

**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**  
**CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting Notes – December 9, 2015 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Introductions and Warm-Up Exercise**

Co-Chairs Gordon Jackson and Rochelle Trochtenberg welcomed members, and Gordon asked everyone to introduce themselves and share a “soothing” memory of the season as an antidote to the violence in the world.

**Santa Clara County Priority Employment Policy**

David Ambroz provided historical context for this topic, informing Committee members that the original focus of the Priority Access Task Force, dating back to 2008, was priority employment for foster youth, based on youth stories backed by data that indicate there is an absence of effort to address the career and employment issues that face youth in care. Proactive career development, employment opportunities and extending foster care services beyond 18 are fundamental in establishing a successful future for youth in care.

In 2006, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors established a policy that former foster youth would be given an opportunity to secure employment with the County. The policy creates a special application process for benefitted, entry level positions with the County. Those hired enter as unclassified and receive full health benefits; after three months of successful employment, the youth can become permanent. The policy and practice have been well received. Since its inception nine years ago:

- ✓ 27 youth have been hired.
  - 19 have been promoted.
  - 3 are in the same entry level job.
  - 3 were terminated.
  - 2 resigned.

Over time, the program has been expanded to include twenty-two entry-level classifications, representing more than one thousand entry-level positions across the county. Santa Clara County was honored with a top award from the California State Association of Counties for this Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program from among 260 entries throughout the state.

David and Judge Len Edwards are advocating for the CDSYT Committee to recommend that the full Child Welfare Council endorse the expansion of the Santa Clara EFY Employment Program to all governmental bodies including cities, counties and the state.

Committee members then held a discussion on the proposal. Carol Brown asked about the age of eligibility, and David said the program could be available to youth who leave foster care at 18 or to youth leaving extended foster care up to age 21. Cherie Schroeder informed the group that Yolo County has a presentation on “livable wages” that could inform a proposal. Vanessa Hernandez suggested we ask Santa Clara County if they could be available for technical assistance. She also pointed out that the “Partial Credit” Work Group model could also work well for this topic in that the Committee/Council developed an issue brief, endorsed a recommendation and other organizations secured funding to do the work to make it a reality.

Rochelle asked about the application process and pointed out that it could be different for counties that hire their own employees versus counties that hire through the State Merit System. Len said he would follow up to find out about the process used in Santa Clara County. Jane Tabor Bane suggested that counties be incentivized to hire former foster youth, citing the example of a program where companies hiring people re-entering the community from prison or jail did not have to pay Social Security taxes for a year. She also suggested that the Committee participate in the Aspen Institute’s Partnership for Well-Being event to be held in June 2016, which will look at how to support youth who are looking for jobs or enrolling in school; U.C. Davis has funds to support attendance by

former foster youth. Molly asked for information on the contact person, and Len said he would find out who the Santa Clara County contact is.

Trish Gonzalez suggested that the Committee compile examples of what would be considered “entry level” jobs. Len said he would follow up and get this information. Trish also raised the question about support services for the youth to help them deal with challenges to keeping the job, and Len said that these services are provided through AB 12 funds, not by a separate county-run program. Vanessa reported that she discovered that Texas has an Employment Preference for Former Foster Youth Code for all government jobs in the state, *Texas Government Code 672*, and the language can be found at: [Texas Code 672](#). The implementation guidance from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services may be found at:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/Transitional\\_Living/employment.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/employment.asp) .

The Texas Workforce Commission also issued the following guidance:

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/programs/employment-service-guide-d-300-priority-service> .

Gordon asked for volunteers to serve on a Priority Employment for Foster Youth work group, and the following agreed to serve:

- David Ambroz
- Len Edwards
- Vincent Bartle
- Jane Tabor Bane (offers expertise on county hiring processes)
- Gordon Jackson

Sylvia will connect the work group members so that they can prepare a policy paper and recommendations for presentation to the CDSYT Committee and then full Child Welfare Council.

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

Several Committee members commented on the Family Reunification Documentary that was shown at the Council meeting. Carol said she liked the comments offered by Carroll Schroeder who said that the film was useful in portraying what family reunification cases really look like, not what we’d like them to look like in that it showed:

1. The complexity of challenges facing families.
2. The vulnerability of parents and children.
3. The enormous number of people involved in these cases and the problems inherent in trying to coordinate efforts.
4. The desire on everybody’s part to get things right.
5. That there is no silver bullet that will fix everything right now.

Cherie shared that she thought it was a great meeting and that, in addition to showing what parents go through, the Family Reunification video could have also offered the perspective of what children go through. She thought the film underscored the need for judges and attorneys to have an understanding of child development and mental health. She thought the technique of flashing the court reports against what was really happening was very powerful. Ken Berrick noted that there were many lost opportunities for interventions that could have been helpful to the parents, such as providing transportation and support in navigating the multiple systems they must access in order to carry out their case plans.

Len reminded Committee members about Justice Raye’s comment that “when it gets to my desk (Appellate Court), very little can be done,” thus underscoring the need for prevention. Jane pointed out that Parent Partners could be helpful to parents with Reunification plans, but hiring them is difficult because they often don’t pass required

background checks due to histories of child welfare involvement, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and incarceration.

Rochelle raised an issue regarding the use of the term “tough love,” which was the title of the documentary, because of its association with interventions that can be harsh and ineffective. The point was also raised that Council members should be trained on trauma-informed interventions and resiliency building, and it was noted that Dr. Nadine Burke has an excellent presentation on these topics. Finally, there was a suggestion that the documentary would have been more helpful if there had been a better introduction to the purpose of showing it.

### **Education**

Paige Fern Chan informed Committee members that the Education Work Group was looking at issues related to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and have chosen to focus on the issue of how to ensure foster children’s education is not compromised when the caregiver and education right’s holder is not the same person, including situations where the foster parent does not know what the education rights holder set in place for a foster child. The work group members believe this is a specific area of need that they can create guidance.

Molly Dunn noted that there may be efforts to address this topic going on within the California Departments of Education and Social Services. Also, there is a coalition that asked the California School Boards Association to develop guidance. It was noted that the forthcoming regulations to implement the Responsible and Prudent Parent Standard should include this topic. Trisha Gonzalez informed the group that Fresno County gets around the problem by issuing multiple passwords to persons who need to be involved in developing and supporting a foster child’s education plan. It was noted that birth parents and staff at Short Term Residential Treatment Centers would also need to have access to the plan.

Ken pointed out that this problem only applies to foster children. In other situations, such as divorced parents, step-parents, multiple people can have access to the education planning process. Judges’ “best practice” seems to be awarding parents the education rights. Since the law is not clear, the work group would like to develop proposed guidance. The next steps are for work group members Paige, Andrea, Emily, Ken, Molly, and others that Molly involves to meet via conference call and develop an action plan. Sylvia will coordinate the arrangements.

(The Work Group remained with the Committee for the meeting, rather than breaking out as originally planned.)

### **Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care**

Rochelle asked Committee members for feedback on the report presented to the full Council in the morning and the two recommendations, one for the work group to participate in the Community Care Licensing Regulation (CCL) process for guidance on implementing the Responsible and Prudent Parenting Standard and the other to develop an issue brief that focuses on supporting healthy sexual development of LGBTQ youth in foster care. Len responded that while sexual indent is an important topic, the issue of sexual behavior should be the focus of the issue brief, including how foster parents should discuss sexual development and behavior with youth in their care.

Jane pointed out that the important thing is to ensure youth in foster care have *someone* to talk with regarding sexual development and behavior, and that person does not necessarily have to be the foster parent. Vanessa said the current system is reactive because of CCL requirements that cause foster parents to be concerned about being cited if they discuss sexual development and behavior with youth in their care. She also pointed out that whether the case plan is Family Reunification or Permanency Planning could make a difference in the role of the foster parent.

Len stated he believes the federal Prudent Parent Standard is not very clear or helpful, and that California has the opportunity to provide strong guidance; he also pointed out that foster parents could ask for a court order if they wanted assurance regarding their role in supporting the healthy sexual development of youth in foster care. Trisha

emphasized the need for training, suggesting that foster parents and child welfare workers be trained together so that they get the same message.

Gordon urged that the work group identify ten or so critical issues related to the topic, beyond support for LGBTQ youth, such as masturbation, contraception, religion, and dating. Next steps for the workgroup are to (1) provide input to the CCL Regulation process and (2) identify topics to cover the scope of the problem, and then start with the LGBTQ topic.

### **California Youth Connection Policy Agenda**

Vanessa Hernandez shared the results of a California Youth Connection (CYC) Retreat where the policy topics and recommendations for 2016 were developed, as follows:

1. Problematic Adoptions – CYC members identified the need to resolve problems with adoption, such as failed adoptions, rescinded guardianships, and adoptions where sibling groups were separated without maintaining connections, as a priority. CYC proposes a policy wherein a written agreement is developed and signed before a Termination of Parental Rights Order is made so that potential barriers to successful adoption can be addressed before they occur. Vincent noted that transportation could be a barrier to getting the parties together. Paul noted that he had heard that not all older youth want to be adopted and youth voice should be included in adoption planning. Trisha pointed out that children who might be born to a mother after her other children have been adopted should be considered as part of the adoption planning as part of maintaining sibling connections.
2. Gaps in Extended Foster Care – CYC members identified gaps in “AB 12” implementation that should be addressed, such as the need for respite housing or hotel vouchers pending approval of AB 12 housing. Also, Child Welfare Workers need guidance related to placing older youth successfully. Paul Curtis cautioned against the use of hotel vouchers because they could lead to unsafe conditions for youth. Emily Higgs noted that at THP+ hearings, youth are bumped down on the waiting list for housing if they are not homeless.
3. Increased Education Supports – CYC members identified the need for youth to be supported in attaining educational success not just in K – 12 but also with becoming ready to attend universities, and they will develop recommended policies in this area.
4. Social Worker Accountability – CYC members also plan to submit recommendations to ensure that social workers are held accountable for serving youth as required by law, regulations, policies, and standards of practice.

### **Work Plan Update**

Paul Curtis advocated for addressing the issue of homeless youth to be added to the work plan. He pointed out that there is generally inadequate response by child welfare when youth run away from foster care. Counties vary in their responses to runaway foster youth, and protocols are needed. He referenced the forthcoming All County Letter and All County Information Notice from CDSS that addresses this issue for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC), which could serve as a model for more encompassing guidance. He also suggested that gathering information on County best practices (such as Fresno’s Outreach Worker) and recommendations from CYC could inform recommendations. A survey of youth and Counties (via CWDA) would also provide excellent information. Marsha Lewis-Akeem said it is important to talk to youth after they run away to find out the reason, which often can be remedied so that the youth don’t need to run away again. Trish pointed out that youth shelters don’t want to accept foster youth and there are challenges when youth are homeless outside the county where their dependency or probation case is located.

Committee members agreed that the topic should be added to the work plan, and Joy, Rochelle and Paul will meet via conference call to discuss next steps; Sylvia to coordinate. NOTE: after the meeting, there was an informal discussion among Rochelle, Joy, Paul, Vanessa, Andrea, and Emily, and they decided to combine this topic with the Housing work group due to the overlap in subject matter. The focus on homelessness would be on foster youth

under the age of 18 (both child welfare and probation), and coordination would occur with the John Burton Foundation for youth 18 and older.

Committee members reviewed the work plan and decided that the item on the role of the Ombudsman could be amended to identify the intersection of the Ombudsman’s role with the role of the Child Welfare Council because the Council was formed, in part, to look a system issues and the Ombudsman’s focus is at the individual level.

**Wrap up**

Gordon reminded Committee members that the next meeting will be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Judicial Council offices in San Francisco. Agenda items will include Drug Courts, Out-of-County Mental Health, Santa Clara County’s Priority Employment model, and runaway foster youth.

Gordon closed by asking everyone to share reactions from the day. Comments include passion for the work, but headache from a full day of focusing on the issues; appreciation for the diversity of perspectives; being impressed by the data presentation by Daniel Webster in the morning and his handling of questions from Council members; and the need to include more youth, foster parent and birth parent voice in Council and Committee meetings. Gordon suggested that at the end of every item on the Council agenda, the Co-Chairs specifically ask for feedback from youth, foster parents and birth parents. Vanessa and Sylvia will take this proposal to the Council’s Steering Committee for consideration. Rochelle and Gordon thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

**SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

Item	Action Steps	Point Person
Santa Clara County Priority Employment Policy	1. Ask Santa Clara County if they can be available for Technical Assistance.	Judge Len Edwards
	2. Find out what the hiring process is in County-run HR systems and in Merit System Counties	Judge Len Edwards (County HR) Jane Tabor Bane (Merit System)
	3. Get copy of Yolo County “Livable Wage” presentation	Cherie Schroeder
	4. Get information on Aspen Institute’s Partnership for Well-being conference to be held in June 2016.	Jane Tabor Bane
	5. Secure U.C. Davis funding to support attendance former foster youth.	Jane Tabor Bane
	6. Compile information on what constitutes an “entry level job”	Judge Len Edwards
	7. Recommend use of AB 12 funding to provide support services to youth hired under a “priority employment” policy	David Ambroz, Judge Len Edwards, Vanessa Hernandez, Joy Anderson
	8. Review the Texas Priority Employment policy to determine if some or all if might be recommended for California	David Ambroz, Judge Len Edwards, Vanessa Hernandez, Joy Anderson
	9. Use the “Partial Credits” work group process as a model: prepare issue brief and recommendations; seek organizations to take the lead on implementing the recommendations.	David Ambroz, Judge Len Edwards, Vanessa Hernandez, Joy Anderson
	10. Get information on how the program that incentivized the hiring of people who coming out of prison or jail via suspending Social Security contributions for a year was set up and the success and challenges that were experienced.	Jane Tabor Bane

Item	Action Steps	Point Person
	11. Participate in the Aspen Institute’s Partnership for Well-being conference to be held in June 2016; use U.C. Davis funding to support attendance former foster youth.	Jane Tabor Bane
	12. Prepare issue brief with recommendations to the full Council	David Ambroz and Judge Len Edwards
	13. Connect work group members identified above via a conference call	Sylvia Pizzini
Education	1. Create action plan for report and recommendation re: Educational Rights Holder	Paige Chan Fern, Andrea Cammann, Emily Higgs, Ken Berrick, Molly Dunn( and/or other representatives from the Alliance for Children’s Rights)
	2. Set up conference call with all work group members: : Paige Fern Chan, Ken Berrick, Andrea Cammann, Emily Higgs, Vanessa Hernandez, Molly Dunn, Lori-anne Elinsky, Michelle Traidman, Michelle Lustig	Sylvia Pizzini
Supporting Health Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care	1. Establish process for giving input to CCL regulations on Responsible and Prudent Parent Standard	All work group members: Rochelle Trochtenberg, Vanessa Hernandez, Joy Anderson, Marsha Lewis-Akeem, Andrea Cammann, Emily Higgs, Fernando Sandoval
	2. Identify topics that cover the scope of the problem	All work group members
	3. Prepare issue brief on supporting healthy sexual development of LGBTQ youth in foster care	All work group members
	4. Connect work group members via conference call	Sylvia Pizzini
Housing and Homeless Foster Youth	1. Create work plan that includes best practices for working with youth who run away from foster care as well as for ensuring that foster youth and non-minor dependents have safe housing and supports.	Paul Curtis, Rochelle Trochtenberg, Joy Anderson, Vanessa Hernandez
	2. Set up conference call with work plan	Sylvia Pizzini
Promoting Youth, Foster Parent and Parent Voice at Council meetings	1. Take the proposal to the Council Steering Committee regarding asking the Council Co-Chairs to specifically call for youth, parent and foster parent comments on all agenda items at the full Council meetings	Sylvia Pizzini and Vanessa Hernandez