



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** April 26, 2022

# 12

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**AUTHORIZE EXTENSION OF CONTRACTS RELATED TO OPERATIONS AT SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

San Pasqual Academy (the Academy) opened in 2001 and is a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent youth in the foster care system and to prepare them for self-sufficiency upon exiting care. Over the last five years, federal and State legislation has significantly shifted the statutory requirements for keeping children safely with families, resulting in sweeping legislative changes that identify home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth and reduce the reliance on and use of congregate care. Given these changes, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has undertaken significant consideration of the future of the Academy in the last year. In response to actions taken by the Superior Court of California and the California Department of Social Services, on January 25, 2022 (19), the Board approved continued operations at the Academy, as needed, to support the transition to a continuum of care multipurpose campus to serve youth in foster care and directed the CAO to continue to explore options for a mixed-use campus for a combination of youth populations including youth in foster care, youth at risk of entering foster care, unaccompanied minors, and youth interacting with the juvenile justice system.

The contract extension to operate the Academy authorized by the Board on July 13, 2021 (6) is set to expire on June 30, 2022. Today's action requests the Board to authorize an amendment to the County of San Diego (County), Health and Human Services (HHSA) Child Welfare Services contract with New Alternatives, Inc., to increase the contract amount and extend the contract term for 11 months from May 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023 for residential/education services, Independent Living Skills, and the Intergenerational Program. Additionally, today's action requests the Board to authorize an amendment to the HHSA Behavioral Health Services (BHS) contract with New Alternatives, Inc., to extend the contract term for nine months from July 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023 for the continued provision of specialty mental health services to youth at the Academy. The BHS contract with New Alternatives, Inc. for specialty mental health services is set to expire on June 30, 2022. Both of these contract extensions are necessary to ensure the County provides placement stability and the continuity of specialty mental health services to youth currently placed at the Academy while procuring new services in support of a reimagined campus that extends the successful outcomes of the Academy to a wider population of youth. Additionally,

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the amendments will allow for new referrals for eligible youth that can immediately benefit from the current programming at the Academy and successfully transition to an appropriate placement type provided at the planned multipurpose campus.

This item supports the County’s vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe and thriving communities. This will be accomplished by providing a safe and thriving placement option, comprehensive services and supports, and a focus on improving equitable outcomes for children and youth interacting with the child welfare system.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. In accordance with Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement, and Administrative Code Section 401, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, subject to successful negotiations and a determination of a fair and reasonable price, to amend the following contracts to increase contract amount and extend the contract term through March 31, 2023 and up to an additional six months, if needed, subject to the availability of funds; and to amend the contracts to reflect changes to services and funding allocations, subject to the approval of the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency:
  - a. County of San Diego, Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services contract with New Alternatives for residential/education services, Independent Living Skills, and the Intergenerational Program (Contract #45216)
  - b. County of San Diego, Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Services contract with New Alternatives for specialty mental health services (Contract #45369)

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services (CWS), partners with public and private agencies such as New Alternatives, Inc., San Diego County Office of Education, and Access Inc. (through the support of the San Diego Workforce Partnership) to maximize racially equitable community outcomes by ensuring all youth at the San Pasqual Academy (the Academy) have increased access to health and wellness opportunities, develop life-long connections, and broaden educational horizons.

Over the last five years, federal and State legislation has significantly shifted the statutory requirements for keeping children safely with families, resulting in sweeping legislative changes that identify home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth and reduce the reliance on and use of congregate care. As a result of these statutory changes focused on keeping children with their families and preventing child maltreatment, CWS has experienced a 39 percent reduction in the number of youth in foster care and a 69 percent reduction in the use of congregate care over the past 10 years. The population of youth placed at the Academy as of April 12, 2022 is 41. The ethnic distribution includes 20 percent White, 46 percent Latino, and 34 percent Black.

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As CWS continues to deepen prevention and family strengthening efforts in communities countywide and align with the trajectory of child welfare services nationally, fewer youth are entering the child welfare system. The youth who cannot be safely maintained in their homes with their biological families and enter foster care have often been exposed to severe complex trauma and present with significant mental and behavioral health needs that require more acute and intensive care and interventions. CWS has engaged the community in strategic planning to determine how best to utilize the Academy campus to address the changing needs of our community, as well as the changing statutory framework while building upon the Academy's success.

The Academy reimagined is a cumulative community effort among seven key stakeholder focus groups including former foster youth, partners of the Academy, community partners and the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board of San Diego County, the Foster Alumni and Youth Community Empowerment Subcommittee (FAYCES), relative caregivers and resource families, Foster Family Agencies, Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) providers, Transitional Housing providers, CWS staff, and legal and county partners. The vision of the Academy reimagined is to extend the successful outcomes of the Academy to a wider and diverse population of youth with unique needs by providing increased access to comprehensive services and supports focused on improving equitable outcomes for children and youth interacting with the child welfare system.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-23 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of approximately \$2,225,000 in FY 2021-22 and costs and revenue of approximately \$11,887,500 in FY 2022-23. The funding sources are federal Short-Doyle Medi-Cal, Mental Health Services Act, Realignment, and General Purpose Revenue. There will be no net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

This item was presented as an informational item to the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board Subcommittees on April 13, 2022 (Race and Equity) and April 21, 2022 (Foster Alumni and Youth Community Empowerment Subcommittee). This item will be presented as an informational item to the Child and Family Services subcommittee on April 28, 2022.

This item will be presented to the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board as an informational item on May 13, 2022.

**BACKGROUND**

San Pasqual Academy (the Academy) opened in 2001 and is a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent youth in the foster care system and to prepare them for self-sufficiency upon exiting care. Through a partnership of public and

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private agencies such as New Alternatives, Inc., San Diego County Office of Education, Access Inc. through the support of the San Diego Workforce Partnership, and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Child Welfare Services (CWS), youth are provided with residential, education, work readiness, and child welfare case management services.

Over the last five years, federal and State legislation has significantly shifted the statutory requirements for keeping children safely with families, resulting in sweeping legislative changes that identify home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth and reduce the reliance on and use of congregate care. As a result of these statutory changes and multiple discussions on how to preserve the Academy's unique program as permitted through the parameter of new laws, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) approved a three-year Pilot Project for the Academy for the period of December 1, 2018 through December 31, 2021.

*Timeline of Prior Events and Actions Taken by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board)*

- **February 8, 2021** – CDSS notified CWS that the Academy's Pilot Project and supporting Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to continue the Academy's ongoing operation would terminate effective October 1, 2021, rather than December 31, 2021.
- **March 16, 2021 (12)** – The Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to request an extension from CDSS for the current MOU for the Academy through June 30, 2022.
- **May 3, 2021** – CDSS replied with an offer to grant an extension to the term of the MOU, to coincide with the end of the 2021-22 school year subject to several conditions.
- **May 18, 2021 (30)** – The Board directed the CAO to enter into an agreement with CDSS for an extension through June 30, 2022; and have the appropriate staff available to meet with all interested partners of the Academy on ways to expand the use of the Academy campus.
- **July 13, 2021 (6)** – The Board authorized the extension of the contract to operate the Academy through June 30, 2022.
- **December 3, 2021** – The Superior Court of California, San Diego County, issued a preliminary injunction restraining and enjoining the State from terminating New Alternatives' group home license for the group home located at the Academy, provided that New Alternatives continues to comply with the licensing standards currently in existence.
- **December 23, 2021** – CDSS lifted a condition in the MOU restricting new placements at the Academy.
- **January 25, 2022 (19)** – The Board took the following actions:
  - Approved continued operations at the Academy, as needed, to support the transition to a continuum of care multipurpose campus;
  - Authorized a competitive solicitation for Resource Family Homes and a Group Home at the campus;
  - Authorized a competitive solicitation for Specialty Mental Health Services for the Group Home at the campus;
  - Directed the CAO to develop a plan for utilizing the campus as a continuum of care multipurpose campus to serve youth in foster care and return to the San Diego

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County Board of Supervisors to bring forward recommendations for implementation and resource needs; and

- Directed the CAO to continue to explore options for a mixed-use campus for a combination of youth populations to include youth in foster care, youth at risk of entering foster care, unaccompanied minors, and youth interacting with the juvenile justice system; and to develop an implementation plan.

*Current SPA Contract*

The continued operations and Group Home programming at the Academy are critical in supporting trauma-informed transitions for youth remaining on campus, with minimal impact on their wellbeing, while working toward a transition to utilizing Resource Family Homes, which is one component in the continuum of diverse placement types planned for the multipurpose campus. The contract extension to operate the Academy authorized by the Board on July 13, 2021 (6) is set to expire on June 30, 2022. If today's action is approved and negotiations are successful, New Alternatives, Inc. will continue to provide the following operational services and programs to youth at the Academy up to March 31, 2023:

- Residential Education Services
  - Safe and nurturing board, care, and supervision in family-style homes;
  - Transportation as needed for academic, volunteer, employment, extra-curricular social and family activities;
  - Health and Wellness and therapeutic support;
  - Education support, tutoring, and linkage to special education services and advanced academic placement services as necessary; and
  - Trauma informed support during a transitional period as the campus is reimaged.
- San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN) Program
  - Intergenerational mentoring and community support; and
  - Guidance and life skills enrichment from older adults (“grandparents”) residing on campus.
- Independent Living Skills Program
  - Basic life skills training to prepare youth for a successful life as an independent adult; and
  - Self-sufficiency, work readiness, and technology literacy.

As of April 12, 2022, the current population of youth at the Academy is 41 given the MOU's restriction on new placements, which was lifted in December 2021. Of the 41 students, nine are anticipated to graduate high school in June 2022. Today's action requests the Board to authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to negotiate an amendment to the CWS contract #45216 with New Alternatives, Inc., to increase the contract amount and extend the contract term for 11 months from May 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023 for residential/education services, Independent Living Skills, and the Intergenerational Program. Additionally, of equal importance to the health and wellbeing of youth at the Academy, is the provision of specialty mental health programming. Today's action also requests the Board to authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to negotiate an amendment to the HHSA, Behavioral

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Health Services (BHS) contract with New Alternatives, Inc., contract #45369, to extend the contract term for nine months from July 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023 for the continued provision of specialty mental health services to youth at the Academy. The BHS contract with New Alternatives, Inc. for specialty mental health services is set to expire on June 30, 2022.

The extension of these contracts is necessary to ensure the County provides placement stability and the continuity of specialty mental health services to youth currently placed at the Academy while procuring new services in support of a reimagined campus that extends the successful outcomes of the Academy to a wider population of youth. Additionally, the amendments will allow for new referrals for eligible youth that can immediately benefit from the current programming at the Academy and successfully transition to an appropriate placement type provided at the planned multipurpose campus. Today's action also provides for the additional time required for comprehensive planning and identification of resources in direct alignment with Board actions taken on January 25, 2022 (19) to develop an implementation plan for a continuum of care multipurpose campus to serve youth in foster care as well as a mixed-use campus for a combination of youth populations.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action to authorize an amendment to the contract with New Alternatives, Inc., to extend the contract for nine months from July 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023, supports the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability (Economy), Equity (Health) and Community (Quality of Life) by providing comprehensive services and supports focused on improving equitable outcomes for children and youth interacting with the child welfare system and ensuring transparency and open government to best serve the needs of our diverse communities.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A