU was created, the Unit’s duties included monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating evidence-based practices; promoting continuous quality improvement; maintaining the fidelity of implemented programs; updating policies and procedures; and developing a standardized training curriculum for new JPD Officers. As of June 2022, the QSU has no updated written policies, procedures, or formal Unit description governing its operations. In the absence of these guidelines, the roles and responsibilities of the Unit have shifted considerably over time. For instance, the Coordinator for supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) was originally under the Probation Department’s Family Preservation Unit but was subsequently transferred to the QSU. In addition, in 2015, QSU took on the responsibility of assisting with Title IV-E reimbursements. Due to their specialized experience, QSU staff also perform fieldwork tasks not explicitly listed in the initial

job announcements, such as accompanying JPD Officers to County jail interviews and home visits. The QSU has no prioritization mechanism for its many responsibilities, despite the deletion of two positions from the Unit. The QSU should develop an updated formal description of its roles and responsibilities and develop policies and procedures around the areas outlined in this description. The Unit should also develop a prioritization plan for how it should operate in the event of workflow fluctuations and staffing shortages.



## INTRODUCTION

This Management Audit of the Probation Department's Juvenile Probation Division's (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) was added to the Management Audit Division's Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 work plan by the Board of Supervisors, pursuant to the Board's power of inquiry specified in Article III, Section 302(c) of the County of Santa Clara Charter. The Board added this audit after considering the annual County-wide audit risk assessment conducted by the Management Audit Division in accordance with Board Policy.

## PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the audit was to examine the operations and management practices of the JPD QSU, and to identify opportunities to increase the Unit's efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. Work on this audit began with an entrance conference on April 25, 2022, and a draft report was issued to the Office on October 24, 2022. We also sent the draft audit to the Office of the County Counsel.

An exit conference was held with the Probation Department on October 31, 2022, and a revised (final) report incorporating feedback from the exit conference was issued to QSU on December 19, 2022.

The audit's main objectives were:

- To review the Unit's Title IV-E<sup>1</sup> case plans and claiming practices and assess the following: whether the QSU 1) is compliant with all Federal and State requirements and in alignment with best practices; and 2) is claiming the maximum amount of available funding for the County.
- To evaluate whether staffing levels of the QSU are adequate to fulfill all functions of the Unit.
- To assess the adequacy of the Unit's policy, procedure, and training development.
- To identify opportunities to increase the safety, economy, efficiency, or effectiveness of the organization.

Primarily, we evaluated the JPD QSU's operations between Fiscal Year 2019–20 and FY 2020–21, although our audit includes significant changes to policies, procedures, and practices implemented over FY 2021–22 and through the beginning of FY 2022–23.

## AUDIT METHODOLOGY

We interviewed executive and upper management personnel including the Chief Probation Officer, Juvenile Division Director, and various supervisors and line staff within the Unit and the Probation Department. We also interviewed and reviewed the work of the Unit's contractors, including its Title IV-E consultant.

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1 Part of the Federal Social Security Act that authorizes the Federal Foster Care Program.

We reviewed the Unit's FY 2021–22 budget, as well as Federal, State, and County laws and policies. We reviewed the QSU's active contracts and agreements, as well as Title IV-E case plan audit summaries and other performance reports from its contractors. Finally, we analyzed the content of the Unit's Probation Officer consultation logs, new Officer training program, and training records.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH GENERALLY ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS**

This management audit was conducted under the requirements of the Board of Supervisors Policy Number 3.35 as amended on May 25, 2010. That policy states that management audits are to be conducted under generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with GAGAS as set forth in the 2018 revision of the "Yellow Book" of the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. In accordance with these auditing standards, we performed the following procedures:

Audit Planning – This management audit was selected by the Board of Supervisors using a risk assessment tool and estimate of audit work hours developed at the Board's direction by the Management Audit Division. After audit selection by the Board, a detailed management audit work plan was developed and provided to the Department.

Entrance Conference - An entrance conference was held with Probation Department management to introduce the audit team, describe the audit program and scope of review, and to respond to questions. A letter of introduction from the Board and the audit work plan were also provided prior to the entrance conference.

Pre-Audit Survey - Audit staff reviewed documentation and other materials to obtain an overall understanding of the Unit's operations, and to isolate audit areas that warranted more detailed assessments.

Field Work - Field work activities were conducted after completion of the pre-audit survey and included the following: (a) staff interviews; (b) observations of trainings; (c) reviews of Federal, State, and County laws and policies; (d) analyses of Title IV-E audit summaries and other performance reports by the Probation Department's contractor (e) analyses of Probation Officer interaction logs; and (f) reviews of training records and presentations, among other investigative tasks.

Draft Report - On October 24, 2022, a draft report was provided to the Probation Department to describe audit progress, and to share general information on our preliminary findings and conclusions.

Exit Conference – An exit conference was held with Probation Department management on October 31, 2022 to obtain views on the report findings, conclusions and recommendations, and to make fact-based corrections and clarifications as appropriate. Following these meetings, a revised draft was provided to the Department on December 19, 2022, for use in preparing their formal written responses.

Final Report - A final report was prepared and issued on January 11, 2023. Written responses are attached to the final report as Attachment A on page 33.

### **Overview of JPD QSU Functions**

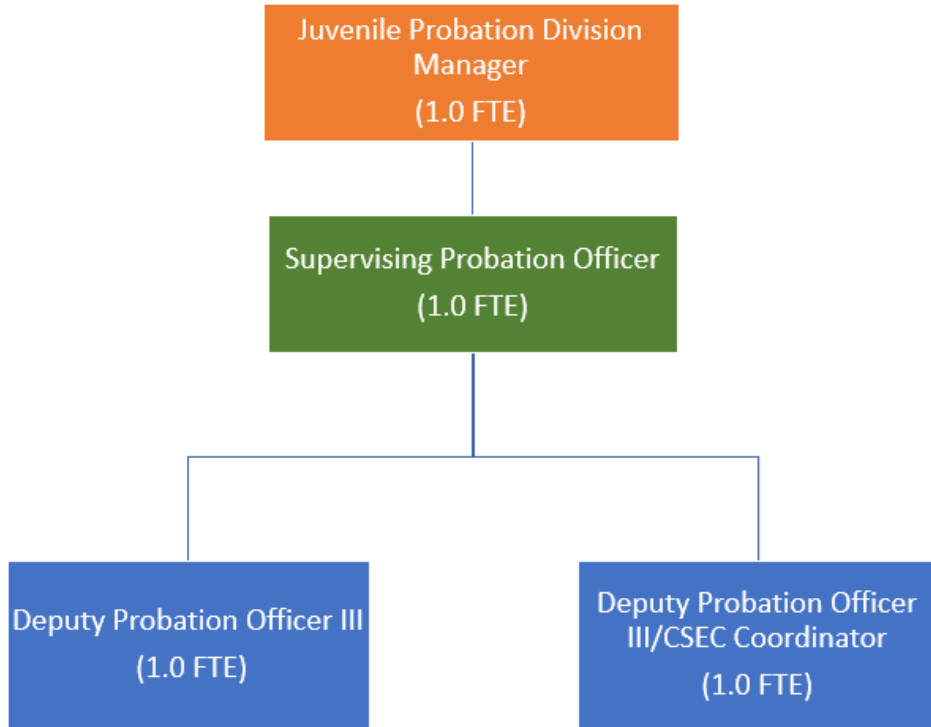
The QSU creates performance and fidelity measures for existing and future JPD programs and evaluates implementation of evidence-based practices such as administration of the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System—a tool that evaluates a young person’s needs and calculates their risk of recidivism. This Unit also creates and updates policies and procedures, offers coaching and technical assistance to staff, and develops and delivers a standardized training curriculum to all Deputy Probation Officers new to the Division.

The QSU is also responsible for quality assurance checks and claiming operations related to Title IV-E processes. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (as amended), authorizes the Federal Foster Care Program and provides federal matching funds to states to reimburse public agencies for administrative and maintenance costs for youth in foster care or at imminent risk of foster care placement, including youth involved in the juvenile justice system. In order to claim these funds for the County, the QSU helps support efforts to ensure that case plans are completed for all eligible youth, and that these cases are reviewed at least once every six months. The QSU, in conjunction with its Title IV-E consultant, verifies that these case plans are compliant with all Title IV-E requirements, and JPD works with the County’s Social Services Agency to submit claims to the State on a quarterly basis. JPD’s Title IV-E revenue amounted to approximately \$3.76 million in FY 2020–21 and \$3.33 million in FY 2021–22.

### **Organizational Structure and Budget**

The QSU is overseen by a Supervising Probation Officer, who manages two Deputy Probation Officer IIIs. One of these Deputy Probation Officers is also the Commercially and Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Coordinator and is thus only able to commit partially to QSU duties. Originally, the Unit had three line-level staff, but two positions were deleted, and the CSEC Coordinator was reassigned to the QSU. The entire unit is managed by the JPD Manager. See Figure I.1 on page 6.

**Figure I.1: QSU Organization Chart**



Source: Management Audit Division rendition of organization chart furnished by the Probation Department.

### **JPD QSU Revenues and Expenditures**

The Fiscal Year 2021–22 Adopted Budget for QSU<sup>2</sup> included net expenditures of \$699,676.00, which was comprised of \$696,849 in personnel costs and \$2,827 in other expenses, as shown in Figure I.2 on page 7.

<sup>2</sup> As a portion of the budget for the Probation Department.

**Figure I.2: EOD Fiscal Year 2021–22 Original Adopted Budget**

<b>FY 2021–22</b>	<b>Budgeted Amount</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Salaries & Benefits	\$696,849
<u>Other Expenses</u>	<u>\$2,827</u>
<b><i>Expenditures Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$699,676</i></b>
<b>Revenues</b>	
Revenues	\$-
<b><i>Revenues Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$-</i></b>
<b><i>Net Expenditures</i></b>	<b><i>\$699,676</i></b>

Source: County Financial System (SAP Report ZFMP013).<sup>3</sup>

## TOPICS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL REVIEW

During the course of a management audit, certain issues may be identified and brought to the attention of the agency being audited and the Board of Supervisors, even though a specific finding is not included in the report. One such matter is described below.

### Insufficient QSU Staffing

In October 2015, three Deputy Probation Officers were added to the JPD QSU, which was overseen by a Quality Systems Supervisor. QSU management reported that, when the QSU was fully staffed, the Unit would monitor JPD staff reading policies and procedures. Further, the QSU would manage every case file eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement, which covers portions of maintenance and administrative costs for working with youth in or at imminent risk of being placed in foster care. The Unit would monitor each JPD Officer's Title IV-E caseload in its own tracking log and verify compliance with writing, closing, and updating case plans.

However, QSU management reported that, upon the promotion of two staff, two vacant codes within the QSU were deleted in February 2020. While the Coordinator for Commercially and Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) was transferred to the QSU two years later, this code is still responsible for CSEC tasks and therefore does not devote the entirety of their work hours to QSU tasks. Having effectively only 1.5 full-time equivalent positions within the Unit (excluding the Unit Supervisor) has drastically shifted the nature of the QSU's work. Ensuring JPD staff are in compliance with policies and procedures has been delegated to supervisors of other units.

Since these QSU staffing changes, JPD supervisors in other units have also been tasked with monitoring JPD Officer cases, including those that are Title IV-E-eligible. Supervisors oversee JPD Officers' caseload tracking spreadsheets for their respective units and are responsible for ensuring that these logs are up-to-date. While the QSU works with its contractor, Justice Benefits Inc. (JBI) to conduct time studies and audit

<sup>3</sup> Title IV-E revenue is budgeted in a different cost center within the Probation Department.

Title IV-E case plans, QSU staff compiles Title IV-E information from JPD Officers' individual caseload tracking spreadsheets to send to JBI. As such, if Probation Officers within JPD units do not include all eligible case plans in their tracking sheets, then the case is not listed in QSU's report or included in JBI's audit. This could potentially lead to an eligible case not being claimed in the quarterly Title IV-E claim, resulting in unrealized funding.

QSU staff reported that when they conduct ad hoc reviews of JPD units' caseload tracking sheets, these sheets sometimes contain errors or outdated information. However, the audit team was unable to get access to individual tracking sheets due to these lists containing confidential information on minors, making it difficult to determine the scale of the problem. There is an opportunity to submit a revised claim nine months after initial submission. This allows the County to correct any errors and include any cases that were not identified in the initial claim or remove ineligible cases. QSU reported that they notify JBI when a case is identified that was not initially included in their Title IV-E case report. However, neither QSU nor JBI could provide a list of the number of cases that were identified after-the-fact as eligible, or if a case was identified beyond the nine-month revision period. As such, auditors could not determine the total potential revenue loss from eligible cases that were retroactively identified after the allowable nine-month revision period.

While more frequent QSU audits of JPD caseload tracking sheets might mitigate this issue of errors and missing cases, the Unit's staffing levels make these audits infeasible. Unit staff reported that having an additional code within the QSU may assist with conducting more systemic reviews of these logs.

In addition to reducing the oversight capabilities of the QSU, diminished staffing has also forced the Unit to deprioritize certain functions during major projects (discussed further in Section 3, starting on page 25, of this audit report). For example, during a Probation Department initiative to reformat its policies and procedures to uniform Lexipol standards (a private company creating risk management solutions for public safety agencies and local government), multiple QSU staff each worked over 30 hours of overtime during a two-week pay period to meet the August 2022 deadline for this project. During this period, the Unit reported that they neglected other duties such as offering technical assistance to JPD staff, reviewing CSEC cases, and correcting Title IV-E case plans.

To be able to cover the entire scope of its existing duties and provide more complete oversight of Title IV-E case plans, the QSU likely requires additional staff. In June 2022, the Unit reported plans to move a vacant code into the QSU during Fiscal Year 2022-23. The Management Audit Division suggests prioritizing this recruitment and evaluating the need for an additional code one year after this position is filled.

During the Management Audit Division's exit conference on October 31, 2022, the Probation Department reported that the Department had sent out a memo of interest to fill this vacancy. They received one letter of interest that was subsequently withdrawn. Management reported that they would retry filling the position in March of 2023.

## RECOMMENDATION PRIORITIES

The priority rankings shown for each recommendation in the audit report are consistent with the audit recommendation priority structure adopted by the Finance and Government Operations Committee of the Board of Supervisors, as follows:

**Priority 1:** Recommendations that address issues of non-compliance with federal, State and local laws, regulations, ordinances and the County Charter; would result in increases or decreases in expenditures or revenues of \$250,000 or more; or, suggest significant changes in federal, State or local policy through amendments to existing laws, regulations and policies.

**Priority 2:** Recommendations that would result in increases or decreases in expenditures or revenues of less than \$250,000; advocate changes in local policy through amendments to existing County ordinances and policies and procedures; or, would revise existing departmental or program policies and procedures for improved service delivery, increased operational efficiency, or greater program effectiveness.

**Priority 3:** Recommendations that address program-related policies and procedures that would not have a significant impact on revenues and expenditures, but would result in modest improvements in service delivery and operating efficiency.

## JPD QSU ACCOMPLISHMENTS

While management audits focus on areas for improvement within the audited entity, these entities also have accomplishments that should be highlighted to enable the reader to understand operations in their entirety, including those areas that are not the subject of audit findings. We have asked JPD QSU to provide comment on its recent accomplishments. Management furnished the memo, which is provided in Attachment B on page 37.

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## Section 1: Title IV-E Case Plans

### Background

The Federal Title IV-E Foster Care Program, established under the Social Security Act, provides funding to state and local governments for portions of maintenance and administrative costs related to working with children in or at imminent risk of foster care. Justice Benefits Inc. (JBI) contracts with the Probation Department to perform a quarterly time study, which identifies Probation Officer time spent on Title IV-E-eligible activities through “random moment” emails to Officers. JBI also audits Title IV-E case plans (used to document eligibility) to remove ineligible activities from claiming; flag case plans that need correcting; and identify any additional time eligible for reimbursement. The Juvenile Probation Division’s (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) is responsible for preparing reports for JBI on eligible Title IV-E case plans and working with Officers to answer any questions they have about developing case plans.

### Problem, Cause, and Adverse Effect

JPD Officer time is sometimes claimed on Title IV-E case plans that have errors that make them ineligible for reimbursement. JBI’s review of the Division’s Title IV-E case plans found that, between March 2019 and April 2022, 420 of 1,213 case plans (34.62%) claimed as Title IV-E-eligible had some issue or recommendation for improvement. Although some of these errors were correctable, 363 of 3,650 (9.95%) time study moments claimed to Title IV-E were associated with case plans that had an error or issue that no longer made them eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement (e.g., not having an associated case plan, not including the correct goal, or missing signatures)—an estimated \$617,100 in net foregone revenue. While the County’s error rate for case plan issues that could not be corrected decreased between 2021 and 2022, the overall error rate for case plans has fluctuated. In addition, the last three quarters of Fiscal Year 2021–22 showed an increase in the number of qualifying cases that JPD staff failed to identify and include in the Title IV-E time study. JBI and QSU offer trainings to Officers on time studies and preparing Title IV-E case plans. However, these trainings are not required for either new or veteran JPD staff. Further, while JBI provides reports to QSU showing case plan errors and missed “random moment” emails by Officer, the QSU does not analyze these reports and offer targeted assistance to Officers with recurring issues. Unaddressed recurring errors can ultimately lead to unclaimed Title IV-E revenue.

### Recommendations

QSU should establish an annual training requirement, consisting of either one-on-one meetings or a larger group training format, to help Officers remain up-to-date on Title IV-E case plan eligibility and claiming. This is in addition to the recommendations in Section 2 of this audit. The Unit should also monitor JBI audit reports and provide targeted technical assistance to Officers exhibiting recurring issues.

### Savings, Benefits, and Costs

More consistent training will help reduce errors in case plans, fluctuations in eligible cases claimed, and ultimately help maximize Title IV-E funding. In FY 2020–21, JBI estimates that time spent on cases that were ineligible equaled roughly \$41,076 in lost Title IV-E funds claimed. Training can be supported through JBI’s existing contract, which allows for quarterly trainings of up to 150 JPD staff.

## FINDING

### Claiming Title IV-E Funding for the Juvenile Probation Division

The Federal Title IV-E Foster Care Program, established under the Social Security Act, provides funding to state and local governments for portions of maintenance and administrative costs related to working with children in or at imminent risk of foster care. To claim reimbursement for these costs, counties can conduct quarterly time studies to determine what proportion of juvenile probation officers' time is spent on Title IV-E-eligible activities. Such activities include updating case plans, case review, case management, referring an eligible child to services, preparing for participation in judicial determinations related to child welfare, and identifying placement options for a child at risk of foster care placement. Based on these quarterly time studies, counties can submit a claim to the State indicating how much was spent on eligible Title IV-E activities. This amount is reimbursed to counties and distributed to county child welfare and probation departments based on a memorandum of understanding between these parties.

There are two steps to determining Title IV-E eligibility. First, the State recommends completing an Evaluation of Imminent Risk and Reasonable Candidacy to establish the following: 1) that the child is under 18; 2) that the child has been subject to a 602 petition (indicating that the child engaged in an activity that would be a crime if they were over 18); and 3) recent child welfare involvement or other risk factors. Next, probation officers develop case plans to further document the child's candidacy for Title IV-E. The case plan includes a goal (which is typically to maintain the child in their family home) and describes the current circumstances of the child and their family home situation. The plan also discusses potential services to help prevent out-of-home placement and provides a plan for the child should they need to be placed outside the home. The case plan must be signed by the child, parents, deputy probation officer, and probation supervisor. If the child and/or their guardians cannot be reached to sign the case plan, a note must be made in the file. Case plans must be updated by juvenile probation staff every six months.

The Juvenile Probation Division's (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) is responsible for providing Probation Officers (Officers) with assistance on their Title IV-E case plans; helping track case plans that are eligible for reimbursement; and supporting Justice Benefits Inc.'s (JBI) Title IV-E work for the Probation Department. Since 2015, the Probation Department has contracted with JBI, a consulting firm specializing in government reimbursements, to run the Title IV-E time study that identifies how much time Officers spend on Title IV-E-eligible activities. This information is then used as a basis for reimbursement claims submitted to the State.

Because not all daily tasks conducted by Officers pertain to Title IV-E-related activities, JBI's Title IV-E time studies use a "random moment" methodology to estimate eligible administrative costs. For these time studies, JBI sends out 2,500 random notifications over the course of a quarter to JPD Officers. Once an Officer receives a notification, they have 72 hours to log into JBI's online system and record how they were spending their time when they received the notification. This information is used to determine the approximate proportion of Officers' time spent on Title IV-E-eligible activities, which then informs the amount of Title IV-E funding the County is eligible to claim for reimbursement. JBI prepares a quarterly fiscal claim that is sent back to the JPD for review and then sent to the State as part of the County Expense Claim. The County Expense Claim includes claimed funds for Title IV-E as well as other social services and

child welfare programs. The claim is submitted by the County's Social Services Agency (SSA), and the JPD receives funding through a Memorandum of Understanding with SSA. In Fiscal Year 2021–22, the JPD received \$3,333,638 in Title IV-E revenue, and in FY 2020–21, the JPD received \$3,757,811 in Title IV-E revenue.

QSU's role in Title IV-E case plans includes tracking and compiling a list of the case plans that are eligible for Title IV-E. This involves creating two reports: the first is a monthly report that compiles all new Title IV-E cases across all JPD units. This monthly report is sent to JBI to help them identify new cases, which may be eligible for retroactive claiming for the full month even if the case plan was completed and signed mid-month. The second report is a quarterly report that compiles all eligible Title IV-E cases and is sent to JPD's fiscal unit so they may include the total number of eligible Title IV-E cases as part of the claim to the State.<sup>4</sup> QSU creates these lists from case tracking sheets that are maintained and updated by Officers in each JPD unit and reviewed by the unit's supervisor.<sup>5</sup>

JBI also conducts onsite audits of JPDs Title IV-E case plans to remove ineligible activities from claiming; flag case plans that need correcting; and identify any additional time spent on eligible activities for reimbursement. JBI uses information from random moments responses, along with QSU's Title IV-E monthly case plan report, to help determine which cases they will select during their onsite audit reviews. QSU staff reported that the timing of these audits does not always align with QSU's quarterly reports to the JPD fiscal unit. The audit timeline depends on the JBI auditor's schedule, and these audits also did not consistently occur during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Title IV-E Case Tracking and Error Rate Inconsistencies**

JBI's review of case plans and time study information helps to identify whether reported Title IV-E time was indeed eligible for reimbursement. JBI will either remove ineligible "random moments" claimed via the time study (often due to a case plan error or nonexistent case plan) or identify time spent on a Title IV-E-eligible probation activity that wasn't included in the initial time study as such. As shown in Figure 1.1 on page 14, in FY 2020–21, JBI's review of cases and time claimed toward Title IV-E resulted in removing 149 ineligible moments and adding 125 eligible moments of time that Officer spent on cases that were not initially recorded in the time study. This produced a net reduction of 24 moments of time that also resulted in JBI estimating an approximate decrease in funding of \$41,076 that was associated with time spent on activities that were no longer claimable. During FY 2021–22, JBI identified only 47 moments of time on case plans that turned out to be ineligible for claiming, but there were 148 moments of time that had not been initially claimed that JBI identified as actually being eligible. JBI estimates that their identification of these additional eligible moments resulted in an increase of \$172,972 in Title IV-E claimable funds. This estimated change in Title IV-E claimable funds is a result of JBI's review of the case plans, and as shown below, their review helped ensure that time spent on eligible cases was properly claimed.

<sup>4</sup> As discussed above, JBI prepares the quarterly claim, which is reviewed by JPD's fiscal Unit.

<sup>5</sup> QSU staff used to be responsible for updating each unit's tracking sheet, but when the number of QSU staff decreased, this responsibility shifted to the individual JPD units.

**Figure 1.1: FY 2020–21 and FY 2021–22 JBI’s Fiscal Impact of Eligible Moments Identified<sup>(1)</sup>**

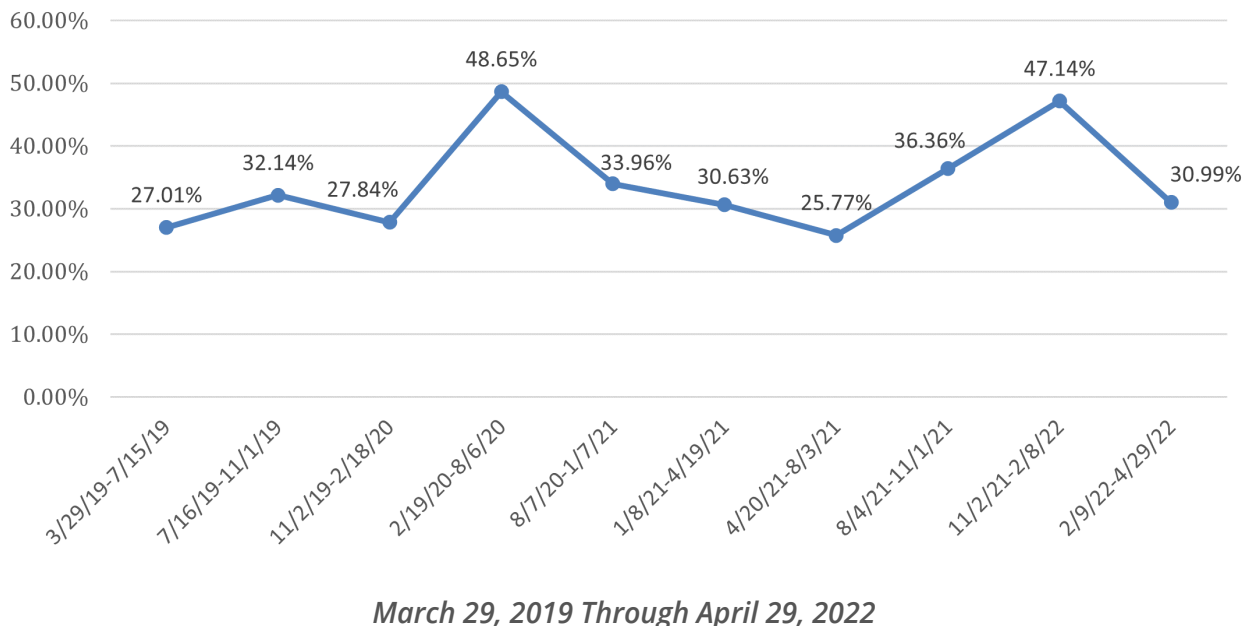
	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22
Ineligible Moments Identified	149	47
Eligible Moments Identified	125	148
Net Change in Moments	-24	101
Estimated Cost per Moment	\$1,712	\$1,713
<b>Total Change:</b>	<b>-\$41,076</b>	<b>\$172,972</b>

Source: JBI’s FY 21 and FY 22 Revenue-Gain Loss Compliance Review.

Note: (1) Estimated costs per moment were rounded to the nearest whole number for this table. Total change was calculated based off the original, unrounded amounts.

JBI’s review of JPD’s Title IV-E case plans shows fluctuating error rates between March 2019 and April 2022 (see Figure 1.2 below for full details). Over this period, JBI’s review of JPD’s Title IV-E case plans found that 34.62% of case plans claimed as Title IV-E eligible had some issue or recommendation for improvement, such as adding more information to the narrative about the family dynamics or including specific services and risk factors. Of 3,650 reviewed time study moments, some of the most common issues within case plans included the following: not including a planned placement option for a child if they were removed from the home (4.33% or 158 moments); not detailing services (4.08% or 149 moments); or not detailing risk factors (2.74% or 100 moments). These are issues that can be corrected and submitted for reimbursement. While many of these errors can be corrected, the degree of fluctuation regarding case plan errors—between 25.77% and 48.65%—shows that JPD staff are not steadily improving over time in this area and may require more training.

**Figure 1.2: Overall Percentage of Case Plans With Errors (Correctable and Uncorrectable),**



March 29, 2019 Through April 29, 2022

Source: JBI Audit Reports.

However, several issues with Title IV-E-eligible cases can make the time study “random moments” claimed toward these cases ineligible for claiming. Over this same three-year time period, JBI’s audits found that 11.45% (418 random moments) of time claimed by Officers as eligible for Title IV-E was in fact not eligible due to multiple case plan issues that could not be corrected. Assuming a cost per moment of roughly \$1,700 (based on information provided by JBI), the removal of 418 random moments equates to a total reduction in Title IV-E funds of \$710,600 over this three-year period. According to JPD staff, of these 418 moments, 55 moments were determined to be claimable under a different code. This results in a net number of 363 moments (9.95%) that were ineligible for reimbursement, and an adjusted foregone revenue of \$617,100 over this three-year span.

JPD staff also reported that, over these three years, JBI identified 346 separate, additional moments that had not initially been claimed to Title IV-E but were eligible for claiming and reimbursement, which equals approximately \$588,200 in additional revenue outside of the moments claimed toward ineligible cases (however, this alternate revenue did not impact the \$617,100 in net foregone revenue from ineligible cases). Overall, the percentage of cases with uncorrectable errors has declined considerably and is currently lower than what JBI estimates typically seeing for other counties.

Nevertheless, the persistent number of overall errors (including correctable ones), in addition to the increase in the number of cases not being initially identified as Title IV-E-eligible as described above, indicates a need for additional training to better identify which cases are Title IV-E eligible, which elements of a case plan are required, and how to ensure a case plan is properly prepared.

Regarding distribution of errors, JBI reports also indicate certain Officers having recurring issues around claiming moments on Title IV-E case plans. For instance, over the period of March 2019 through April 2022, there were five officers who reported time spent across multiple cases that turned out to be ineligible for claiming. Common disqualifying factors indicated by JBI included the following: no case plan, an expired case plan, incorrect signatures, an incorrect goal for the youth, or the youth was no longer eligible for Title IV-E. These are issues that, with additional technical assistance and training, could be corrected. In addition, QSU staff reported that Officers will sometimes miss their “random moment” notifications, and JBI tracks this as well. JBI sends its quarterly audit reports to each JPD unit’s management for review, but QSU does not analyze this information to determine whether there are specific skill gaps pertaining to Title IV-E claiming or certain Officers that would benefit from additional training. Consequently, there is no targeted outreach or technical assistance from the QSU in this area.

### **Training and Technical Assistance Opportunities to Improve Title IV-E Case Plan Errors**

The QSU oversees training and technical assistance around Title IV-E case plans as part of its Deputy Probation Officer development program for Officers that are new to the JPD. However, as discussed further in Section 2, starting on page 19 of this audit report, this training is not mandatory, and there are no required refresher courses in this area. In addition, the QSU does not direct proactive, targeted technical assistance on recurring issues with case plans, eligibility determinations, and Officers

missing random moment emails. The lack of required ongoing training and targeted technical assistance may contribute to the fluctuation in errors associated with Title IV-E cases. Left unaddressed, errors in Title IV-E eligible case plans can lead to ineligible cases and unclaimed revenue.

JB I's contract with the JPD also includes training County staff quarterly or as needed on topics including time study coding, the importance of claiming, identifying claiming population, compliance results, candidacy, case plans, and Title IV-E 101. Between August 2021 and July 2022, JBI held ten trainings: one was a training for supervisors; four were for observers (these are JPD staff who participate in quality reviews of time study information for Officers); and five trainings were related to new time study participants and overviews of Title IV-E and the time study process. Across all ten of these trainings, there were 23 participants total—an underutilization of JBI's contract, which allows for training of up to 150 Probation staff per quarter. JBI's trainings focus on the mechanics of the time study and processes and procedures involved with ensuring Officers correctly enter their information into the time study. According to staff interviews, JBI spends a portion of the training on Title IV-E case plan eligibility and how to correctly write a case plan, but they do not have entire trainings devoted to this.

In the fall of 2020, JBI held one-on-one meetings with 124 Officers in lieu of a larger training series. This more individualized meeting approach may have helped bring about the decrease in uncorrectable case plan errors beginning in early 2021. Interviews with JPD staff also indicate that this one-on-one approach was helpful for answering questions that Officers may not feel comfortable asking in a larger training session. JBI's contract already requires they provide ongoing case plan training. We recommend that QSU work with JBI to implement an annual required refresher training for Officers and Probation staff to provide an overview of Title IV-E case plan requirements, their importance, and address any specific recurring issues from the prior year. This training could take the format of one-on-one meetings or a larger group training. In addition, QSU and JBI should work to target ongoing assistance to Officers who may have recurring issues with correctly identifying Title IV-E eligible cases and/or preparing case plans.

## CONCLUSION

The QSU plays an important role in ensuring that the JPD properly identifies Title IV-E-eligible cases and works with JBI to verify that these case plans are correctly written and updated. There have been improvements in the percentage of time spent on cases that are found ineligible by JBI for Title IV-E, but Officers have not been properly identifying the maximum number of moments eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement. Offering additional training and technical assistance to Officers on their roles and responsibilities will help ensure all eligible cases are included in the County's claim and that the County maximizes its Title IV-E reimbursement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Juvenile Probation Division's Quality System Unit should:

- 1.1 Work with Justice Benefits Inc. to implement a minimum annual Title IV-E-specific refresher training, and, if needed, up to quarterly refresher trainings if errors continue fluctuating. This annual training requirement could take the format of one-on-one meetings or a larger group training. This Title IV-E refresher training is in addition to Recommendation 2.1, on page 22 in Section 2 of this audit report. (Priority 1)
- 1.2 Formalize its practice for analyzing Justice Benefits Inc. reports and audits and reach out to Officers who have recurring issues claiming ineligible cases to offer additional training and technical assistance. (Priority 1)

## SAVINGS, BENEFITS, AND COSTS

Offering additional training will help reduce errors in case plans, fluctuations in eligible cases claimed, and ultimately help maximize Title IV-E funding. In FY 2020–21, JBI estimates that time spent on cases that were ineligible equaled roughly \$41,076 in lost Title IV-E funds claimed. Further, over a three-year period, we estimate approximately \$617,100 in foregone revenue associated with cases with uncorrectable errors. Training can be supported through JBI's existing contract, which allows for quarterly trainings of up to 150 JPD staff. Formalizing the review of JBI reports and audits and targeting assistance to Officers with ongoing needs will also help address fluctuations in errors and reduce the amount of time needed on JBI's part to correct these issues.

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## Section 2: The New Deputy Probation Officer Training Program

### Background

The Juvenile Probation Division's (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) is responsible for developing and implementing a standardized training curriculum for Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) new to the JPD. This training supplements the mandatory core training delivered to all new DPOs, which is certified by the Board of State and Community Correction's Standards and Training for Corrections program. The QSU's DPO development training consists of 16 modules covering topics such as the intake process, court reports, Title IV-E case plans, youth case management, and other areas specific to the JPD.

### Problem, Cause, and Adverse Effect

The DPO development training program is not mandatory for new JPD DPOs, although it is "strongly recommended." QSU staff reported there is no reason for the non-compulsory nature of this program. Additionally, officers are not required to take refresher courses on DPO development training topics. In the absence of coursework requirements, training rosters show that DPOs have not completed the DPO Development curriculum. These attendance sheets indicate that at least half of the 76 DPOs that took courses from June 2019 to October 2022 took eight or fewer of 16 courses. While DPOs all attend the Probation Department's mandatory core training, these trainings are focused on general correctional topics such as professionalism, defensive tactics, and behavioral health. Although there is some overlap in areas such as court reports, the QSU's DPO development training materials are more finely tailored to the JPD. This lack of required trainings for Officers new to the Juvenile Division may contribute to various DPO errors. For instance, QSU's Fiscal Year 2019–20 log of interactions and consultations with DPOs shows that 25 of 607 interactions (4.12%) dealt with corrections to reports and case plans—topics covered in the DPO development trainings. These consultations totaled 18.4 hours. Additional recurring errors with case plans are discussed in Section 1, starting on page 11 of this audit report. Finally, auditors identified inaccuracies in central training records, which did not always capture all names from training sign-in sheets.

### Recommendations

The QSU should make its DPO development training program mandatory for all DPOs new to the JPD and require refresher courses on these topics every three years. On a quarterly basis, the Unit should cross-check its central training logs against its session sign-in sheets to verify accuracy and review these records to ensure that all DPOs have completed all 16 modules. If DPOs have missed coursework, the Unit should schedule make-up sessions for these individuals.

### Savings, Benefits, and Costs

Requiring staff to take the entirety of QSU's DPO Development curriculum will better equip new DPOs with skills specific to the JPD. Developing these skills may also reduce the Unit's time spent on DPO consultations covering these topics, which is particularly crucial given the staffing issues discussed in the Introduction of this audit report. Finally, improving DPOs' understanding of the case plan process would aid the QSU in maximizing Title IV-E reimbursements.

## FINDING

### The Juvenile Probation Division’s Deputy Probation Officer Development Training

When the Juvenile Probation Division’s (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) was established in 2013 through a staffing announcement, one of the primary duties of the Unit was to “assist in developing and implementing a standardized training curriculum for probation officers new to their divisions.”<sup>6</sup> As of Fiscal Year 2021–22, QSU’s Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) development curriculum consists of 16 courses (see Figure 2.1 below).

**Figure 2.1: Quality Systems Unit Deputy Probation Officer Development Training Program**

DPO Development Training Course Titles	
1. Case Closure	9. Intake Process
2. Case Management	10. Jurisdiction
3. Court Reports and Recommendations – Module 1	11. Juvenile Court Overview
4. Court Report and Recommendations – Module 2	12. Specialized Units Part I
5. “Other” Court Reports and Recommendations	13. Specialized Units Part II
6. District Attorney (DA) Review	14. Supervision
7. Detention	15. Title IV-E and Case Plan
8. Dispositional Options	16. Wellness

*Source: Auditor-generated chart based on QSU training materials and training logs.*

These courses are largely specific to the job tasks of JPD DPOs. For instance, the District Attorney Review course discusses various scenarios and violations for youth under and over the age of 14. Meanwhile, the Case Management training discusses case plans for minors, eligibility criteria for their foster care candidacy, and evaluation of imminent and reasonable candidacy risks.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the QSU’s DPO development training, all new Probation Department Officers undergo over 150 hours of Probation Officer Core Training. This training is certified by California’s Board of State and Community Corrections’ Standards and Training for Corrections (STC) program. The STC-certified training program covers areas such as officer health and safety, defensive tactics, communication, gangs, medical issues, cultural awareness, and other broad topics pertaining to corrections. Subsequently, Department sworn staff can take additional and refresher courses from the Probation Department’s course catalog.

### The QSU’s DPO Development Training Program is not Mandatory

Despite DPO training being one of QSU’s core functions, the Unit’s DPO development training is not mandatory. In addition, DPOs are not required to take refresher courses on topics covered in the DPO development training. The Unit reported there is no reason for the elective nature of this coursework, but that “new hires are strongly encouraged to attend.”

<sup>6</sup> 2013 Probation Department memo on new QSU Supervisor positions.

<sup>7</sup> These risks drive the type of case plan that will be completed (i.e., Title IV-E versus non-Title IV-E).

QSU's training records and sign-in sheets indicate that, in the absence of mandatory coursework, DPOs have not completed all DPO development training modules. These records show that, between June 2019 and October 2022, 39 of 76 DPOs that took QSU training courses (51%) completed half or less of the DPO Development curriculum. The Unit reported several reasons for why more than half of these DPOs did not take the entirety of DPO Development course offerings. At least one of these students had taken a handful of these classes as a refresher in order to teach future trainings. Others were likely referred to specific courses by their JPD Supervisors to build certain skillsets, while some DPOs on the list were previously part of the QSU. However, Unit staff noted that other DPOs may have simply missed sessions and never made them up.

In addition to DPOs not attending QSU's introductory training program, one course—Specialized Units Part II—was not offered in 2021. The QSU reported that, during this period, they believed it was more efficient for the small DPO class of four students to schedule individual appointments with subject matter experts in this area rather than gathering ten staff to present on this topic.

Finally, the Unit's central training records do not always align with individual training sign-in sheets. For instance, the DPO development training roster did not include names from the following trainings administered in 2021: "Other" Court Reports and Recommendations, DA Review, and Detention. Without an accurate training record, it is difficult to determine and address potential knowledge and skill gaps in new DPOs.

### **Staff Work Contains Errors in Areas Covered by DPO Development Training**

The QSU maintains logs of DPO consultations and interactions where QSU staff offered guidance and technical support to DPOs. Within these logs, auditors identified various DPO errors in topics covered by QSU's DPO development training. For instance, during FY 2019–20, 25 of 607 interactions (4.12%) dealt with corrections to reports and case plans. These consultations totaled 18.4 hours. The Case Plans training module includes specifics on what information needs to be included in case plans; eligibility criteria; narrative guidelines; required signatures; and update requirements. Likewise, the Court Report and Recommendations training includes general guidelines, templates, and quick style references. While the corrections in the QSU's DPO interaction logs may not have been entirely addressed through these trainings (the Unit's logs did not specify the nature of QSU's corrections), making DPO development training mandatory might reduce instances of these errors.

Contractor audits of the QSU's Title IV-E case plan submissions demonstrated additional recurring issues with JPD staff's case plans. Common errors included missing or incorrect signatures, an incorrect case plan goal, or having an expired case plan. As discussed above, these areas are all covered in QSU's Case Plans training. During FY 2021–22, the County's contractor also identified 125 eligible instances of "claimed time" for Title IV-E cases that were initially unclaimed (see Section 1, starting on page 11 of this audit report, for more information).

To ensure that JPD DPOs have a sufficient level of knowledge, understanding, and skills to perform work specific to the Division, the QSU should require all DPOs new to the Division to complete the entirety of its DPO development training program. In addition, the Unit should require refresher courses on these topics every three years. While DPOs uniformly undergo STC-certified training when hired by the Probation Department, the QSU's modules are more finely tailored to the JPD and offer information not covered in these trainings.

Further, the Management Audit Division recommends that the QSU cross-check its training logs against its session sign-in sheets on a quarterly basis to verify accuracy and review these records to ensure that all DPOs have completed all training modules. If staff have missed coursework, the Unit should schedule make-up sessions for these individuals, so that they complete the entire curriculum. While auditors found instances of some one-on-one and small group make-up sessions in the QSU's attendance sheets, a significant number of DPOs still did not complete all 16 trainings—even with these makeup sessions.

## CONCLUSION

One of the QSU's primary functions is creating and administering a DPO development training for DPOs new to the JPD. This training program is supplemental to the STC-certified training taken by all Probation Officers new to the Department and discusses topics specific to the JPD in more detail. Coursework includes modules on case management, detention, case plans, supervision, and other corrections-related areas. However, the QSU reported that its DPO Development training is not mandatory. In the absence of required coursework, auditors found instances of DPOs completing only portions of the curriculum. Additionally, we identified DPO errors and QSU corrections that may have been mitigated with more extensive training.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Juvenile Probation Division's Quality Systems Unit should:

- 2.1 Make its Deputy Probation Officer development training program mandatory for all Deputy Probation Officers new to the Juvenile Probation Division and require refresher courses on these topics every three years. (Priority 2)
- 2.2 On a quarterly basis, cross-check its training logs against its session sign-in sheets to verify accuracy and review these records to ensure that all Deputy Probation Officers have completed all training modules. If staff have missed coursework, the Unit should schedule make-up sessions for these individuals, so that they complete the entire curriculum. (Priority 2)

## **SAVINGS, BENEFITS, AND COSTS**

Requiring staff to take the entirety of QSU's DPO development curriculum will better equip new DPOs with skills specific to the Probation Department's JPD. Developing these skills may also reduce the Unit's time spent on DPO consultations and corrections covering these topics, which is particularly crucial given the staffing issues discussed in the Introduction of this audit report. Improved accuracy of training records will also better allow the QSU to check for any gaps in DPOs' training history and administer make-up sessions when necessary. Finally, improving DPOs' understanding of the case plan process would aid the QSU in maximizing Title IV-E reimbursements. DPOs would potentially be able to better identify eligible "moments" and ensure all case plan components follow State requirements.

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## Section 3: Improving Written Guidelines for the Quality Systems Unit

### Background

In October 2013, the Probation Department gave notice of a new Quality Systems Unit (QSU) for the Juvenile Probation Division (JPD) through a job announcement for a Quality Systems Supervisor. Duties in this announcement included monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating evidence-based practices; promoting continuous quality improvement; maintaining the fidelity of implemented programs; updating policies and procedures; and developing a standardized training curriculum for new JPD Officers. In October 2015, three Deputy Probation Officer positions were added to the Unit.

### Problem, Cause, and Adverse Effect

As of June 2022, the QSU has no written policies, procedures, or formal Unit description governing its operations. In the absence of these guidelines, the roles and responsibilities of the Unit have shifted considerably over time. For instance, the Coordinator for supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) was originally under the Department's Family Preservation Unit but was subsequently transferred to the QSU. In addition, in 2015, QSU took on the responsibility of assisting with Title IV-E reimbursements (see Section 1, starting on page 11 of this audit, for more information about this topic). Due to their specialized experience, QSU staff also perform fieldwork tasks not explicitly listed in the initial job announcements, such as accompanying JPD Officers to County jail interviews and home visits. The Unit reported that staffing changes over time have also drastically impacted the nature of QSU's work. When the Unit had three dedicated staff, the QSU would manage every single Title IV-E case file and monitor whether Probation staff were up-to-date on reading policies and procedures. However, after two positions were deleted from the Unit, these responsibilities were delegated to Supervising Probation Officers. The Unit has no prioritization mechanism for its wide range of tasks when its workload fluctuates, reportedly dropping many of its Title IV-E and staff consultation responsibilities in late July and early August of 2022 to update all Department policies and procedures according to uniform standards. Finally, there are no formal channels for Probation staff to request technical assistance from the QSU or for QSU staff to receive Title IV-E training to oversee case plans.

### Recommendations

The JPD QSU should develop an updated formal description of its roles and responsibilities and develop policies and procedures around the areas outlined in this description that include training protocols for QSU staff. The Unit should also create official contact channels for Probation staff seeking technical assistance from the Unit (e.g., "office hours") and share a biannual memo about these channels with all Juvenile Division staff. Finally, the QSU should develop a prioritization plan for how the Unit should operate in the event of workflow fluctuations and staffing shortages.

### Savings, Benefits, and Costs

Having more defined guidelines around the QSU will prevent the Unit from becoming a "catch-all" function that includes tasks outside the scope of quality assurance (e.g., the CSEC role). Institutionalizing a way for Department staff to contact the QSU for assistance may lead to improved training opportunities and outcomes for Probation Officers. Finally, a prioritization plan will allow the QSU to better identify "mission critical" activities in the event of workflow surges and limited staff.

## **FINDING**

### **The Creation of the Juvenile Probation Division's Quality Systems Unit**

The Juvenile Probation Division's (JPD) Quality Systems Unit (QSU) was established during Fiscal Year 2012–13 through approval of a new Quality Systems Supervisor position by the Board of Supervisors. In October 2013, the Probation Department released a job announcement for this new position and outlined the following associated responsibilities: monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating evidence-based practices; promoting continuous quality improvement; maintaining the fidelity of implemented programs; updating Division policies and procedures; and developing a standardized training curriculum for new JPD Officers.

Two years later, the Department released another announcement notifying Probation staff of the addition of three Deputy Probation Officer positions to the Unit. The announcement stated that this augmentation would allow the QSU to develop and implement a Quality Management System (QMS) that would create performance and fidelity measures for current and future program needs. The new QSU staff would also update policies and procedures and assist in training and coaching around various Division-wide evidence-based practice initiatives.

### **No Written Guidelines and the Evolution of the QSU over Time**

Since the initial two job announcements, the QSU has not developed a formal written description of the Unit's roles and responsibilities, nor has it created any policies and procedures governing its operations. In the absence of these guidelines, the functions of the Unit have shifted considerably over time. For instance, the Coordinator for supporting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) was originally under the Department's Family Preservation Unit but was subsequently transferred to the QSU. This position is largely unrelated to quality assurance and best practices implementation. Instead, the CSEC Coordinator provides supervision and specialized assistance to an identified group of sexually exploited victims under supervision; partners with community-based organizations to ensure services are in place for these individuals; and acts as a resource for Probation Officers throughout the Juvenile Division who may have clients who are at-risk or suspected of being victims of sexual exploitation. QSU staff reported that this position was moved into the Unit because the original Probation divisions that housed this function were dismantled. While the CSEC Coordinator performs some quality assurance duties, CSEC cases take priority, and management reported that the Coordinator's QSU-related activities only comprise approximately 50% of their time.

Additionally, in 2015, the QSU took on the responsibility of supporting the Title IV-E reimbursement process when the Probation Department contracted with Justice Benefits Inc. (JBI) to assist with Title IV-E documentation and associated time studies (see Section 1, starting on page 11, of this audit for more information about this topic). The Unit did not develop guidelines to help transition QSU staff into this role, despite the fact that the Unit administers trainings on Title IV-E case plans and offers technical assistance to Probation Officers in these areas. JBI's Title IV-E training for new QSU staff is not part of any scheduled orientation; rather, this training occurs on an ad hoc basis, when JBI happens to be on-site.



Further contributing to the “catch-all” nature of the JPD QSU, the Unit’s staff sometimes performs fieldwork activities that are not explicitly within the scope of the 2013 and 2015 job announcements. For example, the QSU’s Probation Officer consultation and interaction tracking logs contained activities such as jail interviews and victim home visits during FY 2019–20 and FY 2020–21. QSU staff reported that the JPD contains a relatively high proportion of newer and younger staff, some of whom have not yet completed field training. The QSU, which typically consists of more experienced personnel, will accompany these individuals to model appropriate field techniques and safety. While the QSU’s outdated descriptions discuss “training and coaching” Probation Officers, Unit staff acknowledged that new hires are not specifically informed that they will be conducting fieldwork activities alongside Division staff.

### **Staffing Changes and Workload Fluctuations**

Staffing changes have also significantly changed the nature of the QSU’s work. For instance, QSU supervisors reported that, when the Unit had three dedicated staff, the QSU would manage every single Title IV-E case file and monitor whether Probation staff were up-to-date on reading Division policies and procedures. However, after two positions were deleted from the Unit, these responsibilities were delegated to JPD Probation Officers and their Supervisors. This delegation of work has led to JPD Officers’ caseload tracking spreadsheets missing certain Title IV-E-eligible cases, as discussed in the Introduction, starting on page 3 of this audit report.

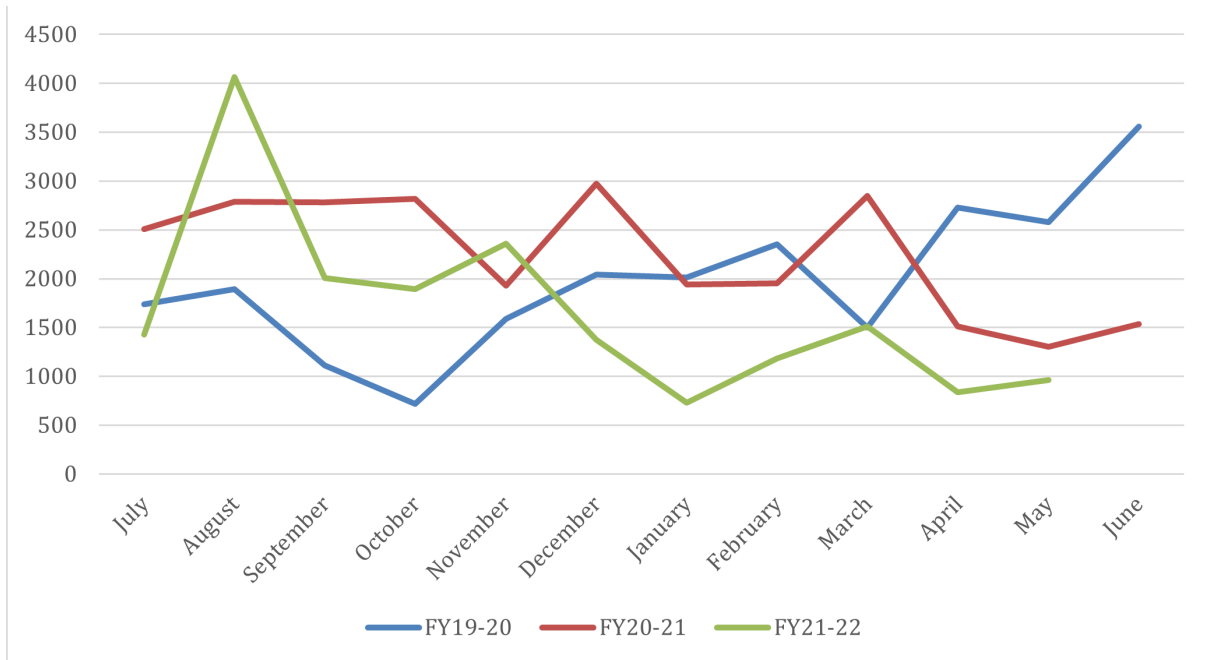
Additionally, in the context of reduced staffing and workload fluctuations, QSU staff have sometimes deprioritized certain functions entirely. During the second half of FY 2021–22, the Unit was tasked with updating all Division policies and procedures according to uniform Lexipol standards (a private company creating risk management solutions for public safety agencies and local government). As the deadline for these updates approached in August 2022, the Unit reported that the QSU put its review of CSEC cases and Title IV-E responsibilities on the backburner, as well as Probation Officer requests for technical assistance. Because the QSU has no policies, procedures, an updated description describing its “mission-critical” functions, or a prioritization plan for its responsibilities, it is unclear which QSU tasks should be ongoing in the midst of urgent projects such as the Lexipol updates.

To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the QSU and prevent it from becoming a “catch-all” unit of unrelated functions—particularly given the staffing shortages discussed in the Introduction of this audit report, starting on page 3—the QSU should develop an updated formal Unit description and develop policies and procedures around the areas outlined in this description. These policies and procedures should include training protocols for QSU staff. In addition, QSU should develop a prioritization plan for how the Unit should operate in the event of workflow fluctuations and staffing shortages to ensure items such as Title IV-E reimbursement activities are not neglected.

### **No Formal Channels for Probation Officers Seeking QSU Assistance**

The QSU's lack of written procedures extend to its channels for JPD staff seeking technical assistance and best practice guidance. Unit staff reported that staff contact the QSU in an "informal process" through phone calls, text messages, and occasional appointments. Primarily, Deputy Probation Officers learn of the QSU's services through the Unit's training curriculum for staff new to the Division. However, as discussed in Section 2, starting on page 19 of this audit report, this training program is not mandatory, and not everyone attends as a result. Thus, there is limited means for individuals who do not attend the program to learn of the QSU's various support services.

The Unit's interactions and consultations log showed a steep decline in the average time spent per month on QSU-Officer interactions during FY 2021–22, dipping from 33 hours per month (1,985 minutes) during FY 2019–20 and 37 hours (2,240 minutes) during FY 2020–2021 to 27 hours (1,668 minutes) the following year. While this dip might partially be attributed to a previous spike in COVID-19 inquiries and return-to-work questions following the height of the pandemic, data shows that the FY 2021–22 decline was largely driven by a significant decrease in hours from November 2021 to May 2022—months after return-to-work mandates (see Figure 3.1 on page 29 for full training and consultation minutes).

**Figure 3.1: Training and Consultation Minutes Over FY 2019–20 to FY 2021–22**

Source: Auditor Analysis of QSU Interaction Logs.

QSU staff reported that potential contributors to these declines may have been staff turnover in the Unit, as students who had built a connection with these staff members during trainings did not return to the QSU for assistance after these individuals transitioned into other roles. However, creating and advertising official avenues for Officers to seek support from the Unit outside of mentioning this service at initial, unrequired trainings may increase use of these services. The Management Audit Division recommends that the QSU create formal contact channels for Probation staff seeking technical assistance from the Unit (e.g., “office hours”) and share a biannual memo about these channels with all Juvenile Division staff.

At the exit conference with the auditee on October 31, 2022, the Probation Department reported that a new mentorship program had been introduced in FY 2022–23. This “Circle of Support Team,” comprised of experienced JPD Probation Officers, is responsible for supporting the learning and onboarding of new JPD Officers and connecting these new Officers to staff outside their own units. Members of the Circle of Support Team volunteer to provide mentorship and exposure on a variety of specific skills and topics. The Management Audit Division believes these efforts are in alignment with the above recommendation, and thus considers implementation of this measure in-progress.

## CONCLUSION

The JPD QSU, established in 2013 and developed into a full Unit with the addition of three staff in 2015, was created to promote quality improvement, implement and maintain the fidelity of best practices, train JPD staff, and update policies and procedures. However, the Unit has no policies and procedures governing its operations, and there have been no updates to the Unit’s description of its functions in seven years. In the absence of these guidelines, the Unit’s scope of work has shifted considerably over time, expanding in some areas such as CSEC, Title IV-E, and

Probation Officer fieldwork, while decreasing in others such as individual case plan review and Probation Officer policies and procedures monitoring. Due to limited staff, responsibilities of the Unit fluctuate significantly when the QSU receives major projects. Finally, despite training, development, and technical assistance being included in the QSU's core functions, there are no official channels for Probation Officers to seek assistance from this Unit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Juvenile Probation Division's Quality Systems Unit should:

- 3.1 Develop an updated formal description of its roles and responsibilities and develop policies and procedures around the areas outlined in this description that include training protocols for Quality Systems Unit staff. (Priority 1)
- 3.2 Create a prioritization plan that identifies "mission-critical" activities and details how the Unit should operate in the event of workflow fluctuations and staffing shortages. (Priority 1)
- 3.3 Create official contact channels for Probation staff seeking technical assistance from the Unit (e.g., "office hours") and share a biannual memo about these channels with all Juvenile Probation Division staff. Implementation of this recommendation through initiatives such as the Probation Department's "Circle of Support Team" mentorship program is in progress as of FY 2022–23. (Priority 2)

## SAVINGS, BENEFITS, AND COSTS

Having more defined guidelines around the QSU will further prevent the Unit from becoming a "catch-all" function that includes tasks outside the scope of quality assurance (e.g., the CSEC role). A concrete definition of the Unit might also temper the Department expanding the QSU's functions in a manner that cannot realistically be fulfilled with the Unit's staffing levels, and a prioritization plan could assist in the QSU achieving its existing goals given workflow surges. Lastly, institutionalizing channels for Department staff to contact the QSU for assistance could lead to increased training opportunities and outcomes for JPD Officers.



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**Response to Management Audit of Probation Department's Juvenile Division**  
**Quality Systems Unit Recommendations**

No.	Recommendation	Probation Department's Response
<b>Section 1. Title IV-E Case Plans</b>		
1.1	Work with Justice Benefits Inc. to implement a minimum annual Title IV-E-specific refresher training, and, if needed, up to quarterly refresher trainings if errors continue fluctuating. This annual training requirement could take the format of one-on-one meetings or a larger group training. This Title IV-E refresher training is in addition to Recommendation 2.1 in Section 2 of this audit report. (Priority 1)	<p><b>AGREE</b>-The Justice Benefits Inc. (JBI) contract with the Probation Department specifies they will train staff if there is an identified area of improvement. Current trainings offered by JBI includes the following related topics: Time study coding, Importance of claiming, Identify claiming population, Compliance results versus Candidacy, Case Plans, and Title IV-E 101.</p> <p>In 2020-2021, JBI met one on one with all time study participants to confirm their understanding of the time study requirements and case plan accuracy. After the completion of these one-on-one meetings, the data showed an improvement in random moment completion and improved quality of case plans submitted.</p>
1.2	Formalize its practice for analyzing Justice Benefits Inc. reports and audits and reach out to Officers who have recurring issues claiming ineligible cases to offer additional training and technical assistance. (Priority 1)	<p><b>AGREE</b>-Justice Benefits Inc. provides performance reports to the Probation Department on a regular basis. The Title IV-E and Wellbeing Probation Division Manager distributes the reports and updates the other Probation Division Managers, who share the reports with their supervisors. The supervisors share the data with their staff and review the findings for process improvement. The supervisors also utilize this information to identify staff needing additional support, training, or technical assistance, such as one-on-one training with Quality Systems (QS) Unit staff and/or with JBI staff</p>

No.	Recommendation	Probation Department's Response
<b>Section 2. The New Deputy Probation Officer Training Program</b>		
2.1	<p>Make its Deputy Probation Officer development training program mandatory for all Deputy Probation Officers new to the Juvenile Probation Division and require refresher courses on these topics every three years. (Priority 2)</p>	<p><b>NEUTRAL</b>-The Deputy Probation Officer Development (DPOD) program is highly encouraged for new Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) and for any DPO who feels as though they could benefit from the support. In addition to DPOD, all new DPOs attend mandatory CORE training which is approximately 200 hours and attend 40 hours of mandatory Standards for Training and Corrections (STC) Training on an annual basis.</p> <p>As DPOD is offered throughout the year, changes to the curriculum are completed by the QS Unit to reflect any legislative updates. All DPOs are welcome to attend any class as a booster. QS Unit is also available during business hours to provide any assistance and support to staff.</p>
2.2	<p>On a quarterly basis, cross-check its training logs against its session sign-in sheets to verify accuracy and review these records to ensure that all Deputy Probation Officers have completed all training modules. If staff have missed coursework, the Unit should schedule make-up sessions for these individuals, so that they complete the entire curriculum. (Priority 2)</p>	<p><b>AGREE</b>-The Probation Department's Training Unit is responsible for retaining staff training records. The QS Unit will submit the training rosters for the DPOD to the Training Unit electronically and hard copies will be sent via pony mail. This will allow the Training Unit to cross check their training logs and ensure staff receive STC credits. Additionally, the QS Unit shares an Excel spreadsheet with the Training Unit to confirm class completion.</p> <p>The Deputy Probation Officer Development (DPOD) classes are designed to address specific technical aspects of the job. As such staff are encouraged to attend classes if they have skill deficits or want refreshers on certain topics. During the course of the 16-class curriculum, the QS Unit staff offer make-up classes for those who aspire to complete the program in its entirety. At the beginning of each DPOD series, staff are notified</p>



No.	Recommendation	Probation Department's Response
		of the opportunity for make up classes. Additionally, if significant portions are missed, staff can make up classes at the next offering.
<b>Section 3. Improving Written Guidelines for the Quality Systems Unit</b>		
3.1	Develop an updated formal description of its roles and responsibilities and develop policies and procedures around the areas outlined in this description that include training protocols for Quality Systems Unit staff. (Priority 1)	<p><b>AGREE</b>-The Quality Systems Unit was established almost ten years ago and since then the roles and responsibilities of the unit have evolved. The Unit has endured significant staff turnover, staff shortages, and re-prioritization of projects. A formal description will establish shared expectations, set boundaries, define roles, and establish any needed policies and procedures regarding the units functioning and responsibilities.</p> <p>In the next year, the QS Unit will develop a charter or mission statement for the unit.</p>
3.2	Create a prioritization plan that identifies “mission-critical” activities and details how the Unit should operate in the event of workflow fluctuations and staffing shortages. (Priority 1)	<p><b>AGREE</b>- As part of the QS Unit developing a charter in the next year, all functions of the unit will be measured in conjunction with the division’s strategic plan. The QS Unit will work directly with the Probation Division Managers and Deputy Chief Probation Officer to identify priorities and tasks that can be supported by other units when the QS Unit is impacted.</p>
3.3	Create official contact channels for Probation staff seeking technical assistance from the Unit (e.g., “office hours”) and share a biannual memo about these channels with all Juvenile Probation Division staff. Implementation of this recommendation through initiatives such as the Probation Department’s “Circle of Support Team” mentorship program is in progress as of FY 2022–23. (Priority 2)	<p><b>DISAGREE</b>-Due to alternating schedules, meeting schedules, competing priorities, and teaching/coaching commitments, it is more efficient for the Quality Systems Unit to schedule individual appointments with staff seeking help, support, and assistance. The rigidity of office hours would hinder the limited number of Quality Systems staff to help others with urgent matters as they arise. It may also discourage staff from approaching Quality Systems staff for help when the Quality Systems staff may be available outside designated times. It is</p>

<b>No.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Probation Department's Response</b>
		<p>important to note that not all Quality Systems staff have the same work schedules.</p> <p>Being flexible and responsive to the needs of staff aids greatly in establishing, building, and re-establishing mutually beneficial mentoring relationships.</p>

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JPD QUALITY SYSTEMS UNIT**

### **DPO DEVELOPMENT**

The QS Team has hosted two DPO Development courses. The courses were offered within one week from the employees starting date.

Group 9 (7.5.22 to 8.24.22) effective day 6.27.22 (group of 5)

Group 10 (8.15.22 to 10.12.22) effective day 8.8.22 (group of 13)

The DPO Development course consists of 16 classes, each 2 hours. The learning objectives include Juvenile Court Overview, Intake, District Attorney Review, Detention, Jurisdiction, Dispositional Options, Specialized Units, Court Report and Recommendations, Other Court Reports, Case Plans, Supervision, Case Management and DFCS, Case Closure, and Wellness. Furthermore, the QS team held make-up sessions to ensure DPOs catch up and are provided with all of the training materials.

The QS team works collaboratively with Specialized Units, such as Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Dually Involved Youth (DIY), Prevention and Early Intervention Program (PEI), Education Services Unit, Special Programs Unit (SPU), Placement, Family Preservation Unit (FPU), Re-Entry Services Unit (RSU), and Screening Unit, by inviting the units' staff as guest speakers.

The QS team continues to offer support to new DPOs after the completion of the DPO Development course. 11 DPOs had a "hands on" experience in prepping a court calendar and observing court the following day to identify different court writing styles, court expectations, stakeholders' roles, and juvenile justice court proceedings. 7 DPOs attended the Safety Vest Workshop.

### **POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

The QS team has reviewed and updated the current procedures and developed new policies and procedures for Lexipol transitioning. (137 TOTAL)

### **TITLE IV-E CASE PLAN**

JPD, from 3Q21 to 4Q22, has maintained an average of 33.03 Reimbursable % compared to 27.88% statewide and identified 21.75 Candidate % compared to 8.11% statewide.

JPD also has steadily improved miscodes from 11.36% in 3Q21 to 2.94 in 4Q22. The May 2022 audit consisted of 71 cases covering 238 moments. 7 moments were found to be miscoded, which was at a four-quarter low.

In addition, according to the Santa Clara County and JBI Quarterly Meeting Recap Notes dated September 27, 2022, "Compared to the 80,000 moments gathered each quarter by JBI, Santa Clara is far exceeding the averages in candidacy, reimbursable percentage, and general administration."

### **CSEC**

657 youth were screened with the CSE-IT. In which, 48 youth were identified as "Clear Concern" for exploitation and case reviews were completed to assess the needs for services.

The JH advocate referral form and process were updated to ensure youth are connected with advocate services prior to their release.

16 DPOs completed CSE-IT Train the Trainers. Moving forward, this will allow our newly certified trainers to train new staff in house on how to complete the CSE-IT.

DPO Emergency Response Procedure was updated.

Collaborated with County agencies and counsels in updating the Santa Clara County MOU for CSEC. This was a joint collaboration with stakeholders that included the DA's Office, DFCS, BHSD and other system partners.

## **TRAINING CONSULATION LOG 2022**

QS team has consistently provided an average of 20 hours monthly of one on one consulting within the division in a variety of subjects including but not limited to case planning, case management, report writing, translation, policy, and CSEC case reviews.

January 12.16 hours

February 19.75 hours

March 19.5 hours

April 14 hours

May 16 hours

June 19.33 hours

July 11.75 hours

August 25.5 hours

September 30.33 hours

October 27.41 hours