

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS COMMITTEE
Meeting Notes – March 2, 2016 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Introductions and Warm-Up Exercise

Rochelle Trochtenberg welcomed members and asked everyone to introduce themselves and then share something that happened to them in the past three months since we were all together. Themes for the activities ranged from travel to exciting places, receiving awards, success with work and school projects, meeting famous people, welcoming a foster child into the family, and, sadly, several situations that required medical or dental care. Of course the prize for the best story went to Rochelle herself as she moves to Sacramento to assume the California Ombudsperson for Foster Care position.

Transition from Council meeting – what stood out for you as most relevant for the work of the Council and this Committee

Committee members commented that the morning meeting had been “terrific,” noting particularly the progress made on understanding the issues related to psychotropic medications. Also noteworthy was the Education Toolkit 2.0 and the involvement of youth and caregivers on the Council. There was concern about the seeming lack of progress with the Out-of-County Mental Health services work.

Education Rights Holders

Paige led a discussion on the issues related to the current Education Rights Holder practices. She raised the question of how foster parents can get access to school records necessary to support the educational success of youth in their care if they are not the Education Rights Holder. She noted that the Stuart Foundation that is holding a convening in two weeks on this issue. She suggested that the Child Welfare Council, via this Committee, might want to issue guidance as well and asked for thoughts about improving education rights holder policies and practice.

Judge Edwards suggested that there could be two education rights holders approved by a court order. There was concern about this idea in that the school would have trouble keeping track. Another idea was for foster parents to have carte blanche approval, but the downside to this approach would be that it would create disincentive for the school to actively find out who the education rights holders are and engage them.

The need for education rights owners and judges to be trained was identified. Cheryl pointed out that caregivers should always have education rights; California is the only state that appoints one for a child. At a minimum, there should be a provision that a caregiver can always enroll a child in school and a standing order that caregivers always have access to certain key education information regarding youth in their care. Joy raised the question about what happens when youth move; how do they get a new education rights holder? While not answering the question, it was agreed that this was an area to be addressed.

Paige summarized an approach to the work based on the discussion: Break the effort into three parts:

1. Consider age of child when selecting education rights holder.
2. Work with Judicial Council on changes to current law and practice for selecting education rights holders.
3. Determine what group home administrators should and should not have in the way of education rights holders.

Paige laid out the issues identified so far that need to be addressed as a starting point for developing guidance and model policies:

- Should there be different levels of education rights, such as access to information vs. decision-maker?
- What information must a caregiver have?
- To get the courts involved we need to raise the level of attention to the problems and work with children’s attorneys and have recommendations regarding what the law should say.
- Is the Child and Family Team an effective venue for selecting the education rights holder?
 - Trish commented that the core elements of CFTs vary and need to be flexible depending on the situation, e.g., education-related mental health services; it is critical that the right people must be at the meetings.
 - Marsha commented that in Level 14 Group Homes she has had a difficult time getting the county Child Welfare Worker to the CFT meetings.
- How do we keep the biological parent involved, especially if he/she is reluctant to share education rights?

- There should be mandated training for education rights holders.
- Identify what education records exist and who should have access to them.

Paige recommended that the work group should develop guidance for schools, courts, and caregivers. Work group members are Paige Fern Chan, Ken Berrick, Marsh Lewis-Akeem, Andrea Cammann, Emily Higgs, Jill Rowland, Vanessa Hernandez, Joy Anderson, Michelle Traiman, Michelle Lustig, Molly Dunn, and Lori-anne Elinsky. Cherie is going to ask a CASA from Yolo County to join the group. Others who are interested should let Sylvia know.

Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care

Cherie and Sylvia attended the first CDSS Healthy Sexual Development Work Group meeting on February 25th. Our report and recommendations will be incorporated into work plan, including the CCL regulations to implement the new “Responsible and Prudent Parent Standard.” It was noted that all parents have difficulties in discussing intimate relationships with their children and guiding them to make positive choices, and that foster parents often are reluctant to broach the topic out of “fear of CCL.” It is important that all youth and caregivers know and understand the Foster Child Bill of Rights. We should not be penalizing children for sexual behavior. As requirements for the Resource Family Approval are developed as part of the Continuum of Care Reform initiative, they should address this topic as well.

Housing and Runaway/Homeless Youth

Paul announced that CDSS has a work group on this issue to and that the lobbyist for his agency is participating on it. There is a federal memo that says all states should issues guidance through their child welfare agencies. Some counties have agreements with Homeless Youth Shelters, but CCL is questioning whether this is acceptable based on residential care regulations. CDSS has clarified that shelters that are licensed for runaway and homeless youth will not fall under the criteria for Short Term Residential Treatment Centers. Clearly, youth shelters have a role in the solution to runaway and homeless youth. There are some agencies that specialize in services to homeless youth, such as WestCoast. The work group will meet by conference call in about three weeks.

Work Plan Update

See attached.

Wrap up

Rochelle thanked Committee members for their participation.

SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Item	Action Steps	Point Person
Education Workgroup	1. Cherie to ask a Yolo County CASA if she would like to be a member of the work group and let Sylvia know.	Cherie
	2. Any one not listed as a member of the work group in the minutes and who wishes to join, please let Sylvia know.	Sylvia
	3. Paige will take the lead on drafting a work plan based on the discussion.	Paige
Supporting Health Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care	Continue to participate on CDSS work group	
Housing and Runaway/Homeless Youth	Follow progress of CDSS work group on this issue	Paul
	Schedule conference call in about three weeks ((week of 3/28/16)	Sylvia