

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS COMMITTEE
Junipero Serra State Office Building – 320 West 4th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013
Meeting Notes – June 3, 2015 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

○ **Introductions and Warm-up Exercise**

Gordon and Rochelle welcomed Committee members and Gordon asked participants to introduce themselves and then share what the name of a chapter would be if they wrote a book about themselves. Members came up with very intriguing chapter names that both enlightened and entertained the group.

○ **Minutes of 03/04/2014**

The minutes of the March 4, 2015 Committee meeting were accepted as written.

○ **Debrief of full Council meeting**

Comments on the morning's meeting included:

- Vanessa underscored one of the findings from the “Imaginary Achievement Gap” study, noting that the school expulsion rates are particularly alarming.
- David said he believes the Council is “chalking up victories” because of the work underway to address longstanding issues in child welfare.
- Michelle observed that the Council is making things happen, taking action.
- Andrea pointed out that the Book of Proceedings from the Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care Gathering contains many specific recommendations on how to implement the recommendations.
- Sylvia confirmed that the next steps for the Supporting Healthy Sexual Development Work Group will be setting up a working session with the Family and Children's Services Division and Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services, where the specific findings can be incorporated into implementation plans.
- Rochelle offered observations that not all foster children want to be returned home and that caregiver training is sometimes does not provide clear guidance on how to support individual youth.
- Cheryl built on this statement, by sharing that the foster parent often knows more about the youth than the social worker, and at the same time foster parent training should be improved.

○ **Education Work Group**

Paige updated Committee Members on the preliminary plans for the Education Work Group, prior to the group breaking off for a meeting in a separate room.

Paige reported that the group had identified some common themes related to educational progress of youth in foster care, e.g., School Stability, School Mobility/Transportation, School Placement, School Push Out, High School Graduation, Access to Records, and the Education Rights Holders/Role of the Caregivers.

Some barriers identified that Prevent Foster Youth accessing Education include trauma, lack of a shared vision and mission, no agreement on meaningful metrics for people to address, lack of clarification relating to who is responsible for system collaboration, need for a bridge to higher education, and stigma associated with being a foster youth.

○ **Housing Work Group**

Rochelle, Vanessa and Vincent distributed information received from officials at the California Department of Housing and Community Development and also shared information from their experiences as youth in foster care and work with youth in care. There are many federal housing programs which might offer opportunities for former

foster youth, but more research is required. At the state and county level, Transitional Housing programs are sometimes available depending on county priorities and resources allocated for this purpose.

Vincent reported on a program for former foster youth who are students and UC Berkeley, which includes multiple support services in addition to housing. Vanessa said that she has worked with youth who are not able to take advantage of Transitional Housing due to waiting lists, noting that there is a disconnect between what is advertised as available and the reality of the housing shortfall. Cherie observed that youth's participation in the Independent Living Program is optional and that every county runs its program differently. Trish Gonzalez described the program in Fresno where there is collaboration with Rotary and Service Clubs.

Access to computers and information technology was also brought up as an issue. For example, youth placed in group homes are often not allowed access to the internet which could offer support in learning independent living skills. Further, some rural counties are still using dial-up which limits access.

Vincent proposed that the work group advocate for the Guardian Scholars model to be implemented at every Community College, every campus of the California State University system and every campus of the University of California System. This program is now available for former foster youth at 33 of these higher education institutions. It is a comprehensive program with a goal of supporting former foster youth in their efforts to gain a university, community college or trade school education. Guardian Scholars students receive:

- Full Financial Aid Package - grants and scholarship packages cover tuition and living expenses.
- Housing – priority for campus housing and availability of year-round housing, either on or off campus.
- Academic Advisement – assistance with class selection & registration.
- Employment Services, Mentoring and Career Counseling – job placement, shadowing and advising.
- Personal Guidance, Counseling, Tutoring – regular contact with a consistent counselor to develop and monitor an education plan.
- Supplemental Support Services – child care, transportation help, book and supply vouchers etc.

The program leverages the expertise and resources of the private sector and public agencies to achieve “significant synergies” to support students effectively and cost efficiently. Together, academic institutions, foundations, public agencies and private citizens create a powerful team dedicated to assisting deserving foster youth achieve their dreams of an education, realize true independence, and reach their full potential. The schools provide dedicated program directors to coordinate services and meet regularly with the students. The privately funded catalyst organization raises additional funds for scholarships, housing and emergency services, as well as coordinating social events and mentoring.

Committee members agreed that the next steps should include: (1) developing a problem statement; (2) creating a “Roadmap” for former foster youth that can guide them in securing housing; (3) gaining a better understanding of how federal housing programs can be leveraged for use by former foster youth; and (4) exploring how the Guardian Scholars Program can be expanded to higher education sites that currently do not have a program.

○ **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for Foster Youth**

David Ambroz introduced Lindsay Gilchrist and Greg Srolestar who made a presentation on a proposal that is gaining support in Congress and the federal administration: Earned Income Tax Credit for youth formerly in foster care, ages 18 through 25. The proposed plan is intended to address issues such as homelessness and low median income among former foster youth. The details regarding eligibility and implementation have been worked out and presented in a concept paper distributed to Committee members. The cost was estimated to be \$16,800,000 out of the \$125 million total cost of the Earned Income Tax Credit. A white paper on the topic prepared by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative would provide the basis for legislative language if Congress decides to move forward.

○ **Santa Clara County Priority Employment Policy**

Jackie Wong and Marc Philpart presented policy findings developed for the California Opportunity Youth Network that encompasses employment for youth in foster care. PolicyLink and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) developed this proposal for California opportunity youth collaboratives as part of a larger initial effort to define a statewide policy agenda and action plan.

Opportunity youth (OY), also commonly referred to as disconnected youth, are young men and women between the ages of 14 and 26 that come from low-income, underserved, and disadvantaged communities. They disproportionately include youth that are homeless, not in school or employed, or involved with the child welfare or justice systems. There are currently more than 6 million OY in the United States. Building on the White House Council for Community Solutions' recommendations to the President for fostering cross-sector collaboratives that put OY on the path to prosperity, the Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions has established the PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works (www.policylink.org). The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund (OYIF) provides support to 21 communities to demonstrate how this collective impact, place- and policy-based approach can led to improved outcomes for OY. In California alone, five communities – more than in any other state – have taken up the charge to improve educational and career outcomes for disconnected youth. Leaders of the five California collaboratives and their supporters have agreed that a high degree of collaboration among these communities can lead to improved outcomes for all youth in California. The five sites that constitute the California Opportunity Youth Network (COYN) are:

- Del Norte County: Wild Rivers Community Foundation, Del Norte County and the Adjacent Tribal Lands Opportunity Youth Initiative
- Los Angeles: Alliance for Children's Rights, Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative
- Oakland: Urban Strategies Council, Oakland-Alameda County Opportunity Youth Initiative
- San Diego: San Diego Youth Development Office, San Diego Youth Opportunity Pathways Initiative (PATHWAYS)
- San Jose: Kids in Common & Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, Santa Clara County Opportunity Youth Partnership

The opportunity for collaboration is hastened by the need to take advantage of timely policy and systems change opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and California's AB 86 (Adult Education Reform) in order to ensure the collaboratives reach the scale necessary to improve outcomes for their target populations. In response to this need, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation requested that PolicyLink and NCYL draft a policy agenda and action plan based on two issues of interest: jobs and education. These recommendations are intended for COYN sites to reach scale and broaden impact, as well as to expand the quantity and quality of services available to OY through policy advocacy and increased local and statewide collaboration. Findings from these conversations were then analyzed for common themes, key concerns, and perceived challenges in the field, and recommendations were created to address them. Marc and Jackie are now going to focus on building stronger partnerships and more collaborative networks at the five California sites. They will be creating regular status reports, which can be shared with the Committee.

○ **Over-Medication Work Group**

Bill reported that Anna Johnson is still working on a document that compares and contrasts the provisions of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the Katie A Settlement, and the Quality Improvement Project (QIP), and she will share it at the next Committee meeting.

○ **Wrap up**

Gordon thanked Committee members for their participation and reminded everyone that the next meeting will be on September 2nd at CDSS in Sacramento.