



# California Child Welfare Council 2012 – 13 Annual Report

July 2013





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### CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FISCAL YEAR 2012-13

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2. Hon. Vance Raye, Co-Chair	Administrative Presiding Justice, Third District Court of Appeal
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5. Ken Berrick	President and CEO Seneca Family of Agencies
6. Dana Blackwell	Senior Director, Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
7. Hon. Stacy Boulware Eurie	Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, Superior Court of California, Sacramento County
8. Sheila Boxley	President and CEO, Prevent Child Abuse California
9. Philip Browning	Director, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
10. Michael Cunningham	Acting Director, California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
11. Paul Curtis	Executive Director, California Coalition for Youth
12. Leah Davis	Parent Leader, California State Parent Team
13. Marlena Davis	Child Welfare Policy Assistant, Assn. for Community Human Service Agencies
14. Terri Delgadillo	Director, California Department of Developmental Services
15. Toby Douglas	Director, California Department of Health Care Services
16. Hon. Leonard Edwards (Ret.)	Retired Judge, Superior Court of California, Santa Clara County; AOC Volunteer
17. Hon. Susan Talamantes Eggman, Ph.D.	Member, California State Assembly
18. Patrick Gardner	Director, Young Minds Advocacy Project
19. Karen Grace-Kaho	Foster Care Ombudsman, California Department of Social Services
20. David Green	Social Worker, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
21. William (Bill) Grimm	Senior Attorney, National Center for Youth Law
22. Leslie Heimov	Executive Director, Children's Law Center of Los Angeles
23. Howard Himes	Director, Fresno County Department of Social Services
24. Kathryn Icenhower, Ph.D.	Executive Director, SHIELDS for Families, Inc.
25. Rollin Ives	Special Advisor, California Department of Health Care Services
26. Gordon Jackson	Assistant Superintendent, California Department of Education
27. Hon. Steven Jahr	Administrative Director of the Courts
28. Phillip Kader	Chief Probation Officer, Contra Costa County
29. Don Kingdon, Ph.D.	Deputy Director/Small County Liaison, California Mental Health Directors Assn.
30. Teri Kook	Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation
31. Will Lightbourne	Director, California Department of Social Services
32. Hon. Carol Liu	Member, California State Senate
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35. Susan Manzi	Board President, Youth in Mind
36. Frank Mecca	Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association of California
37. Linda Michalowski	Vice Chancellor, California Community Colleges
38. Mike Minor	Director, Division of Juvenile Justice, Calif. Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation
39. Hon. Michael Nash	Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County
40. Barbara Needell, Ph.D.	Research Specialist, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley
41. Crys O'Grady	Former Foster Youth
42. Don Pickens	Parent Leader, California State Parent Team
43. Cory Pohley	Executive Director, California Court Appointed Special Advocates
44. Charlene Reid	Director, Tehama County Department of Social Services
45. Carroll Schroeder	Executive Director, California Alliance of Child and Family Services
46. Karen Stapf Walters	Executive Director, California State Board of Education
47. Hon. Darrell Steinberg	President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
48. Hon. Mark Stone	Member, California State Assembly
49. Kim Suderman	Director, Yolo County Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services
50. Rochelle Trochtenberg	Youth Organizer, Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration
51. Hon. Claudette White	Judge, Quechan Tribal Court, Fort Yuma Indian Reservation

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# Introduction

The California Child Welfare Council (Council) was established by the Child Welfare Leadership and Accountability Act of 2006 (Welfare and Institutions Code Sections 16540 – 16545) as a statewide multidisciplinary advisory body. It is responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and the courts that serve the children and youth in the child welfare and foster care systems. It is also charged with monitoring and reporting on the extent to which child welfare and foster care programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care.

During fiscal year 2012-13, the Council considered a number of critical issues, including:

- Emerging developments in data integration that can provide child welfare social workers with essential information to work effectively with families.
- Opportunities for improved services to California's families that are or are at risk of being in the child welfare system that could be available through federal child welfare finance reform.

*Since its inception six years ago, the Council has focused on developing collaboration, process improvement, and effective partnerships to meet the needs of children and families.*

The State of California is responsible for ensuring that foster children and youth receive mandated services provided by several state departments. However, in the Council's authorizing statute the Legislature acknowledged that the services available to meet their basic needs were insufficient. The statute declared that statewide leadership and coordination across departments is essential to addressing poor outcomes for these foster children and youth, and to providing them with critically needed support and services at the local level. It further noted that the child welfare system – including the state, the counties, and the courts – suffered from the lack of a cohesive structure, state leadership, and communication between agencies serving foster children and youth.

Since its inception six years ago, the Council has risen to this challenge. It has focused on developing collaboration, process improvement, and effective partnerships to meet the needs of children and families in the child welfare system, who are typically experiencing multiple challenges.

In addition, the Council received recommendations for significant policy improvements in three key areas:

- **Prioritization:** ensuring access to services for parents who have a court-ordered plan to reunify with their children who have been placed in foster care.
- **Partial Credit:** awarding academic credits to foster children who transfer schools mid-semester.
- **Commercially Sexually Exploited Children:** serving victims, many of whom are or were former foster youth, as well as preventing victimization.

Each of these topics is described in detail below.

The Council's Committees and Task Forces addressed specific issues to improve California's responses to children and families in need. Their accomplishments, challenges and plans for fiscal year 2013-14 are also presented in this report.

# Background

The Council meets quarterly under the leadership of Co-Chairs Diana Dooley, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Vance Raye, Administrative Presiding Justice of the Third District Court of Appeal. The Council is structured to encourage participation by Council members and all other stakeholders in the child welfare system both during and in between Council meetings through four standing committees:

- **Prevention and Early Intervention Committee** – identifies services and support systems that keep families from entering the child welfare system.
- **Permanency Committee** – identifies and removes barriers that keep children in foster care so that they do not grow up in temporary homes but rather have permanent, nurturing families.
- **Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee** – identifies ways that all foster children’s health, mental health, educational and social development needs can be met and ways that older foster youth can be prepared for successful transitions to adulthood.
- **Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee** – identifies how data can be accessed across major child serving agencies to provide essential information to those involved in the care of foster children and to measure foster children’s outcomes from the services they receive.

Two groups provide guidance to the work of the Council:

- **Steering Committee** – advises Co-Chairs on issues to be addressed and on the formation of Council meeting agendas.
- **Parent and Youth Discussion Group** – promotes consumer voice in all deliberations by preparing before and debriefing after each Council meeting.

Three Task Forces studied cross-systems issues during the year:

- **Prioritization Task Force** – examines how foster children’s parents may receive priority access to services needed to have their children safely returned home.
- **Out-of-County Mental Health Services Task Force** – advocates for a system that ensures foster children’s access to mental health treatment is not compromised when they reside outside their county of court jurisdiction.
- **California Blue Ribbon Commission for Children in Foster Care Co-Membership Task Force** – through the seven Council members who are also members of the Blue Ribbon Commission, apprises Council members of the Blue Ribbon Commission’s activities so that they can participate in convenings of the Blue Ribbon Commission, collaborate on joint goals and projects, and be informed about new findings related to serving foster children.

At its June 2013 meeting, the Council added a fourth Task Force:

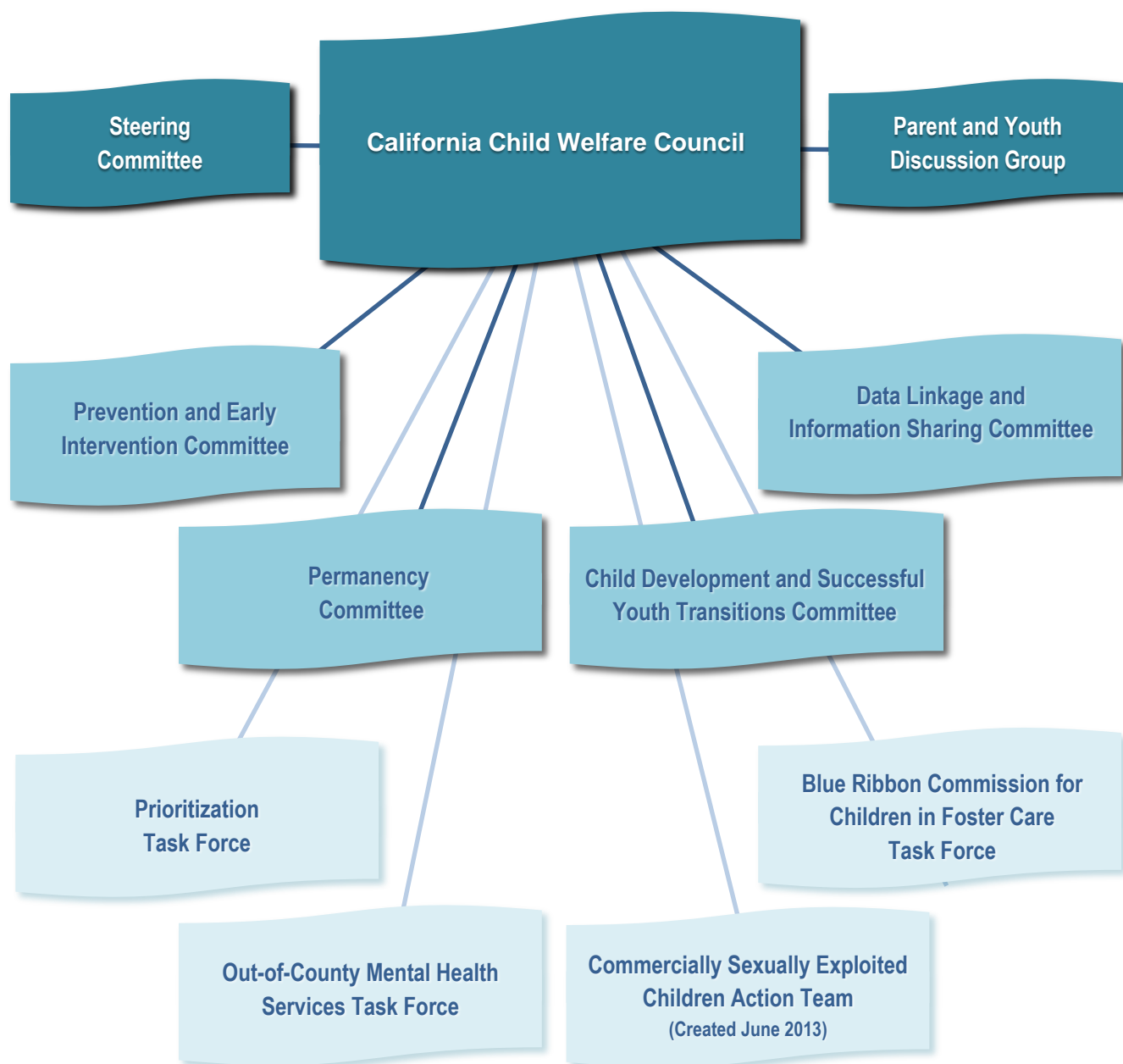
- **Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Action Team** – will be implementing the recommendations of the CSEC Work Group of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee.

The contributions of Council members and additional subject matter experts through the above structures have resulted in the achievements described in this Annual Report.

As required by statute, this report is respectfully submitted to the Governor, Legislature, Judicial Council and the public.



The following graphic depicts the structure of the Child Welfare Council.



# Accomplishments of the Child Welfare Council

At the quarterly meetings during 2012-2013, Council members were kept informed regarding significant child welfare policy initiatives underway and were provided updates on the status of work carried out through the committee and task force structures. Details regarding each meeting were captured in Discussion Highlights, which are available on the Council website. Issues that were considered include:

- Integration of child welfare data across multiple agencies.
- Federal child welfare finance reform.
- Commercially sexually exploited children.
- Prioritization of services for parents with a court-ordered plan to reunify with their children.
- Partial school credits for foster children who experience frequent moves from one school district to another.

## Data Integration

This topic was brought forward to the Council by the Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee. Erin Dalton, Deputy Director for Research and Evaluation, Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Department of Human Services, briefed the Council on data integration efforts in her county that give social workers information needed to determine what services should be prioritized for what clients, as well as supporting a culture of collaboration across agencies. The Allegheny County Data Warehouse stores data submitted by multiple agencies serving families and children for the following purposes:

- Improve Services to Clients
  - ✦ Avoid redundant information.
  - ✦ More timely delivery of services.
  - ✦ Holistic view of the client.

- Improve Workers' Effectiveness
  - ✦ Full view of data regarding clients' needs.
  - ✦ Ability to accurately match services to client needs.
  - ✦ Efficient use of workers' time (less paper, more use of electronic information, elimination of duplicate paperwork).
- Improve Ability to Manage and Administer Program Operations
  - ✦ Identification of duplication or gaps in services.
  - ✦ GIS mapping – better identification of geographic needs.
  - ✦ Management information to improve planning and allocation of resources.
  - ✦ Improved consolidation of reports – service trends, state and federal reporting, etc.
  - ✦ Better connection between services and fiscal systems.

Ms. Dalton showed some examples of:

- (1) How the data are used to inform social workers and policy makers about services received by parents and foster children.
- (2) The percentage of Pittsburgh Public School students who have involvement with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. Thorny issues persist in accessing drug and alcohol data because of federal confidentiality requirements, sharing detailed data with the courts and probation, and sharing data with schools.

She also noted that data sharing requires a culture change within the child welfare agency and among community service providers. Ongoing challenges include funding, maintenance of the Data Warehouse, correct use of the data and legal issues associated with confidentiality.

## Federal Child Welfare Finance Reform

Currently federal child welfare funding limits the ability to fund prevention and early intervention; it is primarily an entitlement to foster care services with small block grants for services to children living with birth parents. This topic was brought forward to the Council by the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee, which has been studying opportunities for savings from reducing the need for foster care being re-investing in community-based programs that serve families.

Three guest speakers from Casey Family Programs – Christine Calpin, Joo Yeun Chang and Joan Smith – informed the Council about how child welfare is financed currently, and what the issues are and what efforts in federal child welfare finance reform are under discussion. Some key points included:

- Title IV-E of the Social Security Act is the largest dedicated federal child welfare funding source (approximately 52% of federal child welfare funding). Initially this program was only for children living with a single parent or a relative. However in 1960, Louisiana expelled 23,000 children from AFDC because their homes were deemed "not suitable." The federal government declared that states could not simply ignore the needs of children living in households deemed to be unsuitable. Instead, the ruling required states to either:
  - (1) Provide appropriate services to make the home suitable, or
  - (2) Move the child to a suitable placement while continuing to provide financial support on behalf of the child.
- This funding later became Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)/Foster Care. AFDC was for children in their (mostly single parent) homes and AFDC/FC was for children out of their homes. While this made sense at the time, the legacy of AFDC has now outlived the AFDC program which was repealed in 1996, and replaced by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program.

The Title IV-E Program is limited in that it is:

- (1) Triggered when a child enters out-of-home care and does not align with larger federal policy goals of safety, permanency and well-being.
- (2) Tied to a non-existent federal program that results in a diminishing federal financial participation.
- (3) Based on the condition states must also provide certain protections to each child in foster care without regard to whether or not the child meets federal Title IV-E eligibility criteria.
- (4) Based on the further condition that states must meet additional federal requirements related to planning for and administering services to children and families.

Title IV-B of the Social Security Act is a much smaller child welfare funding source (approximately 5% of all federal child welfare funding) for services without regard to whether a child lives at home, lives in foster care, or previously lived in foster care.

The presenters noted that there is no clear consensus on what the reform should look like although numerous proposals have been floated (such as the one by the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care). They advocated for increased involvement of child welfare workers, families and children in policy development and concluded by stating that finance reform presents:

- **A vehicle for maintaining federal support –** The current structure results in fewer children being eligible for federal funding every year.
- **The potential to influence change -** Historically few states experimented with waivers. Today we have the opportunity to inform changes to the system, particularly if 50% or more of the states engage in a waiver.
- **An opportunity to send a message –** To reduce the need for children to be removed from their parents and remain in foster care, federal funding must include early intervention and family maintenance services.



## Commercially Sexually Exploited Children

This issue of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) was brought forward to the Council by the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee. In September 2011, a CSEC Work Group was formed to study the issue and explore the role that the Child Welfare Council could play in addressing this horrific and seemingly intransigent problem. Internationally, human trafficking is a \$32 billion per year industry, currently involving over 100,000 children in the United States, according to estimates by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas are rated as areas of “high intensity child prostitution” in the country. While the Council’s database does not collect information regarding commercial sexual exploitation of children who are in the child welfare system, studies have estimated that anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of victims of commercial sexual exploitation are or were formerly in foster care.

Commercially sexually exploited children are also the most likely to become clients of the agencies and courts who are represented on the Council. Law enforcement, probation, education, mental health, medical care and public health systems as well as nonprofit organizations currently serve these victims, but unfortunately, all too often in ways that are not coordinated nor philosophically aligned. Clearly, this is the type of problem that the Council was designed to address.

In March 2013, the CSEC Work Group released its report, *“Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California,”* including recommendations based on three key premises:

- (1) Many children involved in the child welfare system are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and an unknown number are being exploited.
- (2) Action by the child welfare system in collaboration with other child-serving agencies and organizations could prevent exploitation and aid victims.

- (3) The Council is positioned to take a leadership position on this issue by establishing a CSEC Action Project. It would need to empower agencies and organizations to take action to reduce exploitation and protect and treat victims.

In June 2013, the Council unanimously adopted the recommendations, starting with a global recommendation to launch a CSEC Action Project to improve California’s response to commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Project will be coordinated by a CSEC Action Team co-convened by the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency and a community-based advocacy organization representative who has experience working with exploited children. Membership will include state and local government agency leaders, CSEC service providers and advocates, CSEC survivors, youth, court representatives, and other stakeholders. The CSEC Action Team will be guided by the *Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* report and the following principles:

- Essential to the project’s success will be the involvement of CSEC survivors, at-risk youth, and their families or caregivers.
- The Team will need to build effective partnerships with state and local agencies and service providers. These will be central players in the implementation of CSEC programs, services, supports, and prevention efforts.
- Addressing CSEC issues and the needs of exploited youth will require a coordinated, comprehensive approach. Therefore, the Team will need to establish a structure and tools to support multi-system collaboration.

The CSEC Action Team will further develop and implement the recommendations adopted by the Child Welfare Council and delineated in the CSEC Project Plan, which fall within four focus areas: Prevalence and Identification, Specialized Services, Prevention and Training, and Multi-System and Data Coordination. (Additional information is provided below; see “Accomplishments of the Council’s Task Forces.”)

## Prioritization

In 2010 the Council formed the Prioritization Task Force to pursue a key strategy that addresses the needs of parents whose children have been placed in foster care due to abuse or neglect. The strategy being pursued is to establish prioritization of services for parents to remedy the problems that led to removal of their children by the Juvenile Court. Increasing parental access to targeted services and supports is vital in order for them to demonstrate that they can safely care for their children, thus achieving reunification.

Family reunification is one of the primary goals of the child protection system, and under federal and state law, child welfare social workers are required to make “reasonable efforts” to help parents overcome problems that led to removal of their children. However, nationally only 50% of families in the child welfare system achieve reunification, and the overall rate in California is similar. In addition, approximately 10% of children who have been reunified return to foster care due to subsequent allegations or instances of child abuse and neglect within 12 months.

Services and supports are linked to improving family reunification outcomes. Although services may be available for *children* in the child welfare system, attention is needed to address the availability and timing of services to their *parents* while their children are in foster care and after they return home.

In September 2011 the Council passed a motion recommending that the Governor take the lead in prioritizing access to resources and services to families in the child welfare system who have a court-ordered reunification plan. It further recommended that the Governor direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Workforce Development; Corrections and

Rehabilitation; and Business, Housing and Transportation to, among other things:

- Identify the extent to which prioritization policies and practices are already in place.
- Detail barriers to prioritization and how to address them.
- Develop and implement a plan for increasing prioritization.
- Identify data to measure the impact of prioritization.
- Explore implications for other populations.

Over the past year, the Task Force conducted an inventory of the state departments that direct policy and funding for services most often needed by parents with a reunification plan: mental health, alcohol and other drugs, workforce development, housing, and corrections and rehabilitation. In addition, information regarding community-based family services was gathered from the California Strengthening Families Roundtable.

The findings revealed that agencies currently have prioritization categories for other populations. Respondents expressed a clear willingness to explore how parents in the child welfare system who need services to support successful reunification might be included in the prioritization structure. In June 2013, the Council unanimously adopted a motion that the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency convene state and county prioritization partners to:

- Confirm agreement and commitment to prioritize targeted services for families with a child in foster care who have a court-ordered plan of reunification.
- Establish a cross-systems collaborative process with clear leadership, structure and accountability.

(Additional information is provided below; see “Accomplishments of the Council’s Task Forces.”)

## Partial School Credits

This issue was brought forward to the Council by the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee. Foster children commonly experience multiple placements. Moving from one placement to another often involves a transfers between schools, and partial completion of a semester leads to the loss of “partial credits” for work the student has done. The Institute for Higher Education Policy estimates that a change in placement occurs about once every six months and, due to this movement, foster youths lose an average of four to six months of credit for educational attainment.

Losing credit for work a student has done can have a detrimental effect on foster youths’ academic performance and future success in life. According to a report by the Child Welfare League of America, the number of changes in youths’ foster home placements is associated with their having at least one severe academic delay, which in turn leads to lower graduation rates for foster youths compared to their peers. About 50 percent of foster youth graduate compared to 70 percent of their peers. Of these high school graduates, only 20 percent are enrolled in post-secondary education compared to 60 percent of their peers.

Recognizing these issues, in 2003 the California Legislature adopted Assembly Bill 490 (AB490) authored by Senator Steinberg. This landmark legislation sought to ensure that the educational rights of foster youth were protected and that their educational stability was preserved.

Though many jurisdictions across California have made progress towards implementing the provisions of AB490, there are still challenges to ensuring the educational stability of foster youth. The law requires that partial credit be allowed but does not create a system for how that is done.

Many school district governing boards have adopted policies and administrative regulations for calculating partial credits that apply to the system of credits used in their districts.

The Partial Credits Work Group convened on May 5, 2013, with diverse stakeholder participation including representatives from:

- Child Welfare Council membership
- California Department of Education
- California School Boards Association
- California Department of Social Services
- County Welfare Directors Association of California
- Foster Youth Services and school counselors
- Former foster youth
- Legislature
- Legal counsel services
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Participants agreed that a statewide, consistent policy and practice is needed to address the issue and began working on a model policy that included:

- A common calculation method for determining partial credits.
- Roles, responsibilities, and timelines for awarding partial credit.
- Strategies for statewide dissemination and education of key stakeholder.

In June 2013 the Work Group presented a status report to the Council. It will reconvene present final recommendations to the Child Welfare Council at its September 2013 meeting.

# Standing Committees

As described above, the Council accomplishes much of its work through four standing Committees: Prevention and Early Intervention; Permanency; Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions; and Data Linkage and Information Sharing. The following pages present a summary of each Committee's progress during 2012-13

## Prevention and Early Intervention

### Background and Purpose

The purpose of this committee is to:

- Help establish a statewide prevention/early intervention platform through identification of research-informed practices that are a best fit for California.
- Bring Differential Response to scale statewide.
- Identify potential federal finance reforms that could promote prevention and early intervention.

Preventing children, youth and their families from entering the child welfare system remains an important state and local outcome. The earlier families' needs and challenges are addressed, the better the outcomes for children and youth. The research shows that when families are engaged in the services and supports that build protective factors, (especially when service involvement is voluntary) they are better able to safely care for their children at home in their communities.

Efforts to date have focused on bringing Differential Response to scale on a statewide basis, and on supporting federal reform of child welfare financing.

- Differential Response includes a broad set of strategies for working with families at the first signs of trouble. Entry into the child welfare system can often be prevented through innovative partnerships with community-based organizations that can help meaningfully support families who are at-risk for child maltreatment.

- Federal reform of child welfare financing could serve to remove fiscal disincentives and better align the child welfare system with prevention outcomes. Many (but not all) at-risk children can be safely kept at home by providing their parents and extended family with culturally appropriate community-based services. As a result, children who can be protected and served at home are less likely to be placed in foster care.

### 2012 –2013 Activities and Accomplishments

The activities and accomplishments of the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee are:

- The Differential Response Framework was widely disseminated to promote greater fidelity and uniformity in systems that shape prevention activities and child welfare practice.
- Members worked closely with national experts on federal child welfare finance reform to become educated and to begin development of educational materials on the subject for the Council and related partners.
- Target goals for 2013/2014 were identified for the committee.

### Concerns and Challenges

The PEI committee is fully committed to the exploration of priority access for Child Welfare-involved families, and would like to see prioritization strategies expanded to help families avoid entry into the child welfare services system. There is concern about the potential impact of realignment on PEI activities across all systems. During times of fiscal challenge, counties feel the need to focus on core functions to the exclusion of prevention and early intervention activities.

### **2013 – 2014 Goals**

- Map research-informed prevention activities to the Differential Response Framework to promote greater uniformity.
- Develop and disseminate educational materials on federal child welfare finance reform, and draw out implications for prevention and early intervention.
- Support the Council in exploring alternative means of financing and leveraging of resources to meet prevention goals for California.

## **Permanency Committee**

### **Background and Purpose**

Permanency has not been achieved for all children in care under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. The result is devastating – far too often youth age out of care with little or no family support and have dismal outcomes such as homelessness, arrest, conviction, poverty, and mental illness. The failure of the system to achieve permanency negatively affects all children in care, with a particularly disproportionate impact on African American and Native American children.

Children need to reach permanency as quickly as possible. Reunifying children and youth with their birth families as soon as it is safely possible is a primary goal of the child welfare system. When safe reunification is not possible, the goal is to achieve permanence for children and youth through adoption, legal guardianship or a lifelong relationship to a committed adult.

The Permanency Committee's charge is to identify and remove barriers and recommend best practices to achieve speedy permanency for all children in foster care. A new co-chair of the Permanency Committee was appointed in June 2013.

### **2012 – 2013 Activities and Accomplishments**

- Courts with high reunification rates and low reentry rates were invited to address the committee (the courts represented were

Riverside, Humboldt and Santa Cruz). In preparation, the committee prepared a list of questions for the courts.

- Amy D'Andrade presented to the committee the second round of her findings regarding reunification and reentry.
- The committee created and posted several draft recommendations on best practices to increase reunification and reduce reentry.
- The committee also increased coordination with the Prioritization taskforce to align and inform recommendations.
- The Committee set out a timeline to give recommendations to the Council by the September 2013 meeting.

### **Concerns and Challenges**

The Permanency Committee originally comprised of a large number of community experts in permanency who were committed to furthering policy and practice. Severe cutbacks in budget have limited the capacity of many of these experts to participate on the Committee. Youth voice in particular has subsided, and inconsistent attendance limits the Committee's ability to take on additional tasks that individual members have an interest in pursuing. The need to orient new attendees or re-orienting those who don't attend regularly slows the progress of the work.

### **2013 – 2014 Goals**

- Complete a review of best practice reunification methods and submit recommendations to the full Child Welfare Council.
- Schedule and facilitate a conversation about best practices with the full Council and those exhibiting promising and best practices.
- Establish priorities for current goals and add new ones if so determined.



## Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee

### Background and Purpose

The goals of this Committee are to:

- (1) Explore issues related to the health, mental health, educational and social development needs of all children and youth in the child welfare system, from the very young through transition to adulthood, and make recommendations on how to address them.
- (2) Gather information on what works and recommend replication of proven policies and practices in one jurisdiction for expansion to other jurisdictions.

### 2012 – 2013 Activities and Accomplishments

The Committee engaged in lively discussions on the multiple issues that fall under its charge and has served as the impetus for the Council to explore issues that cut across all Committees. In 2012-13 these included commercially sexually exploited children, partial school credits, and the special needs of young children in foster care.

Presentations on the first two topics were made to the full Council and are described in detail above (see *Council Accomplishments*). Highlights of the topic of Young Children in Foster Care include:

- Infants are less likely to be reunified with their parents, and for those who do achieve reunification, almost one-third will re-enter the child welfare system.
- Infants and toddlers placed in foster care had higher rates of re-entry, recurrent maltreatment, and disruptions of family bonds than children and youth of other ages.
- Nationwide, 45% of infant placement into foster care occurs within 30 days of birth
- From July to December 2011, among young children in care at 12 months:
  - ✦ 33.9% (1,228) were in their first placement.

- ✦ 39.5% (1,430) were in their second placement.
- ✦ 17% (615) were in their third placement.
- ✦ 5.9% (213) were in their fourth placement.
- ✦ 3.7% (133) were in the fifth or more placement.
- In California in 2012, 35% of the total population of children in foster care (19,783 foster children) were ages zero to five.
- In California in 2012, slightly more than 45% (5,425) of children who have been in care for 12-23 months were ages zero to five.

Children who enter foster care at a young age are having unsuccessful outcomes throughout their lifespan, as noted above. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon:

- A lack of specialized supports and services and informed caregivers.
- Some practices that achieve other outcomes have the unintended consequences of interfering with healthy brain development for young children (e.g., concurrent planning and family finding).

There are many successful programs and strategies throughout the state of California that address the needs of children ages zero to five in foster care. These programs have the following common characteristics:

- (1) They are driven by a multi-disciplinary team to oversee and frequently monitor the delivery of services.
- (2) They ensure consistent front-end developmental and mental health assessments.
- (3) They include informed court involvement.
- (4) They focus on building secure relationships.
- (5) They provide training for the caregiver and parent.

These programs focus on meeting the specific developmental needs of young children and demonstrate successful cross-system collaboration to minimize the traumatic impact on the brain development of young children. Examples of programs that meet these criteria include Zero to Three Helping Babies from the Bench (San Francisco County); Family Wellness Court (Santa Clara County); and the Zero to Five Child Focus Team (Fresno County).

### Concerns and Challenges

Members have limited time to work on the breadth and depth of issues that fall to the Committee, and the level of staff support is minimal. These realities are offset by the commitment and passion of Committee members to tenaciously work on areas of concern and offer solutions to continually improve the health, mental health and education of children and youth in the child welfare system.

### 2013 – 2014 Goals

For fiscal year 2013-2014, the Committee will continue to work on the Partial Credit and Young Children in Foster Care projects. The Committee also added the following topic five areas for analysis and recommendations:

- Education Related Mental Health Services.
- Over-Medication.
- Quality Foster Care.

The following outlines the work to be done in each of these areas.

- **Partial Credit:** This Work Group is preparing strategies to address the problem to be presented to the full Council on September 4, 2013.
- **Young Children in Foster Care:** This Work Group will make a presentation to full Council which includes:
  - ✦ What the State and County First Five Commissions are doing to promote awareness of the needs of children ages zero to five.

- ✦ Examples of successful programs serving foster children ages zero to five.
- ✦ How the courts and child welfare agencies can collaborate in serving foster children ages zero to five.
- ✦ Recommendations for the Council's role in promoting best practices for foster children ages zero to five.

- **Education Related Mental Health Services:** This Work Group is tracking progress of the AB 114 Committee that is looking at similar issues for all special need students, through the lens of meeting foster youth's needs. The goal is to understand the impact of new policies for serving students with special needs now that "AB 3632" has been discontinued, and a paper was prepared to capture this information.

- **Over-Medication:** This Work Group will review the work of Pauline Chan, DHCS Pharmacy Division, who is leading a federally mandated DHCS/CDSS Quality Improvement effort to improve the oversight of the administration of psychotropic medications to foster children. She is working on a draft plan for the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition, Chris Wu, Administrative Office of the Courts, will share reports on court authorization created using the *CWS/CMS Safe Measures* application as an example of how to use the Health and Education Passport system for data sharing.

- **Quality Foster Care:** This Work Group will follow the progress of CDSS initiatives on *Residentially Based Services* and *Continuum of Care* regarding quality of care and congregate care reduction. It will present to the Committee a detailed problem statement, including how group homes currently are licensed and how they provide oversight.

## Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee

### Background and Purpose

Data can inform services at the individual and systems levels. To this end the Committee works towards linking data across major child-serving agencies (child welfare, education, vital statistics, health, mental health and substance use) to give caregivers, social workers, multidisciplinary teams and courts the ability to ensure continuity of care for children, youth and families. The Committee also helps develop essential tools to measure outcomes across systems at the state and local levels. This is critical to improving access to and the quality of services for children, youth and families.

### 2012 – 2013 Activities and Accomplishments

The Committee focused on disseminating the Council's 2012 Statement on Information Sharing, Data Standardization, and Interoperability, and ensuring that the statement the Council adopted in 2012 was promoted in relevant forums (e.g., County Counsels Association, State Interagency Team (SIT), and the state Systems Integration and Interoperability Project). In May 2013, the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care adopted a revised recommendation on data and information sharing that endorses the Council's 2012 Statement. Further activities included:

- Collaboration with Office of Systems Integration and Stewards of Change.
  - ✦ In May, 2013, the Committee participated in a statewide interoperability symposium sponsored by the Health and Human Services Agency, Office of Systems Integration and Stewards of Change. It focused on developing business, governance, legal and technological frameworks that to enable state and county data exchange. A follow-up symposium will be held in September of 2013.
- Collaboration with California Health Information Exchange (HIE).

- ✦ The Committee continued efforts to expand the HIE Children in Foster Care Use Case for Immunizations to include all aspects of health information.
- ✦ The Committee continued efforts to advance the California HIE federal audacious goal – Personal Health Records for Children in Foster Care.
- Collaboration with the CDHCS/CDSS Foster Care Quality Improvement (QI) Project.
  - ✦ The Committee worked to ensure that this federally funded project to improve the approval and oversight process for administering psychotropic medication to children in foster care incorporates the data sharing Council's privacy principles.
- Collaboration with the California Legislature.
  - ✦ The Committee participated in an Assembly Human Services Committee informational hearing on data and information sharing. Further information hearings on data sharing are planned.
- Collaboration with Statewide Education Initiatives.
  - ✦ The Committee continued to work with the Foster Youth Education Task Force, Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in Care project, and National Center for Youth Law's Fostering Education project to encourage data and information sharing that improves educational outcomes for foster youth and respects their privacy rights.
  - ✦ The Committee studied and discussed the implications of the federal Uninterrupted Scholars Act of 2013, which would allow schools to share information on foster children with child welfare agencies.
- Collaboration to Improve Research.
  - ✦ The Committee continued to work with state agencies, the courts, counties, philanthropy, and academia to promote data linkages that further knowledge about California's children and families.

- ✦ UC Berkeley's California Child Welfare Indicator's Project (CCWIP), linked and analyzed education data from the California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS) and CWS/CMS to produce a Stuart Foundation landmark report, *At Greater Risk: California Foster Youth and the Path from High School to College*.
- ✦ CCWIP collaborated with the University of Southern California and several funders to link birth records to child welfare data to reveal etiological risk factors for maltreatment, birth rates among female youth in foster care, and rates of intergenerational maltreatment.

### Concerns and Challenges

While some new federal and state funding has been devoted to promoting interoperability and information exchange, many uncertainties remain. Realignment from the state to the county level poses challenges for achieving uniform information-sharing policies and practices. Procurement for a new child welfare case management system has been restarted; the Committee will focus on ensuring that the new system incorporates national data standards and an interoperable design. The decommissioning of the California Court Case Management system in 2012 shifts the focus of interoperability efforts in the judicial branch of government to local courts.

### 2013–14 Goals

- Clarify State policy on the importance of data integration and information sharing:
  - ✦ Continue to disseminate the Council's *Statement on Information Sharing, Data Standardization and Interoperability* to child welfare services and probation at both state and local levels, other health and human services agencies and the courts.
  - ✦ Continue to participate in the statewide interoperability planning taking place through the California State Systems Interoperability and Integration Project,

including participation on project subcommittees

- ✦ Continue to consult with the Assembly Human Services Committee and staff as it considers legislation on interoperability and information sharing.
- ✦ Emphasize the urgency of interoperability given the critical nature of this time period in terms of data systems and data exchanges.
- Create an inventory of information sharing barriers and develop recommendations to overcome the barriers.
  - ✦ The Committee will continue to examine policy and practice barriers to information sharing and make recommendations to the Council on measures to overcome the barriers.
- Identify common technology standards and strategies to maximize the sharing of information resources.
  - ✦ The Committee will seek to provide localized support, guidance and technical assistance to local courts and counties to overcome barriers to information sharing and advance interoperability.
- Coordinate and leverage existing state investments in data and information resources.
  - ✦ The Committee will seek to identify funding sources for data linkages.
  - ✦ The Committee will continue supporting the State's "audacious" HIE goal of Personal Health Records for Children in Foster Care
  - ✦ The Committee will continue supporting California Department of Social Services (CDSS)/California Department of Education (CDE) linkages.
- Provide technical assistance/consultation to other COUNCIL Committees, task forces and workgroups regarding data issues, and collaborate to increase the visibility of the Child Welfare Council across the state.

# Accomplishments of the Council's Task Forces

In addition to the Standing Committees, the Co-Chairs are authorized to appoint ad hoc groups to address issues that are germane to the work of the full Council. Initially, two task forces were formed: the **Prioritization Task Force** and the **Out-of-County Mental Health Work Group**. In 2012, the Co-Chairs established a third group to coordinate the Council's work with a commission that shares several members with the Council: the **Collaboration with the Californian Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care Task Force**. Near the end of the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the Council formed another ad hoc group: the **Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Action Team**. The following pages summarize the achievements, challenges, and goals for these ad hoc groups.

## Prioritization Task Force

### Background and Purpose

In 2010 the Council formed the Prioritization Task Force to establish protocols that will give parents priority access to services needed to remedy the problems that led to removal of their children by the Juvenile Court (e.g., behavioral health, housing, employment, and community-based family strengthening services). Timely access to targeted services and supports is vital for families who have a court-ordered reunification plan, in order for them to demonstrate that they can safely care for their children. The goal of this facilitated access is to increase safe, timely reunification without reentry. (For additional information regarding prioritization and the current work of the Task Force, see above: "Accomplishment of the Child Welfare Council.")

### 2012 – 2013 Activities and Accomplishments

In 2012/2013 the Prioritization Task Force:

- Completed inventories of state departments that oversee services and supports linked to successful family reunification outcomes.

- Educated members of the Council regarding how prioritized services and supports can lead to positive family outcomes.
- Delivered recommendations that were approved by the Council on how to initiate action planning with accountability among prioritization partners (state and county).

### Concerns and Challenges

Within Health and Human Services, target services and supports for families in reunification are prioritized to varying degrees. However these families have complex needs, and thus receive services from other systems (e.g., Housing and Community Development, Corrections and Rehabilitation, and Workforce Development). Those other systems have eligibility and funding requirements that may not align with the Council's vision for prioritization. This is due in part to mandates that these agencies serve other populations. Families in reunification may qualify under one or more of these populations (e.g. veterans, homeless), however these families are not currently called out as a specific priority population. Furthermore, too frequently data is not collected to identify this population at all.

### 2013 –14 Goals

- Convening of state and county prioritization partners under the auspices of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to:
  - ✦ Confirm agreement and commitment to prioritize targeted services for families with a child in foster care who have a court-ordered plan of reunification.
  - ✦ Identify required resources.
  - ✦ Establish a cross-systems collaborative process with clear leadership, structure and accountability.



- Promotion of expanded data collection, sharing and integration to identify common clients/families with child welfare involvement across systems, specifically for parents in reunification.
- Build capacity for prioritization in the field by packaging and disseminating findings to include a California-specific suite of prioritization tools.

The Task Force anticipates the convening will occur no later than December 31, 2013 allowing for a March 2014 report back to the Council.

## Out-of-County Mental Health Services Task Force

### Background and Purpose

Section 5777.6 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, enacted in 2000, requires:

- Local mental health plans to establish a procedure to ensure timely access to outpatient specialty mental health services for foster care children placed outside of their counties of origin (the county in which the Juvenile Dependency Court has jurisdiction).
- The Department of Mental Health to “collect and keep statistics that will enable the department to compare access to outpatient specialty mental health services by foster children placed in their county of adjudication with access to outpatient specialty mental health services by foster children placed outside of their county of adjudication.”

Over the subsequent twelve years, various measures have been put in place by the Department of Mental Health, which has now become part of the Department of Health Care Services, and the Legislature to further facilitate access to mental health services by foster children who reside outside their county of origin. Despite these efforts, the Child Welfare Council noted that inequities existed and payment systems between counties did not always work efficiently.

In December 2010, the Council approved an action plan for the Work Group which directed its members to take up the following four overarching issues that must be addressed in order to improve access to out-of-county mental health services statewide, with the directive that medically necessary mental health services for foster children residing out of their counties of court jurisdiction would be *presumptively transferred* to their respective counties of residence:

- (1) Identification, screening and communication.
- (2) Authorization and payment.
- (3) Provision of services and capacity.
- (4) Outcomes and accountability.

The Work Group presented a report of its activities and accomplishments to the full Council at its December 2011 meeting. Highlights of the report included:

- **Identification and Intake** – the Work Group formed a Screening and Assessment Subgroup which reviewed the following: screening and assessment tools used in three counties; a matrix of screening tools distributed to all County Welfare Directors and Chief Probation Officers via All County Letter 06-54; Child Health and Disability Prevention Assessment Guidelines distributed to Program Providers and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans via Provider Information Notice 09-14. Other relevant screening and assessment materials were also reviewed.
- **Communications** – the Out-of-County Mental Health Services Work Group recommended that communication protocols described in Welfare and Institutions Code § 14093.10 be used to determine the most appropriate county to provide mental health services and, when appropriate, transfer the responsibility for the authorization of medically necessary mental health services from the county of jurisdiction to the county of residence for children in out-of-county placements.

**Data Mining Project** – the Out-of-County Data Mining Project (a collaboration of the Out-of-County Mental Health Services Work Group and members of the Council’s Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee) analyzed linked child welfare and mental health data, including an examination of the characteristics of foster children who received mental health services and details differences among children placed in and outside of their county of jurisdiction. This was the first time that the two databases have been linked. This represents a milestone toward achieving the Data Committee’s goal of sharing and linking data related to children in the Child Welfare System.

The report produced by the Out-of-County Data Mining Project examined placements, or portions of placements, that occurred in fiscal year 2008/09, the latest year that had complete data available. Key findings included:

- ✦ There was considerable variation among counties regarding the percentage of foster children receiving mental health services overall and the level of access for foster children residing in- or out-of- their county of jurisdiction; in-county foster youth received greater access to services and higher intensity of care on average than out-of-county foster youth.
- ✦ Placement in- or out-of-county was not the strongest predictor of whether or not children received mental health services, but systematic differences were observed, including apparent greater need for services as well as lower access to services and lower intensity of care.
- ✦ Significant issues were identified for sub-populations of youth who require out-of-county placements, including foster children who are older; who have been in care longer; who have had repeated placement episodes; who are placed in group homes; or who are on probation.
- ✦ The age of children in placement had the strongest correlation to receipt of mental health services. For children 11-15 years of age, placement in their county of jurisdiction was the best predictor of whether they received services.
- **Links to Katie A Settlement Implementation Committee** – the Work Group recommended that the Katie A Settlement Implementation Committee would be the appropriate vehicle for addressing the following components of out-of-county mental health services system:
  - ✦ Statewide use of screening and assessment tools at intake.
  - ✦ Case management practices.
  - ✦ Treatment planning and coordination of care.
  - ✦ Outcomes and accountability.

#### 2012 – 2013 Activities and Accomplishments

At its June 2012 meeting, Council members were provided an update on Katie A Settlement Implementation was presented. At each of the Quarterly meetings during 2012 – 13 updates on the status of implementing presumptive transfer were provided by representatives of the California Departments of Health Care Services and Social Services which was still a work in progress at the end of the fiscal year.

#### Concerns and Challenges

Despite considerable efforts over the years by multiple task forces, including this one, a complete solution to presumptive transfer and inter-county payments for foster children’s mental health services has not been achieved.

#### 2013 – 2014 Goals

The Health and Human Services Agency will continue to work with key stakeholders to resolve the outstanding issues and apprise the Council of progress.

## Collaboration with the California Blue Ribbon Commission for Children in Foster Care

### Background and Purpose

There is significant overlap in the membership of the Council and the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC). Because both bodies have similar charges, they formed a crossover working group to coordinate and collaborate efforts. This is intended to avoid duplication and leverage the greatest impact from the work that both bodies are pursuing in common, e.g. the truancy/school discipline initiative, the permanency and reunification effort, and data and information sharing.

### 2012 – 13 Activities and Accomplishments

Members of both the BRC and the Council, or members of one or the other who are working on joint projects, met over lunch at two Council meetings. Attendees discussed common projects and how to leverage the impact of crossover projects and avoid duplication of efforts.

Primary common projects include the Permanency and Data and Information Sharing committees-- both long-standing projects for both bodies, along with the newly formed BRC Truancy and School Discipline Workgroup. Key members of both the Council and the BRC are working closely on plans for a statewide summit that the Chief Justice and the Superintendent of Public Instruction are cosponsoring on December 4, 2013 on keeping kids in school and out of court that will focus on how California can grapple with the high truancy, chronic absenteeism, and school discipline policies that can deeply affect a child's opportunity for success in life. At the Council's September meeting the BRC members will be asking the Council to be a sponsor of the event.

### Concerns and Challenges

The primary challenge for this task force is finding time for crossover members to meet since most are active participants of other Council Standing Committees or Task Forces.

### 2013 – 14 Goals

- Continue coordination and collaboration on the Permanency and Data Integration and Information Sharing committees.
- Continue active involvement in planning and participating in the December "Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Summit."

## Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Action Team

### Background and Purpose

A work group of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee studied the issue of children in the child welfare and foster care system being commercially sexually exploited, or at risk of being exploited. In March 2013, the work group released its report, *"Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California."*

In June the Council unanimously adopted the report's recommendations, and established a Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Action Team to further develop and implement them. (For additional information regarding the Council and CSEC, see above: "Accomplishment of the Child Welfare Council.")

### 2013 – 14 Goals

Fully establish the CSEC Action Team and subcommittee structure.

- Develop a strategic plan that includes objectives and action plans for each of the four areas identified in the report and the CSEC Project Plan.
- Begin implementation of the "Immediate Actions" identified in the CSEC Project Plan.

## Conclusion

The Child Welfare Council brings together leaders from multiple agencies across all three branches of government at the state and local level, as well as service providers, advocates, recipients of services, and other stakeholders. The Council and its subgroups provide an opportunity that is both significant and uncommon in government to achieve interagency collaboration, creative problem solving, and systems improvement.

In its quest to improve the child welfare system the Council has taken on the issues described in this report, many of which have long perplexed policy makers, administrators, courts, service providers and, most of all, families and children who are the recipients of services. By bringing together the many disciplines involved in child welfare as well as consumers and advocates, the Council generates meaningful discussion of these difficult issues. It also promotes the development of solutions that have the greatest likelihood of success in the real world, having been developed by people who have an in-depth understanding of the issues from personal experience. Furthermore, the likelihood of success is enhanced because consideration has been given to the perspectives of the many players who must be part of implementing any solution.

At the same time, these complex, cross-cutting issues defy simple or quick solutions. Rather, they require thoughtful minds to gather information, discuss the nature of the issues, brainstorm strategies to address them, and work together to develop practical ways to implement those strategies. This process takes time, as do the steps to implement strategies that involve multiple agencies, constituencies, and barriers to change.

It has been three and one-half years since the Council adopted its first set of recommendations in December 2009. As of this 2012-13 fiscal year, a broader spectrum of people are involved in the Council's work, and the nature of the work itself has progressed –initiatives have evolved from basic understanding of problems, to recommended strategies, to projects that facilitate collaborative action to implement those strategies.

The outcomes of this progression are twofold. First, within the Council and its subgroups, participants are being called upon to take recommendations into the field and manifest systems change. Second, the collaborative process itself has generated dialogue, partnerships, and coordinated efforts that have gone well beyond the boundaries of the Council and its subgroups. Together, these two outcomes have promoted improvements in the child welfare system, and everyone involved can look forward to the Council's activities achieving further systems change in the coming years.