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**DATE:** August 13, 2019

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Robert Menicocci, Social Services Agency Director

**SUBJECT:** CalWORKs Child Care Resource & Referrals Services

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Under advisement from July 2, 2019 (Item No. 7): Receive report from the Social Services Agency relating to the County of Santa Clara addressing the programmatic Child Care Resource and Referral service needs of CalWORKs clients. (Social Services Agency)

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no fiscal implications associated with the recommended action.

**CONTRACT HISTORY**

Contract history is not applicable.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

On June 19, 2019, SSA received notice from 4Cs of their decision to decline renewal of their CalWORKs Resource and Referral (R&R) services contract with the County. In July 2019, SSA staff met with the Community Child Care Council of Santa Clara County (4Cs) staff to discuss the transition of contract services, confirming that 4Cs intends to continue assisting CalWORKs families with establishing stable child care arrangements in coordination with SSA despite its decision not to renew the CalWORKs R&R contract. This report contains recommendations regarding the programmatic service needs of CalWORKs clients with regard to child care R&R services given these recent developments.

**Addressing CalWORKs Client Child Care R&R Needs**

In order to receive cash assistance CalWORKs families are required to participate in employment and training activities. To help meet program requirements, CalWORKs families are eligible to receive child care and other supportive services.

**Prior R&R Services:** Under the CalWORKs Enhanced Child Care R&R contract, 4Cs staff initiated the arrangement of child care services once SSA staff notified them of a family's CalWORKs eligibility.

After the initial CalWORKs orientation, 4Cs staff conducted in-person interviews with CalWORKs clients to create a written child care service plan that identified specific family needs and actions to be taken by both parties. These interviews occurred at CalWORKs offices where 4Cs staff were co-located with CalWORKs staff.

As a part of their child care service plan, families received pre-screened referrals to child care home providers, center-based providers, or a combination of both. 4Cs also provided information to parents on selecting a child care provider and other child development programs that provide services beyond child care. 4Cs staff followed up with participating families to ensure that a provider had been chosen and to confirm the appropriateness of the referral and the type of child care selected.

If a family's circumstances changed (e.g., relocation to new home, change in work hours, etc.), 4Cs CalWORKs R&R staff were available to assist families with their new child care search.

**Current R&R Services:** Effective July 1, 2019, 4Cs continues providing pre-screened referrals to child care providers and assisting CalWORKs clients with the selection of a provider. SSA's CalWORKs Employment Counselors (ECs) assist with the submission of their R&R request and follow up with families to confirm that they have obtained child care. ECs also assist clients interested in using the 4Cs website to conduct a child care provider search on their own. SSA staff are in regular communication with 4Cs staff ensuring appropriate and timely referrals for CalWORKs clients.

CDE requires that all R&R agencies co-locate with county welfare departments or arrange other means of swift communication with parents and their case managers (California Education Code Section 8352). To comply with this requirement, 4Cs has established a dedicated email address for CalWORKs referrals so that the source of the child care request can be easily identified and prioritized for processing. In addition, 4Cs will maintain a regular presence at CalWORKs offices to inform clients on how to select a provider, answer questions regarding provider referrals and provide regular reports to SSA on services provided.

To date, this R&R service arrangement has proven successful with 4Cs providing services within 24 to 48 hours of receiving the R&R request.

### **Status of 4Cs Employees**

SSA confirmed that 4Cs staff formerly assigned to CalWORKs will continue working in the organization's R&R services unit and serving the general public.

### **Child Care Provider Database: Collaboration**

Over the past few months, SSA and the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) have agreed to work collaboratively to explore child care and early childhood education coordination including the development of an R&R database accessible to the County and SCCOE staff. If the County would like to assume a greater role in the provision of child care services, the creation of a child care provider database would serve as the cornerstone in the development of a comprehensive child care services program.

As outlined in more detail in prior reports to the Board of Supervisors, SSA has identified challenges related to developing a parallel child care R&R database and more comprehensive child care services program, including:

1. Difficulty maintaining accurate and comprehensive information regarding child care provider availability and characteristics in a parallel database, despite the potential investment of significant County resources to develop and maintain such a database.
2. Challenges accessing updated provider licensing information, such that the County might unknowingly refer a family to a provider whose license has been suspended or revoked.
3. Inability to access the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, an information sharing network that monitors issues affecting child care services and promotes child care provider recruitment and training.
4. Ongoing, significant costs to the County General Fund related to technology and staffing for services that duplicate those already being provided by 4Cs through their CDE designation.
5. An extremely low likelihood that CDE would designate the County as the R&R provider for Santa Clara County. 4Cs was issued a Conditional Contract by CDE for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 to continue serving as the County's CDE designated R&R service provider. There has been no indication from CDE of their intention to terminate their contract with 4Cs. It should be noted that no unit of County government performs this function, however, the local County Office of Education serves as the CDE designated R&R service provider for several counties (e.g., Riverside, Shasta, Stanislaus, etc.).

### **Recommendations**

In reference to child care R&R services, based on program performance to date, SSA recommends deferring any further action relating to R&R responsibilities for CalWORKs families since the needs of these families are being met with no reduction in the quality or scope of the services provided.

In regards to child care provider database collaboration, SSA recommends collaboration with SCCOE to explore best practices to support children and families in Santa Clara County as well as Child Care and Early Childhood Education providers, including the exploration of the development of a database and the County's role in this effort.

### **CHILD IMPACT**

The recommended action will have a positive impact on the **Safe and Stable Families** indicator by educating families on quality child care selection and improving access to child care that provides school readiness services.

### **SENIOR IMPACT**

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

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommended action will have no/neutral sustainability implications.

## **BACKGROUND**

As reported to the Board of Supervisors on July 2, 2019, the 4Cs remains the California Department of Education (CDE) designated Child Care R&R agency for Santa Clara County. Notwithstanding numerous audits and findings related to 4Cs' performance, the CDE has continued to renew their contract to provide R&R services for County residents. For over 30 years, the County contracted directly with 4Cs to provide augmented services to CalWORKs families referred by the Social Services Agency; assisting them in making informed and timely child care choices. During the past three years, 4Cs assisted an average of 1,000 CalWORKs families annually.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

Failure to approve the recommended action would result in the report not being received by the Board of Supervisors.

## **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

The Clerk of the Board will follow usual procedures upon completion.