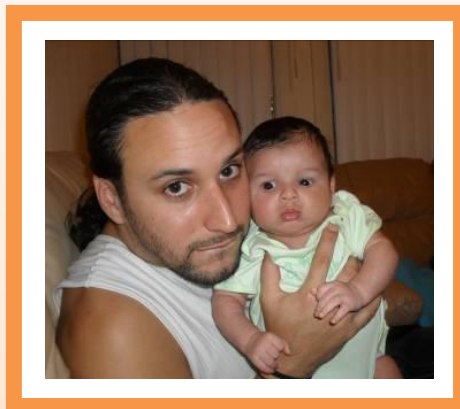
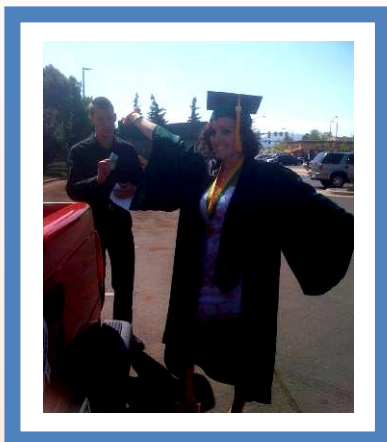
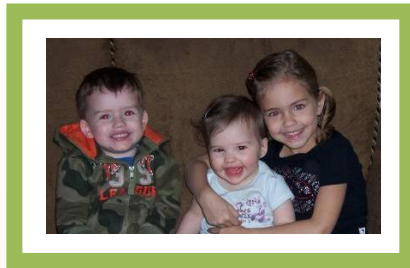


# California Child Welfare Council Report

July 2011



# California Child Welfare Council Report

## July 2011

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). The Council is a State advisory body charged with developing recommendations to improve outcomes for children and youth in the child welfare system through increased collaboration and coordination among the programs, services and processes administered by the multiple agencies and courts that serve children and youth in California's child welfare system.

The Council, which is co-chaired by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court or her designee, has met quarterly since November, 2007. A membership roster is provided as Attachment 1, and the text of the statute may be found in Attachment 2.

The Council is structured to encourage participation by all stakeholders in the child welfare system through the creation of four Committees that include both Council and non-Council members. The involvement of additional subject matter experts who took advantage of this opportunity contributed to the Council's achievements in its beginning years and will undoubtedly continue to add value to the Council's work.

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

### FOUNDATIONAL WORK

The Council's initial activity centered on establishing the conceptual and operational framework for council activity. At its June 18, 2008 meeting, the Council adopted the following Vision and Mission Statements, Guiding Principles and committee structure to undertake its work:

#### **Child Welfare Council Vision:**

Every California child lives in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families with the capacity to meet the child's needs and support their well-being, and is prepared for the transition into adulthood to become a contributing member of society.

#### **Child Welfare Council Mission:**

We provide an effective, collaborative forum for the three branches of government, foster youth and their families, and key stakeholders to advocate for effective and promising strategies and adequate resources to improve outcomes for children, youth and families involved with or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system.

#### **Child Welfare Council Guiding Principles:**

- Collaboration is essential among the three branches of government, foster youth and their families and key stakeholders to achieving improved outcomes for children, youth and families.
- Accountability for child, youth and family outcomes is a shared responsibility across federal, state, and local governments, and among multiple agencies, the courts, community partners, families, and youth.
- Engaging families and youth in the development, implementation and evaluation of services, programs, and policies is essential to achieving improved system outcomes.

- Sharing data and information across governmental jurisdictions, agencies and the courts promotes more informed program planning, development and evaluation. At the local level, it enables the linkage of children, youth and families to appropriate community service and supports.
- Best and promising practices should be replicated statewide where appropriate and possible.
- Maximizing and using multiple funding sources flexibly across systems provides resources needed to meet the comprehensive and complex needs of children, youth and their families.
- Recommendations will be culturally appropriate, strength-based, evidence-based, and outcomes-driven to ensure that all children, youth and their families are treated fairly and equally without regard to age, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

### Committee Structure

A series of informational panels were held at the Council's March and April 2008 meetings, addressing a range of topics including the federal Child and Family Service Review process, data and information sharing, permanency for transition age youth, access to services, caregivers, and disproportionality. The Council used these informational sessions as a basis for the development of an organizational framework. Ultimately, the Council established four committees with respective areas of focus, as outlined below.

- ***Prevention and Early Intervention Committee (P/EI):*** Preventing children, youth and their families from entering the child welfare system is an important state and local outcome. The earlier families' challenges are addressed, the better the outcomes for children and youth, especially when families are voluntarily engaged in the services, supports and actions that empower them to safely care for their children at home in their communities.
- ***Permanency Committee:*** 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, it is the goal of the system to achieve permanence for children and youth through adoption, legal guardianship or a lifelong relationship to a committed adult.
- ***Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions (CDSYT) Committee:*** Ensuring that health, mental health, educational and social development needs of children and youth in the child welfare system are met and that youth are prepared for successful transitions to adulthood through collaborative partnerships at the state and local levels are essential components of child welfare services. Youth involved in the foster care system -- like all children and youth -- require support and services to ensure that their health, mental health, education, emotional, social, and other developmental needs are met. For those youth emancipating from foster care, access to postsecondary education, housing, employment, vocational training, and financial literacy skills, as well as a connection to a caring, committed, lifelong adult, also become increasingly important.
- ***Data Linkage and Information Sharing (Data) Committee:*** When data are linked across major child serving agencies, including child welfare, education, health, mental health, and alcohol and drug services, the ability to share information across systems is created, thereby giving caregivers, social workers, multidisciplinary teams and the courts the ability to ensure continuity of care and services for children, youth and families.

Data linkage also provides essential tools to measure outcomes across systems and the courts both at the state and local levels and is critical to improving the quality of and access to services and supports for children, youth and families at risk of or involved with the child welfare system. To effectuate positive change in child welfare system outcomes whether at the state or local levels, greater data linkage and information sharing is needed.

The Council subsequently formed two issue focused workgroups, one on mental health services for foster children who do not currently live in the county from which they were taken into care (**Out-of-County Mental Health Workgroup**), and the second on prioritization of child welfare families for services that are needed to address key problems that brought them to the attention of the Dependency Court, including mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependence, domestic violence, and the need for education and employment (**Prioritization Workgroup**).

## COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The work of the Council, which centers on the collaborative issue identification and analysis, is prescribed by its enabling statute: "The council shall monitor and report the extent to which child welfare and foster care programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care." The law delineates 13 specific areas to be addressed by the Council as related to recommendation development (See Section 16540 {a-m} of Attachment 2). A thematic reflection of the relationship between the Council's first set of recommendations, adopted in December 2009, and the statutory framework is described below. The recommendations developed by each of the Council's four committees including current contextual and policy issues related to each, are provided in Appendices A through D. Note that each committee laid out an action plan and is currently in the process of following through on implementation of the plan.

**The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee** focused recommendations on a requirement for taking promising practices to scale<sup>1</sup>. The committee specifically recommended that California commit, over a reasonable time horizon, to bring Differential Response to scale on a statewide basis. Differential Response is an evidence-based approach to preventing child abuse and neglect by ensuring child safety through expanding the ability of child welfare agencies to respond to reports of child maltreatment. In California, Differential Response includes a broad set of strategies for working with families at the first signs of trouble. Through innovative partnerships with community based organizations that can help meaningfully support families who are at-risk for child maltreatment, and otherwise could potentially enter the child welfare system, entry into care can be prevented.

**The Permanency Committee** focused recommendations on statewide implementation of Family Finding and Engagement (FFE), a program which locates biological family members for children in out-of-home care. One of the most important factors contributing to the safety and permanence of children in out-of-home care is providing them the opportunity to find a meaningful connection and establish lifelong relationships with biological family members or people with close ties to family members.

The program follows a national model developed by Kevin Campbell to identify and locate family members using multiple databases. Once identified, the child welfare worker engages family members in the process of creating a plan that will result in a safe, permanent family for the child.

The current recommendations identify the necessary components of successful FFE implementation, at both the statewide and local levels, as well as a vehicle for that implementation - the local commissions established by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care<sup>2</sup>. This Committee also addressed the

<sup>1</sup> Promoting consistent program and judicial excellence across counties to the greatest extent possible while recognizing the demographic, geographic, and financial differences among the counties. WIC section 16540(c).

<sup>2</sup> As part of its 2009 final report, the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care recommended that the courts and child welfare agencies jointly convene multidisciplinary commissions at the county level to identify and resolve local child welfare

overarching Council goal of increasing the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of program services and judicial processes delivered to children, youth and families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services to achieve better outcomes.

**The Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee (CDSYT)** similarly addressed the broad system improvement goals through several of its recommendations, including lowering the age at which Transition Planning begins to 13. Pursuant to this recommendation, all foster youth would have access to postsecondary education planning information beginning as early as age 13, and postsecondary education goals would be considered in the development of foster youth transition plans.

Taking what works to scale was also addressed by a number of the CDSYT Committee's recommendations, including replicating statewide the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Program which provides public sector, entry-level job opportunities to untrained, economically-disadvantaged youth transitioning out of the foster care system; promulgating a uniform partial credit transfer requirement that public schools would be required to adopt to ensure foster youth receive academic credit for work completed; and ensuring that all foster youth pursuing higher education have access to comprehensive campus support programs.

The CDSYT Committee addressed the more narrow issue of education data, recommending that timely, accurate education data on foster youth should be made available to the courts, social workers, probation officers and school personnel to enable the early identification of foster youth at risk of school failure and/or dropping out and effective educational case management.

Both the Data and CDSYT Committees addressed the data and information sharing aspects of legislative direction.<sup>1</sup>

**The Data Committee** worked extensively on the issue of data and information sharing, bringing to the full Council one of its first action items, the adoption of a policy supporting sharing and linking data related to children in the child welfare services system. The Council, through the Data Committee, contributed to a set of policy briefs developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) on the laws relating to information sharing in the following areas: health, mental health, education and substance abuse (these briefs are included in Appendix D). The leadership of the Data Committee has been acknowledged by a recent data integration effort underway by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Data Committee also recommends that the Council create and maintain an inventory of national, state, and local level practices on data sharing and information exchange to promote statewide information sharing.

**The Out-of-County Mental Health Workgroup** efforts address several statutory objectives, e.g., increasing the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of program services and judicial processes delivered to

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concerns and to help implement the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations and related reforms. These commissions have now been implemented in a vast majority of counties.

<sup>1</sup> Developing data and information sharing agreements and protocols for the exchange of aggregate data across program and court systems that are providing services to children and families in the child welfare system. These data-sharing agreements shall allow child welfare agencies and the courts to access data concerning the health, mental health, special education, and educational status and progress of children served by county child welfare systems subject to state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations. They shall be developed in tandem with the establishment of judicial case management systems as well as additional or enhanced performance measures described in subdivision (b) of Section 16544, WIC section 16540(h).

children, youth, and families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services to achieve better outcomes for these children, youth, and families – WIC section 16540(b) and promoting consistent program and judicial excellence across counties to the greatest extent possible while recognizing the demographic, geographic, and financial differences among the counties – WIC section 16540(c) are realized through the Council's recently adopted Out Of County Mental Health Action Plan. This plan lays out a framework to ensure children placed outside of their counties of origin receive timely and appropriate, medically necessary mental health services. It contains recommendations related to five key areas:

- 1) Child Welfare Services Base Funding;
- 2) Identification, Screening, and Communication;
- 3) Authorization and Payment;
- 4) Provision of Services and Capacity; and
- 5) Outcomes and Accountability.

The Council directed the Workgroup to develop the plan further so that it includes a detailed fiscal analysis; detailed recommendations around screening and assessment; communication and decision-making protocols between the county placing the child and the county where the child lives; as well as operationalizing a policy of “presumptive transfer” which would establish the default of the county where the child lives as the Medi-Cal provider, including authorization, services and payment.

**The Prioritization Workgroup** is in process of developing recommendations for the Council to consider. The discussion on prioritization is not a new topic to California. Since at least the early 1990's there has been an active exchange on how to build bridges for the child welfare services population to alcohol and drug treatment services. Expertise has been building around accompanying practice and policy changes. The Council's approach to prioritization is designed to safely reduce the number of entries into foster care, and also reduce the length of stay in foster care for children and families who receive priority services.

## AREAS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

There are areas of the statute that have not yet been monitored and reported on by the Council. Some of these, such as ensuring that all state Title IV-E plans, program improvement plans and court improvement plans demonstrate effective collaboration between public agencies and the courts, reference activity that is in fact taking place at the branch and agency levels, albeit outside of the formal structures of the Council.

Other areas yet to be addressed include developing systematic methods for obtaining policy recommendations from foster youth, birth parents and other caregivers and assessing their impact relative to better outcomes; determining the effectiveness and quality of program services and judicial processes; implementing legislative enactments in the child welfare and foster care programs and the courts; and reporting to the Legislature on the timeliness and consistency of that implementation. The need to create a routine mechanism for soliciting input from current foster youth and birth parents who have experienced the child welfare system as well as for monitoring the implementation of existing legislation, ties to key structural questions which the Council will take up at subsequent meeting, as described in the section below on Challenges of the Council.

The current work plans for both the full Council and its Committees contemplate the development of recommendations in other areas, including the role and authority of the foster care ombudsperson, the coordination of services for former foster youth, caregiver support, evaluation of parent partner and mentor



programs that improve reunification and prioritization of programs and services in both the child welfare and court systems.

### Implementation Activities and Next Steps for Committees and Workgroups

The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee has finalized a *Differential Response Core Elements Framework for Prevention and Early Intervention* and will present it to the full Council for review. There has been initial discussion of what resources will be available to bring Differential Response services to scale including the 1115 Medi-Cal waiver which creates an opportunity to allow childless adults to receive behavioral health services; all resources associated with healthcare reform; Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) provisions that ensure services include case management and other preventive and supportive services; Title IV-E Waiver potential for renewal and/or addition of other counties; and Federal child welfare financing reform. Next steps for the committee include the creation of a compendium of implementation and practice tools to facilitate individual counties moving forward with Differential Response. The compendium will incorporate programs, models, assessments, and other tools as appropriate. In the service of identifying evidence-based practices the Committee will undertake an in-depth look at Strengthening Families and will hear a report on Los Angeles County's Prevention Intervention Demonstration Project (PIDP) and will also bring this information to the full Council.

The Permanency Committee's recommendation regarding statewide expansion of Family Finding and Engagement is being implemented in partnership with the California Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Specifically, AOC staff, who provide support to county local Blue Ribbon Commissions, are facilitating implementation of the recommendation via those bodies in selected jurisdictions. This work is being done in collaboration with the Seneca Center, an organization represented on the Council, which houses a statewide resource center on permanency. Casey Family Programs, which holds a seat on the Council, is providing limited financial support for implementation of the work being done by the AOC and Seneca, specifically as related to funding a pilot initiative in Sacramento County. Further, several other entities represented on the Council, including the County Welfare Directors Association, CalSWEC, the California CASA Association and the Co-Investment Partnership, have all agreed to jointly develop and utilize training and technical assistance materials designed to support local implementation of the Family Finding and Engagement recommendations; this work is specifically being done under the auspices of a "toolkit development" initiative, which has been contracted out to the American Humane Association for completion.

The Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee's initial recommendations regarding mental health services for children and youth placed outside of their counties of origin formed the basis for work eventually assumed by the full Council. After the adoption of committee recommendations in December 2009, the Council determined that there were several areas best addressed by the full Council itself; out-of-county mental health was one such issue. As noted above, a separate action plan, delineating a wide array of activities necessary to effectuate the goal of eliminating disparities in mental health service access for youth regardless of placement location, was adopted by the Council in December 2010. Pursuant to that plan, several workgroups, charged with developing the protocols and conducting the analyses outlined in the plan, have been established and have begun meeting.

As noted above, the Council approved the Data Committee's recommended policy on information sharing and linking, and Data Committee members have distributed it through communications to the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care members, local Blue Ribbon Commissions, and juvenile judges in California. An All County Information Notice (ACIN) on the policy for child welfare directors in California is currently in draft and will soon be issued by the Department of Social Services. The inventory of data sharing practices has been launched and is available at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/PG2346.htm>. The policy

briefs on information sharing have been finalized and distributed to local Blue Ribbon Commissions, child welfare directors, juvenile court judges and other stakeholders (available at the above link).

The Data Committee has developed and is implementing follow up action steps to its recommendations. Based on feedback from focus groups conducted on behalf of the County Welfare Directors Association, the AOC is preparing two court forms to facilitate the sharing of health and education information. CDSS and the AOC are planning a series of educational events later in 2011 to encourage counties, local courts and other stakeholders to identify and problem-solve barriers to information sharing. Finally, the quarterly meetings of the Committee are attended by numerous representatives of state and local agencies, and have become an excellent forum for communicating information on pilot projects and system development for linking data on children in foster care.

The Out-of-County Mental Health Workgroup is working on criteria for determining when the county of legal residence should retain Medi-Cal responsibility and for when Medi-Cal services should be provided by the county where the child lives. Factors such as permanence, type of placement and type of services needed are among the considerations that would guide the decision.

The Prioritization Workgroup is working on a policy that could be applied by the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee, the Permanency and Child Development Committee and the Successful Youth Transitions Committee to their respective areas of child welfare practice. The Council has asked the Workgroup to make a recommendation regarding the point at which prioritization should apply, the specific services to be prioritized and the rationale behind the prioritization.

## COUNCIL INFLUENCE, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Council and Committee members were invited to participate in an on-line survey to capture information regarding accomplishments that were influenced or inspired by the work of the Council beyond its formal agenda and to determine members' views regarding the strengths and challenges of the Council. A total of 33 Council and Committee members participated in the survey, and their responses were grouped according to themes under each area of the survey.

### Influence of Council

Council members agreed that since its inception, there has been a notably high level of personal participation of state agencies; it was clearly prioritized, and found to be highly useful. With regard to the influence of the Council in their respective day-to-day roles, 25 survey participants responded to the question, and 19 of them indicated there was some impact, including taking on coordination efforts; assigning staff to work on Council issues; prioritizing foster youth for services; and pursuing data linkages and information sharing. Six survey participants responding to this question stated that the Council had no influence in their daily work. See Figure 1 for details.



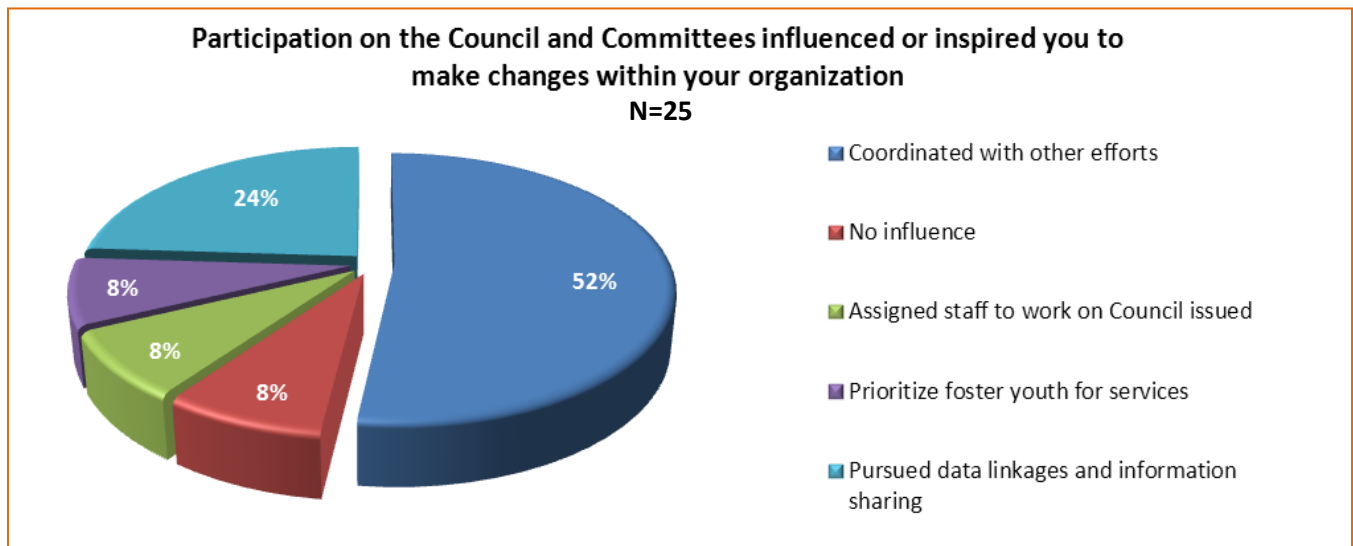


Figure 1

### Accomplishments of the Council

The establishment of the Council itself may be considered an achievement in that it is the first time that high level state, county and court decision-makers across all three branches of government have gathered with child welfare experts, including nonprofits, institutes of higher learning, advocates and – most importantly – foster youth, birth parents and foster caregivers to monitor and report on key policy and practice issues related to children and families they jointly serve.

Important accomplishments noted by survey participants included coordinating and collaborating activities among Council and Committee members; garnering support to resolve issues related to providing out-of-county mental health services for foster children; creating the policy for data integration and information sharing; creating the foundational structure, getting organized and having well-attended meetings; educating state leadership regarding child welfare issues; considering options for prioritizing services for foster children; making Differential Response a priority; and identifying Family Finding and Engagement as an important service. One respondent stated that there were no important accomplishments. See Figure 2 for details.

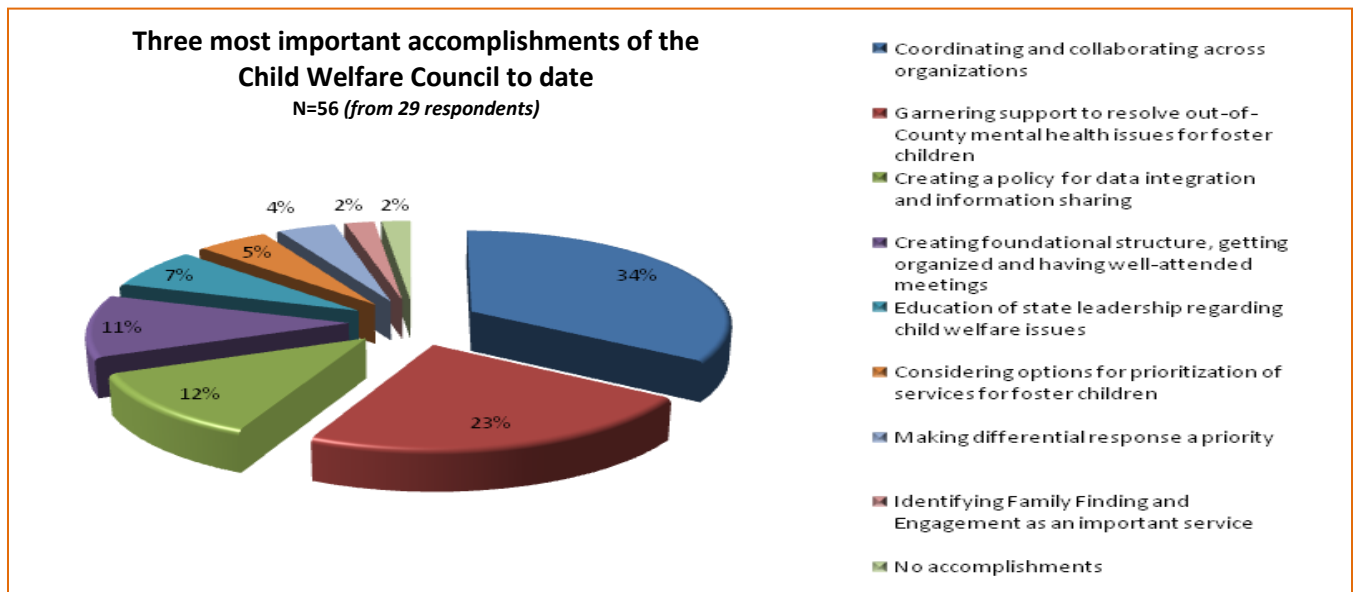


Figure 2

## Challenges of Council

The biggest challenges facing the Council over the next two years identified by survey participants include:

- The ability to be productive and see recommendations get implemented.
- Concern that recommendations would not be included in the budget.
- Making sure the roles of the Council and its Committees are clear so that members and staff can support successful results.
- Dealing with the impact of realignment.
- Prioritizing services for foster children.
- Making it possible for improvements to be implemented in mental health services for children living outside their counties of legal residence.
- Facilitating implementation of prevention and early intervention services; and supporting implementation of data integration.

See Figure 3 for details.

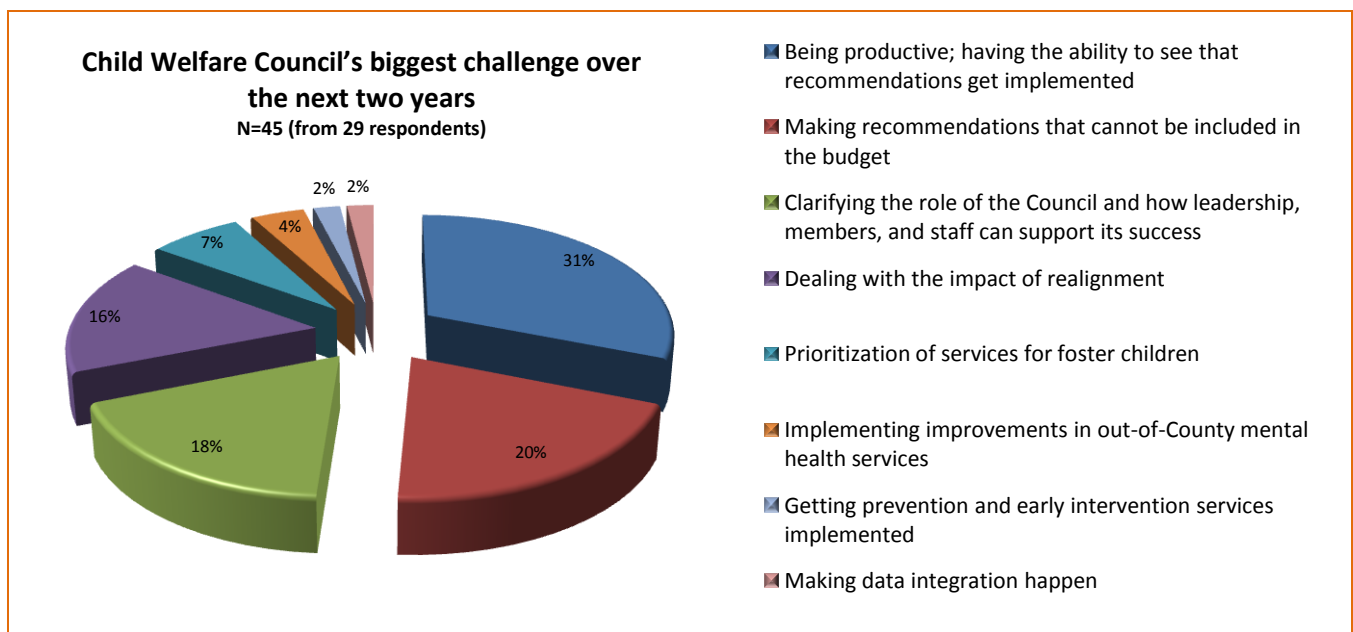


Figure 3

## Setting the Agenda for 2011-12

Council and Committee members offered suggestions for strengthening Council structures and operations for the purpose of improving its ability to collaborate across systems and organizations in the interest of better services for children and families. Specific ideas included:

- Continue to address critical issues facing foster children and their families, including how to reduce the length of time in foster care through early, safe reunification or with alternative permanent families.
- Continue to learn from new developments in inter-organizational collaboration theory and practice and from what other inter-agency bodies of a similar nature are doing.
- Set up a system to track progress on the implementation of Council recommendations.
- Improve facilitation of cross-agency, multiple stakeholder discussions on key issues of concern.

- Increase visibility and credibility of the Council so that the legislative, judicial and administrative leadership seeks out its advice.
- Continue to build on data linkage and information sharing efforts.
- Clarify how staff resources in support of the Council and Committees will be provided.
- Revisit the current Committee structure to determine if it needs to be adjusted to meet emerging Council goals.

The Council represents an enormous opportunity for statewide, inter-agency leadership across all three branches of government at the state and local levels to promote continued improvement in the child welfare system that is informed by the expertise of service providers, advocates and recipients of services. This opportunity has been best realized to date through its foundational work that created the structure for operations and through the adoption of its first set of recommendations in December 2009. The Council's ongoing work through committees and workgroups will expand to all areas required by the authorizing statute. In addition, to the extent possible the Council will promote evaluations of recommendations that are adopted for implementation to determine if they resulted in improved outcomes for children and families.

## ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

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Ms. Diana S. Dooley  
Honorable Vance Raye

Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Presiding Justice, Third District Court of Appeals

#### MEMBERSHIP FOR CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

Ms. Robin Allen	Executive Director, California CASA Association
Mr. Clifford Allenby	Acting Director, Department of Mental Health
Mr. H.J. David Ambroz	Disney; former Foster Youth
Hon. Jim Beall, Jr.	Member, California State Assembly
Mr. Ken Berrick	President/CEO Seneca Center for Children and Families
Ms. Sheila Boxley	President/CEO Prevent Child Abuse California
Ms. Miryam Choca	Senior Director, Strategic Consultation – California, Casey Family Programs
Ms. Jackie Contreras	Chief Deputy Director, Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services
Mr. Michael Cunningham	Acting Director, Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
Ms. Leah Davis	Parent Advocate, California State Parent Team/Parents Anonymous, Inc.
Ms. Marlena Davis	Research Assistant; former Foster Youth
Ms. Terri Delgadillo	Director, Department of Developmental Services
Mr. Toby Douglas	Director, Department of Health Care Services
Hon. Leonard Edwards (Ret)	Judge-in-Residence, California Administrative Office of the Courts
Hon. Mike Feuer	Member, California State Assembly
Mr. Patrick Gardner	Deputy Director, National Center for Youth Law
Ms. Karen Grace-Kaho	Foster Care Ombudsman, CA Department of Social Services
Mr. David Green	Adoption Social Worker, LA Dept of Children and Family Services
Ms. Leslie Heimov	Executive Director, Children's Law Center
Dr. Kathryn Icenhower	Executive Director, SHIELDS for Families, Inc.
Mr. Gordon Jackson	Director, Learning Support and Partnerships Division, California Department of Education (designee of Superintendent Tom Torlakson)

Ms. Chantel Johnson	Legislative and Policy Coordinator, California Youth Connection
Mr. Dennis Jones	Court Executive Officer-Sacramento Superior Court
Dr. Don Kingdon	Deputy Director and Small County Liaison, California Mental Health Directors Association
Ms. Teri Kook	Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation
Mr. Will Lightbourne	Director, California Department of Social Services
Hon. Carol Liu	Member, California State Senate
Mr. Maurice Lyons	Tribal Council Vice Chairman, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Mr. Aubrey Manuel	President, CA State Care Providers Association
Ms. Susan Manzi	Board President, Youth in Mind
Mr. Frank Mecca	Executive Director, CWDA
Ms. Linda Michalowski	Chancellor of CA Community Colleges (designee of Chancellor, Dr. Jack Scott)
Hon. Michael Nash	Presiding Judge, Los Angeles Juvenile Court
Dr. Barbara Needell	Principal Investigator, UC Berkeley
Mr. Donald Pickens	Chair, California State Parent Team
Ms. Brenda Randle	AOD Program Administrator, Kings County Behavioral Health
Ms. Charlene Reid	Director, Tehama County Social Services
Dr. Michael Riley	Director, Orange County Social Services Agency
Ms. Rachel Rios	Chief Deputy Secretary, Juvenile Justice Division
Mr. Carroll Schroeder	Executive Director, CA Alliance of Child and Family Services
Hon. Darrell Steinberg	President pro Tempore, California State Senate
Ms. (Sonja) Kim Suderman	Director, Yolo County Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services
Ms. Rochelle Trochtenberg	Youth Organizer, Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration



**Assembly Bill No. 2216**

**CHAPTER 384**

An act to add Chapter 5.5 (commencing with Section 16540) to Part 4 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to foster care.

[Approved by Governor September 22, 2006. Filed with  
Secretary of State September 22, 2006.]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 2216, Bass. Child Welfare Leadership and Performance Accountability Act of 2006.

Existing law provides for oversight by various state and local entities of certain populations of children, including those who are wards of the juvenile court, and those who are in foster care, or are otherwise under the supervision of county welfare departments. Existing law provides for a system of child welfare services administered by each county, with oversight by the State Department of Social Services.

Existing law also provides for the California Child and Family Service Review System, established by the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001, in order to review all county child welfare systems, covering child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation, family support, and independent living. Under the act, the California Health and Human Services Agency established a workgroup, comprised of representatives of specified entities and organizations, to establish a work plan by which to conduct these reviews.

This bill, the Child Welfare Leadership and Performance Accountability Act of 2006, would establish within the California Health and Human Services Agency the California Child Welfare Council, an advisory body that would be responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and courts that serve children and youth in the child welfare and foster care systems. The bill would provide for the composition of the council, including as cochairs the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court or his or her designee, and the Secretary of California Health and Human Services. The bill would require the secretary to ensure that current federal and state level outcome measures, among other information, are posted on the State Department of Social Services' Internet Web site.

The bill would state the Legislature's intent to inspect other state child welfare and foster care systems over the course of the 2007–08 Legislative Session, for the purpose of examining effective administrative structures of leadership, and to conduct hearings and review recommendations of other commissions and bodies to determine if a reconfigured administrative structure would provide the statewide leadership and

coordination between departments and agencies essential to improving outcomes for current and former foster children and youth throughout the state.

This bill would require the Judicial Council to adopt outcome measures consistent with the outcome indicators specified above, by April 1, 2008.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The State of California undertakes the responsibility of providing a safe environment and developmental opportunities for over 85,000 children and youth who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care because of instances of abuse and neglect.

(b) According to the California Performance Review report, although the state is responsible for ensuring that foster children and youth receive mandated services through several different departments, California's services to support its foster children's basic needs is not nearly sufficient to meet all of their needs. Even though the incidence of emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems among foster children and youth is three to six times greater than among nonfoster children, 25 percent of foster children and youth are not receiving timely medical care, one-half are not receiving needed mental health services and one-half are not receiving dental care. Similarly, 75 percent of foster youth are working below grade level, nearly one-half do not complete high school, and as few as 15 percent attend college. Statewide leadership and coordination between departments and agencies is essential to addressing these dismal outcomes and providing foster children and youth with critically needed support and services at the local level.

(c) Even if the state successfully decreases the number of foster children and youth entering the system, the state must ensure that current foster youth are self-sufficient at the time they emancipate from the system. The state is currently failing in this measure. Unemployment rates for emancipated youth are estimated at 50 percent, nearly one-third of foster children and youth will become homeless within one year of emancipating, fewer than 15 percent of foster youth enroll in college, and approximately one-third of foster youth will be on public assistance shortly after emancipating.

(d) A recent report from the State Department of Social Services found the indirect costs of child mistreatment and foster care, such as juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, and lost productivity to society, total \$95 billion annually. Fiscally sound, long-term investment in the state's children now should reap future savings for the state that can be reinvested to keep at-risk children and families self-sufficient and out of the child welfare system. Moreover, advocating for more flexible federal funding of our state's child welfare system will enable resources to be used to better support families in need and keep more families intact.

(e) In 2001, the Legislature passed the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 (Chapter 678 of the Statutes of 2001), which was an important first step toward improving outcomes for California's foster children and youth. The legislation provided the legal framework for monitoring the county-run child welfare service programs through data collection and review of that data, the ultimate goal being to use the data to improve outcomes for the children and youth in foster care. The first county reviews and improvement plans were implemented in 2004.

(f) In addition to providing services to foster youth, the state's Child Welfare Redesign final report stressed the importance of providing preventative supports to those families who come in contact with child welfare services but whose children are not removed from the home. The goal of these supports is to provide families the tools to prevent a child's removal. This effort results in stronger families and decreased foster care placements. However, successful implementation of preventative services, like foster care, requires a coordinated oversight among many agencies, programs, and services.

(g) Despite this improved oversight and vision for improvement, the child welfare system, including the state, the counties, and the courts, suffers from the lack of a cohesive structure, state leadership, and communication between agencies serving foster children and youth. In 2003, the Little Hoover Commission found that clear leadership and oversight is lacking in California's foster care program and recommended the designation of a new program leader that has the authority to reform the foster care system. Most recently, the California Performance Review report decried this lack of cohesion and similarly concluded that state leadership is needed to repair a foster care system in crisis. The bipartisan national Pew Commission on Foster Care in a report issued last year recommended states establish broad-based commissions on children in foster care to demonstrate effective collaboration on behalf of children.

(h) Creating a comprehensive structure for statewide leadership to address the needs of children in the child welfare system will support and improve the important reform work enacted through the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 by providing clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the state, improving quality assurance and accountability, and facilitating communication between the many stakeholders involved in the child welfare system. Most importantly, these changes will help ensure that California is able to meet the needs of the children and youth in its care.

(i) An independent and impartial ombudsperson that is readily available to the public is essential to protecting the well-being of children, youth, and families.

SEC. 2. This act shall be known and may be cited as the Child Welfare Leadership and Performance Accountability Act of 2006.

SEC. 3. Chapter 5.5 (commencing with Section 16540) is added to Part 4 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

CHAPTER 5.5. CHILD WELFARE LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE  
ACCOUNTABILITY

16540. The California Child Welfare Council is hereby established, which shall serve as an advisory body 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. The council shall monitor and report the extent to which child welfare and foster care programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care. The council shall issue advisory reports whenever it deems appropriate, but in any event, no less frequently than annually, to the Governor, the Legislature, the Judicial Council and the public. A report of the Child Welfare Council shall, at a minimum, include recommendations for all of the following:

(a) Ensuring that all state child welfare, foster care and judicial funding and services for children, youth, and families is, to the greatest extent possible, coordinated to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services provided to children or families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services.

(b) Increasing the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of program services and judicial processes delivered to children, youth, and families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services to achieve better outcomes for these children, youth, and families.

(c) Promoting consistent program and judicial excellence across counties to the greatest extent possible while recognizing the demographic, geographic, and financial differences among the counties.

(d) Increasing collaboration and coordination between county agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and the courts.

(e) Ensuring that all state Title IV-E plans, program improvement plans, and court improvement plans demonstrate effective collaboration between public agencies and the courts.

(f) Assisting the Secretary of California Health and Human Services and the chief justice in formulating policies for the effective administration of the child welfare and foster care programs and judicial processes.

(g) Modifying program practices and court processes, rate structures, and other system changes needed to promote and support relative caregivers, family foster parents, therapeutic placements, and other placements for children who cannot remain in the family home.

(h) Developing data and information sharing agreements and protocols for the exchange of aggregate data across program and court systems that are providing services to children and families in the child welfare system. These data-sharing agreements shall allow child welfare agencies and the courts to access data concerning the health, mental health, special education, and educational status and progress of children served by county child welfare systems subject to state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations. They shall be developed in tandem with the establishment of judicial case management systems as well as additional or

enhanced performance measures described in subdivision (b) of Section 16544.

(i) Developing systematic methods for obtaining policy recommendations from foster youth about the effectiveness and quality of program services and judicial processes, and ensuring that the interests of foster youth are adequately addressed in all policy development.

(j) Implementing legislative enactments in the child welfare and foster care programs and the courts, and reporting to the Legislature on the timeliness and consistency of the implementation.

(k) Monitoring the adequacy of resources necessary for the implementation of existing programs and court processes, and the prioritization of program and judicial responsibilities.

(l) Strengthening and increasing the independence and authority of the foster care ombudsperson.

(m) Coordinating available services for former foster youth and improving outreach efforts to those youth and their families.

16541. The council shall be comprised of the following members:

(a) The Secretary of California Health and Human Services, who shall serve as cochair.

(b) The Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, or his or her designee, who shall serve as cochair.

(c) The Superintendent of Public Instruction, or his or her designee.

(d) The Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, or his or her designee.

(e) The executive director of the State Board of Education.

(f) The Director of Social Services.

(g) The Director of Health Services.

(h) The Director of Mental Health.

(i) The Director of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

(j) The Director of Developmental Services.

(k) The Director of the Youth Authority.

(l) The Administrative Director of the Courts.

(m) The State Foster Care Ombudsperson.

(n) Four foster youth or former foster youth.

(o) The chairpersons of the Assembly Human Services Committee and the Assembly Judiciary Committee, or two other Members of the Assembly as appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.

(p) The chairpersons of the Senate Human Services Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee, or two other members appointed by the President pro Tempore of the Senate.

(q) Leaders and representatives of county child welfare, foster care, health, education, probation, and mental health agencies and departments, child advocacy organizations; labor organizations, recognized professional associations that represent child welfare and foster care social workers, tribal representatives, and other groups and stakeholders that provide benefits, services, and advocacy to families and children in the child

welfare and foster care systems, as recommended by representatives of these groups and as designated by the cochairs.

16541.5. The council shall meet no less frequently than each quarter of the state fiscal year and at the call of the cochairs at a time and location convenient to the public as it may deem appropriate. All meetings of the council shall be open to the public. Members shall serve without compensation, with the exception of foster youth members who shall be entitled to reimbursement for all actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

16542. The cochairs may appoint committees composed of council members, experts in specialized fields, foster youth, program stakeholders, state and county child welfare and foster care staff, child advocacy organizations, members of the judiciary, foster care public health nurses, or any combination thereof, to advise the council on any functions of the council and the services provided through the child welfare and foster care programs and the courts. Members of these committees shall receive no compensation from the state for their services with the exception of foster youth members, who shall be entitled to reimbursement for all actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. The committees may assemble information and make recommendations to the council, but shall not exercise any of the powers vested in the council. The council may seek input from groups and individuals as it deems appropriate including, but not limited to, advisory committees, the judiciary and child welfare and foster care program stakeholders.

16543. Consistent with state and federal law, the council shall have access to aggregate data and information concerning the child welfare and foster care systems held by any state or local department, agency, or court that serves children, youth, and families receiving child welfare and foster care services subject to state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations.

16543.5. It is the intent of the Legislature to inspect other state child welfare and foster care systems over the course of the 2007–08 Legislative Session, for the purpose of examining effective administrative structures of leadership. It is further the intent of the Legislature to conduct legislative hearings through the Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care, and other standing committees, and to review reports and recommendations of other commissions and bodies, including the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care and the Little Hoover Commission, to determine if a reconfigured administrative structure would provide statewide leadership and coordination between departments and agencies, which are essential to improving outcomes for current and former foster children and youth throughout the state.

16544. The secretary shall ensure that all of the federal Child and Family Services Review outcome measures and all of the California Child and Family Service Review System outcome indicators, along with any performance goals and federal outcome standards, are clearly posted on the State Department of Social Service's Internet Web site. Before any of



the federal goals or any of the California Child and Family Service Review System outcome indicators are added, deleted, or amended, the secretary shall consult with the Child Welfare Council and ensure that there has been a public process for the submission of comments and recommendations.

16545. By April 1, 2008, the Judicial Council shall adopt, through rules of court, performance measures designed to complement and promote those measures specified in subdivision (a) of Section 16544 so that courts are able to measure their performance and track their own progress in improving safety, permanency, timeliness, and well-being of children and to inform decisions about the allocation of court resources. In adopting performance measures, the Judicial Council shall consult with the council, and the secretary. The performance measures shall be based on data that is available from current or planned data collection processes and to the greatest extent possible, shall ensure uniformity of data reporting.

**Prevention/Early Intervention Committee Recommendation  
to the California Child Welfare Council  
September 10, 2009**

***Executive Summary***

***Recommendation:*** *The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee of the California Child Welfare Council recommends that California commit, over a reasonable time horizon, to bring Differential Response to scale on a statewide basis.*

The core elements of Differential Response required to prevent child abuse and neglect in California will be identified, framed within the full continuum of prevention, and then applied to a cost/benefit analysis. A robust implementation of Differential Response could greatly reduce the number of children who might otherwise be removed from their home setting and placed into foster care. Regulatory and fiscal impact, along with implementation guidance from existing evidence-based practice frameworks, will be explored during the coming year.

**Prevention** is broadly construed as absence of, or reduction in risk of child maltreatment. Prevention therefore means avoiding identification by Child Welfare Services, avoiding re-entry into the system, or promoting quick exit from the system.

The potential for bringing Differential Response, starting with Path 1, to scale in California presents an opportunity to formalize the full prevention continuum across all families that encounter the Child Welfare Services (CWS) System in close partnership with other child-serving departments, and community partners. Cross-over with the California Child Welfare Council's Data Committee, and CDSS/CFSR Differential Response Committee are anticipated.

**Strategic Actions:**

1. Identify and standardize core elements of Differential Response specific to California.
2. Prioritize eligibility and streamline access to all departments of the Health and Human Services Agency and other public partners.
3. Coordinate prevention/early intervention focus and activities with strategic partners.
4. Determine the scope of resource and funding requirements for full implementation of Differential Response.
5. Develop a process for the delivery of guidance for implementation of Differential Response.
6. Establish performance-based outcomes for Prevention/Early Intervention systems in California.

Addressing the system infrastructure and service needs for children and families will complete the continuum of prevention, build on the strengths that the CWS has already established, and will improve the lives of California's children and families.

## **Background: Prevention/Early Intervention**

### **California's Prevention Continuum**

As of July 1, 2008 there were just over 68,000 children in foster care in California, an unprecedented improvement over the past ten years when the foster care caseload exceeded 108,000 in 1998. While this reduction is significant, California's child welfare system still lacks a full complement of resources and structure to prevent children and their families from unnecessarily entering the foster care system in the first place.

Each year up to 33% of all reports to the Child Protection Hotline represent repeat referrals of the same families from the previous year<sup>i</sup>. During the 11 county pilot phase of Differential Response implementation, only 68 of 2,605 Los Angeles children were subsequently re-referred for incidences of child abuse or neglect when Differential Response Paths 1 and 2 were in place<sup>ii</sup>. In full alignment with the value at the core of federal and state child welfare law, Differential Response is an evidence-based approach to keeping children safe, while preventing removal from their homes and families<sup>iii</sup>.

*Prevention*, as used throughout this document, is intended to reflect a full spectrum of activities (along with the infrastructure and service array required) from preventing children and families from being identified to the child welfare system (primary prevention), to early intervention once they are identified by the CWS hotline (secondary prevention), and then preventing them from further penetrating into the system, or reentry, once they have entered (tertiary prevention). Addressing the full continuum of prevention requires full implementation of Differential Response. The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will prioritize a robust Path 1.

### **Differential Response**

Differential Response is an evidence-based approach to preventing child abuse and neglect by ensuring child safety through expanding the ability of child welfare agencies to respond to reports of child maltreatment. It has been implemented statewide in 11 states. According to the national study on Differential Response in child welfare, it is generally applied to low and moderate risk cases with no immediate safety concerns. Those cases are offered timely, strengths-based services without a formal determination or substantiation of child abuse or neglect<sup>iv</sup>.

In California, Differential Response includes a broader set of responses (than the traditional approach), at the Child Protection Hotline decision making level, for working with families at the first signs of trouble, including innovative partnerships with community based organizations that can help meaningfully support families who are at-risk for child maltreatment, and otherwise could potentially enter the child welfare system<sup>v</sup>. Definitions of pathways, criteria for assignment, and scope of implementation varies widely from county to county. There is currently no regulatory policy defining or requiring Differential Response in California<sup>vi</sup>.

Differential Response is an approach to practice, not a practice initiative. As such it represents a fundamental shift in core child welfare practice, and will require infrastructure, fiscal, and regulatory shifts to support full implementation.

In California Differential Response refers only to the *selection* of Paths 1 – 3, and is distinguished from the delivery of services that follows subsequent to the selection of the pathway<sup>vii</sup>. Although specific criteria for paths varies from county to county, generally<sup>viii</sup>:

- **Path 1** - Community Response is chosen when a Child Welfare Services (CWS) report does not meet the statutory definitions of abuse or neglect, but the family appears to be at-risk and needs support that could be addressed by community services. The family is referred to community providers and can either voluntarily participate in or refuse these services.
- **Path 2** Child Welfare Services and Community Response is chosen when a CWS report meets statutory definitions of abuse and neglect, the risk to the child is low to moderate, and assessment indicates that with targeted services, a family is willing and likely to make needed changes to improve child safety. This path focuses on voluntary involvement in services, but in the interest of protecting the child, the authority of the court may be utilized.
- **Path 3** – Child Welfare Services Response is chosen when a CWS report meets statutory definitions of abuse and neglect and the risk to a child is moderate to high, and action is necessary to protect the child. Actions may be taken with or without a family’s consent. This is the path that is most similar to the child welfare system’s traditional response.

### **Prevention/Early Intervention Recommendation**

**The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee of the California Child Welfare Council recommends that California commit, over a reasonable time horizon, to bring Differential Response to scale on a statewide basis, with an emphasis on Path 1.**

The potential for bringing Differential Response Path 1 to scale in California presents an opportunity to formalize the full prevention continuum across all families that encounter the Child Welfare Services System in close partnership with other child-serving departments, and community partners. Brining Differential Response to scale statewide will help achieve the desired outcomes of:

- Strengthening families by building protective capacity;
- Ensuring fewer referrals to the Child Protection Hotline;
- Prioritized eligibility and streamlined access to all departments of the HHS; and
- Increasing community capacity (Community Partnership) to share responsibility for child protection and family stability with CWS.

Addressing the system infrastructure and service needs for children and families will complete the continuum of prevention, build on the strengths that the Child Welfare Services system has already established, and will improve the lives of California's children and families.

The following details the sequential process of analysis and deliberation on the part of the committee to arrive at the preceding recommendation.

### **Problem Description:**

1. **Access to voluntary services are required to strengthen families and build protective capacity, but are severely limited. There are significant barriers to accessing those that do exist.** Statewide, families who are referred to the Child Welfare System do not have sufficient service options available to them to avoid either penetrating further into the system in order to receive services (child removal from home and entry to foster care), or are not receiving any services at all until family circumstances deteriorate to the point where re-referral occurs and removal is the likely response. Child Welfare Services is the primary, and in many cases sole, gateway to services. An effective prevention and early intervention system would allow families to access services directly, rather than enter the child welfare system in order to receive them.

The Prevention/Early Intervention committee recognizes the importance of building capacity for locally operated systems that can provide families with the tools they need in order to keep children from entering the child welfare/foster care system. A Differential Response approach provides families and the counties' child welfare systems the ability to identify those additional service options that are available locally in hopes of maintaining children in a safe home setting. Collaboration with and between public agencies and community-based organizations has not been maximized and integrated sufficiently to increase resources. Further, this requires that governmental agencies other than Child Welfare agencies, such as county mental health agencies, health services agencies, substance abuse treatment agencies, educational systems, tribes, and others, establish priority eligibility for these at risk families.

2. **Early implementation of Differential Response is inconsistent and incomplete, and therefore additional focus is required to establish core elements for standardization.** In the absence of a state policy, Differential Response has yet to be taken statewide. In collaboration with the California Department of Social Services – Children and Family Services Division (CDSS/CFSD), and Casey Family Programs, California counties actively participated in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, for implementing Differential Response in California (2007). However, participating counties have not consistently implemented or continued implementation of Differential Response. This may be for many reasons, but likely due to the cost of implementation in leaner financial times, possible staff and leadership changes, geographic location and availability of

services, and counties inability to shift core child welfare funding to contribute to the ongoing cost of supporting Differential Response cases.

3. **Due in part to California's divergence from the established core elements of Differential Response nationally, core elements required for the success of Differential Response in California are yet unverified.** California funded the "Eleven-County Pilot Program", beginning in 2000, which also included funding to evaluate the outcomes associated with Differential Response leading to the evaluation report which was issued in February 2008. This report cited the limitations of attempting to measure and track changes in counties that have implemented Differential Response, particularly since Differential Response programs were not implemented at the same time in all counties, nor were they implemented countywide in many counties. The evaluation report indicated that the incorporation of a standardized safety tool in the pilot counties actually increased the number of substantiated referrals reported by the pilot counties as the information collected provided a clearer picture of when children need to be removed from the home setting. The evaluation report also cited county concerns regarding the increased cost of implementing the pilot strategies. However over time; the report further indicated that these strategies are likely to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the child welfare system, decreasing overall costs to the state and the counties<sup>ix</sup>.

With all the information that has been collected on the Differential Response approach, the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee believes that there are core elements that could be made consistent across the counties in order to improve the lives of those who are at risk, and could become, part of the California Child Welfare system. During the upcoming year, this committee will evaluate what those core elements may be, including prioritization of families at risk of entering foster care.

#### **Current Federal, State, and/or Local Efforts to Address Issues and Challenges:**

- **Quality Improvement Center for Differential Response** In 2008 the federal Administration for Children, Youth and Families funded a Quality Improvement Center for Differential Response, administered by the American Humane Association and its partners. The purposes of this project, through research design and implementation, are to: (1) improve child welfare outcomes by implementing Differential Response, and build cutting-edge, innovative and replicable knowledge about Differential Response; (2) enhance capacity at the local level to improve outcomes for children and families identified for suspected abuse or neglect; and (3) provide guidance on best practices in Differential Response. While the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee recognizes that the California Differential Response approach differs from other states by the inclusion of its Path I option, and regulatory limitations, the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will be in a position to transfer and apply learning from this effort to California counties.



- **Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project funding** California is continuing to provide Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Project funding to all 58 counties to enhance/modify their existing service delivery systems to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families consistent with the strategies contained in the county System Improvement Plan (SIP) that are approved by each county's Board of Supervisors. Additionally, the eleven Child Welfare Services Program Improvement pilot counties can access these funds to support their efforts to implement the three key improvement strategies (Standardized Safety Assessment Process, the Differential Response Approach and Permanency for children and youth).
- **Title IV-E Waiver** The California Department of Social Services is conducting the Title IV-E Waiver in two key counties that are expected to demonstrate that flexibility in using what is now restricted funding for out of home care, would allow states to more appropriately and effectively serve children and families via the provision of early intervention services. If this pilot is successful, it is expected that Title IV-E funds would become available to better serve families prior to removal of children from their homes and communities. Promising practices in the waiver counties have already resulted in significant reductions in out of home care and length of stay in foster care. These programs will continue to be monitored for potential replication.
- **State Prevention-Specific Funding & Prevention Frameworks** The California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) also provides an array of funding (both state and federal sources) that counties use for prevention, intervention and treatment services. These resources support local services that may be utilized for Differential Response referrals. CDSS/OCAP also directs funding to community based organizations that may use the resources to support Differential Response directly (i.e. Strategies' High Performance Partnership Project), or indirectly (i.e. the Chadwick Centers' California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare). CDSS/OCAP-funded prevention efforts are being formalized under two prevention frameworks: (1) Pathways for the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in partnership with Harvard University, and (2) Strengthening families, in partnership with the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

### **Strategic Actions:**

1. **Identify and standardize core elements of Differential Response specific to California.** This effort will require additional research to determine what key program components (core elements) need to be included to maximize the likelihood of consistent, standardized program interventions succeeding in preventing child maltreatment; what infrastructure changes are needed; and what resources will be required to fully fund the implementation of Differential Response statewide. In partnership, the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will gather and analyze existing and emerging data to determine the core elements of Differential Response that could successfully lead to the prevention of child maltreatment in California.

This will include, but not be limited to retrospective, California-specific research on Differential Response, along with systematic research in other venues nationally that have successfully reduced foster care placements through use of Differential Response. The Committee will work in close partnership to exchange learning with the American Humane Association's Quality Improvement Center and the federally funded Child Welfare Information Gateway, which disseminates information from all nine National Resource Centers.

2. **Prioritize eligibility and streamline access to all departments of the Health and Human Services Agency and other public partners.** The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will explore the implications of prioritization and make recommendations to guide implementation. Early indications point strongly to one of the core elements being prioritization of families at-risk for maltreatment for supports and services that include housing, alcohol and drug treatment, mental health, and other services in order to create a robust Differential Response. (Differential Response can only work when there is also a robust, multidisciplinary community-based sector to receive referrals from the Hotline and work directly with families.)

Implementation of Differential Response statewide will require that the State, in partnership with the Child Welfare Council, evaluate the benefits and meaning of what it would be to prioritize families at risk of child maltreatment for supports and services that include housing, alcohol and drug treatment, mental health, and other services designed to address the major family risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect. These services need to be broadly accessible to all families who may need or request services on the local level, in coordination with the respective State agencies.

3. **Coordinate focus and activities with strategic partners.** Increased collaboration and coordination among the programs, services and processes administered by the multiple agencies and courts that serve children and youth in California's child welfare system is essential to the success and efficiency of this proposal. Strategic partners will include, but will not be limited to:
  - Children youth, and family-serving departments within California's Health and Human Services Agency including:
    - Department of Drug and Alcohol Services
    - Department of Mental Health
    - Department of Social Services
    - Department of Public Health
    - Department of Developmental Services
    - Department of Health Care Services
  - Other public partners
    - Department of Education
  - Public Child Welfare Directors
  - Administrative Office of the Courts and the local Blue Ribbon Commissions
  - Community-based service providers:

- Family Resource Centers/Family Strengthening Agencies
- Child Abuse Prevention Councils
- Tribal Social Services
- State and Local First 5
- Foundation Partners

**Note:** The CDSS/CFSD Program Improvement Plan Steering Committee has stated their intention to form a workgroup on Differential Response, pending the finalization of California's Program Improvement Plan. This new group will be tasked with identifying core elements of Differential Response, and projecting resource needs to fully fund its implementation. Note that this is an overlap with strategies proposed by the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee. Although the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee proposes to focus primarily on Path 1 of Differential Response, they will work in close partnership with the Differential Response Workgroup so as to transfer learning and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

**4. Determine the scope of resource and funding requirements for full implementation of Differential Response.** In partnership, determine cost estimate and cost benefits of Differential Response.

The approach may likely mirror that taken by the Washington State Public Policy institute which used cost avoidance (of services associated with penetration into the child welfare system) estimates as the primary measure<sup>x</sup>.

The Committee will also look at existing estimates of the cost per family to deliver Differential Response. A recent Casey Family Programs survey requested by the Child Welfare Council's Prevention/Early Intervention Committee and CWDA estimated the average monthly cost of services to be \$658 for Path 1 and \$577 for Path 2. (This estimate should be considered a starting place only, as core elements tended to vary across counties and were therefore averaged out.)

In order to determine feasibility of statewide implementation of Differential Response in county practice from a cost/benefit standpoint, close partnering and coordination with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, Department of Mental Health, the Differential Response Workgroup (soon to be formed at the request of the Program Improvement Plan Steering Committee) and other identified strategic partners will be essential.

**5. Develop a process for the delivery of implementation guidance.** Once the core elements of Differential Response for California are identified, the required funding has been estimated, and implementation feasibility is established, the committee will request the California Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health, and Alcohol and Drug Programs to jointly issue guidelines for implementation of Differential Response including required core elements and guidance regarding model fidelity.

This will require close partnering and coordination with the Child Welfare Council's Data Committee, as they are in the process of identifying information barriers to

information sharing and confidentiality. The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will also work with Alcohol and Drug Programs, the Department of Mental Health, and other appropriate departments at the state and county level to identify and coordinate how the system is working already.

- 6. Establish performance-based outcomes.** Standards and procedures for management of confidentiality and quality monitoring of both publically administered, as well as community-based services, need to be established. Success could be measured by increased participation by at risk families of CWS referrals in community based services, completion of programs identified to reduce risk factors for child abuse and neglect, improved child well-being, and reduced recidivism and reduced entry into foster care. Data tracking systems must be adapted to support Path 1. The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will work closely with the Data Committee on the overlapping issues identified here and elsewhere in this document.

### **Statutory and Regulatory Impact:**

- Although the national trend is to adopt legislation to require the implementation and practice of Differential, or Alternative Response, in California Differential Response is not currently required statutorily. A legislative mandate is not currently considered a core element of Differential Response for California, however the committee will continue to explore this issue. Such a statutory change could create a state mandate to fully fund its implementation. A statutory change would also require a change in Division 31 Regulations (which contain child welfare rules and regulations) so that the fundamental shift in practice would be made clear, and core elements would be specifically articulated.
- Provisions for increased information sharing between CWS and contracted and non-contracted community service providers may become necessary in order to build adequate capacity for providing preventive services to families. If this proves to be the case based on research evidence, there may be a need to clarify the limits and means by the State Attorney General. The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will refer to and coordinate with the Data Committee of the Child Welfare Council.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

Although counties would be trained and encouraged to redirect their existing child welfare allocations in support of Differential Response, there would still have to be a sizable State investment (in addition to the sizable investment already made specific to the implementation of Differential Response, starting in 2000) to implement Differential Response in all counties and county-wide. A cost estimate and cost benefit analysis would have to be created for this purpose, to project actual costs of service delivery and infrastructure changes and support, and would also include cost avoidance projections.

The Washington State Public Policy institute's process for estimating the cost of preventing children from entering and remaining in the child welfare system will be considered and possibly

utilized for this purpose. The Committee will also look at existing estimates of the cost per family to deliver Differential Response, and will account for the possible inconsistencies they may contain. The Prevention/Early Intervention Committee will work in the coming year to identify additional possible resources to engage in this analysis.

Strategies that maximize and leverage the flexibility of existing funding (such as the IV-E Waiver Demonstration) will be prioritized for consideration. This includes leveraging services and resources from other systems that could strengthen the continuum of care for families at risk of entering the child welfare system.

### **Evaluation Plan:**

- During the upcoming year, the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee will develop the criteria for evaluating the efforts to expand the consistent use of Differential Response as a prevention/early intervention strategy.
- The criteria must include specific indicators of success (including improved child well-being, increased self-referrals of at-risk families to community-based services, and reduced recidivism and reduced entry into foster care.)
- The Prevention/Early Intervention Evaluation Plan will be modeled after other effective models within the state and nationally, and would draw upon existing data, including, but not limited to :
  - University of California at Berkeley extract data (provided quarterly to counties in support of System Improvement Planning efforts) based on CWS/CMS;
  - The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs' established data compliance standards for the California Outcomes Measurement System (CalOMS). CalOMS data collection and outcomes measurement objectives, include effective management of and improvement of the provision of treatment services provided to AOD clients at the State, county and provider levels.
  - County Mental Health Client & Service Information (CSI), which includes statistical information and reports about county mental health programs using the Client and Service Information (CSI) system. Data are provided monthly by county mental health programs and summarized at the state level.
  - Children's Resource Center's quarterly report of Structured Decision-Making outcomes for California. Note that this data already shows that in California, when Differential Response Path 1 is implemented, there are fewer reports to the Child Protection Hotline<sup>xi</sup>.

## References

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<sup>i</sup> CWS Redesign: The Future of California's Child Welfare Services, Final Report, September 2003, Pg 21; Choosing the Path Less Traveled, Schene & Oppenheim, 2005 pg 1; Child Welfare Services System Improvements 11 County Pilot Implementation Evaluation, Initial Assessment Phase 2007.

<sup>ii</sup> Child Welfare Services System Improvements 11 County Pilot Implementation Evaluation, Initial Assessment Phase 2007, page 40.

<sup>iii</sup> Merkel-Holguin, L., Kaplan, C., Kwak, A. (2006) National Study on Differential Response in Child Welfare. American Humane Association and Child Welfare League of America. Pg. 83

<sup>iv</sup> Exploring Differential Response: One Pathway Toward Reforming Child Welfare, Protecting Children, Kaplan & Merkel-Holguin, Volume 23, Numbers 1 & 2, 2008 pg 9

<sup>v</sup> Implementing Differential Response in California: Promising practices and Lessons learned, 2007 pg 1

<sup>vi</sup> According to the California Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Policy & Program Development Bureau, Policy Development & Support Unit, there is no one single state endorsed definition for Differential Response. The CDSS Policy Bureau is in the process of editing Differential Implementation guidelines that, once released, will contain a standard definition for Differential Response and its three paths. Personal communication with Policy Analyst, 6/4/09.

<sup>vii</sup> A Proposal to Test the Effectiveness of California's Differential Response Community Services Strategy, Ursula Bischoff and Tom Hanson, WestEd, 2009 Slide 7

<sup>viii</sup> Child Welfare Services System Improvements 11 County Pilot Implementation Evaluation, Initial assessment Phase 2007, page 37.

<sup>ix</sup> Wright, M., Tickler, S., Vernor, K., (2008) Eleven-County Pilot Project Evaluation Report. California Department of Social Services.

<sup>x</sup> Evidence-based Programs to Prevent Children From Entering and remaining in the Child Welfare System: Benefits and Costs for Washington, The Washington State Institute for Public Policy, July 2008 pg 1.

<sup>xi</sup> California Structured Decision Making For Child Welfare Services 2009 Combined Counties Annual Report, Children's Research Center, Madison, Wisconsin, slides 25 and 26.



**Permanency Committee Recommendations  
to the California Child Welfare Council  
September 10, 2009**

***Executive Summary***

**Recommendation:** *The Permanency Committee of the California Child Welfare Council recommends a statewide commitment to increase the number of children who have positive permanency outcomes<sup>i</sup> through the implementation of Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) in all 58 California counties. FFE is a demonstrated model for identifying, engaging, and sustaining permanent connections for children and youth in care, and transitioning those youth to permanency.*

Having reviewed the critical research and evidence, as well as surveyed all 58 California counties regarding existing practice, the Permanency Committee (committee) of the California Child Welfare Council has identified the structure and resources needed to ensure that: 1) children and youth in foster care are able to maintain and develop permanent connections with relatives and other important individuals in their lives that will be in place long after court involvement; and 2) the length of time children are in foster care is reduced as a result of the identification of these permanent connections.

The current recommendations identify the necessary components of successful FFE implementation, at both the statewide and local levels, as well as a vehicle for local implementation - the local commissions established by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Implementation success will be measured through both process and outcome evaluations, with expected improved permanency outcomes in the areas of the type and level of placements, the number of placement changes, and the time to exit to permanency.

**Strategic Approach:**

1. Promote collaboration and implementation of FFE through local commissions.
2. Facilitate collaboration and implementation of FFE on the part of the state child welfare, probation and court systems.
3. Provide for sustainability of FFE through training and technical assistance.

Statewide implementation of FFE will assist the state in coming into compliance with new federal legislation, the Fostering Connections Act, which mandates FFE activities. Implementation of the committee's recommendations will also support pending state legislation, Assembly Bill 938, and will require further regulatory change as related to both the California Rules of Court and Division 31 regulations. The fiscal impact of the recommendations varies widely based upon the specific approach to be undertaken by each county.

## **Background: Permanency**

California has made great progress in the area of permanency during the past few years because of a shift in culture and practice within child welfare as evidenced by child welfare data and evidence from the field.. The data shows that the number of children with new entries into foster care has remained constant, while overall social worker caseloads have gone down, suggestive of increased efforts to achieve permanency for children already in care. And there is universal consensus around the fact that all foster children and youth need and deserve lifelong connections with family and supportive adults. Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) practices have proven effective in not only finding and rekindling those connections, but have also resulted in improved permanency outcomes for children and youth.

FFE refers to the process of identifying and connecting close and distant relatives, non-relative extended family members, and tribes of Native American children, to children and youth in foster care. These connections can provide potential placement or guardianship options and/or can support children and youth simply by establishing meaningful relationships.

As opposed to traditional child welfare and probation practice which focuses primarily on custodial parents and perhaps grandparents, the finding family aspect of FFE practice is an immediate, and wide-reaching search for relatives and other important people in a child's life. These searches typically follow up on information garnered through child/youth interviews and often involve use of internet search engines. In addition to the search for connections, FFE involves contacting and engaging connections identified, and developing and modifying plans for both sustaining connections and achieving permanency for children and youth.

The purpose of FFE is thus two-fold:

1. To ensure that children and youth in care are able to maintain and develop permanent connections with relatives and other important individuals in their lives that will be in place long after court involvement; and
2. To reduce the length of time children are in foster care.

For the first time in California, there is an alignment of local FFE initiatives and statewide and national permanency agendas. The federal government, through legislation and the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)<sup>ii</sup> has mandated the practice of FFE. The state has responded by proposing legislation, adopting a Program Improvement Plan that incorporates FFE strategies, and making recommendations to implement FFE through the Blue Ribbon Commission on Foster Care. The current recommendations provide a detailed blueprint for how the current statewide and national momentum to find family for children and youth in care can be effectively harnessed and realized at the local level.

## Permanency Recommendation

**The permanency Committee of the California Child Welfare Council recommends a statewide commitment to increase the number of children who have positive permanency outcomes through the implementation of Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) in all 58 California counties.**

To facilitate statewide implementation of FFE, it is further suggested that:

- FFE be implemented for all children and that the practice be commenced as soon as the juvenile petition is filed with the court; and that
- The Child Welfare Council's Prevention/Early Intervention Committee consider adopting a FFE recommendation with respect to children not yet in care, but who are at risk of entering either through the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

### **Problem Description:**

- 1. Multiple Placements/Missed Opportunities** Typically, the child welfare system focuses on legal permanency, specifically, reunifying children with a custodial parent if it is safe to do so or pursuing an alternative permanent plan, such as adoption or guardianship. While the focus is on family reunification and finding family placements, extended family members, and even fathers, are often not identified. When they are identified, it is often late in the life of a case, when multiple failed placements and extended periods of disconnection have already contributed to the potential for severe damage to children and youth in care. Placing children with relatives or non-relative extended family members early on allows foster children to maintain family and community connections, and often reduces the number of subsequent placement changes, prevents children from entering higher levels of care, and reduces the number of children aging out of the foster care system.<sup>iii</sup>
- 2. Poorer Outcomes than for Youth in the General Population** The results of this failure to establish a broad network for children and youth in care are dire. As many as 5,000 youth in California reach the age of 18 every year without reunifying with their own families or being placed in other permanent families. Multiple studies document the overwhelming challenges that former foster youth face when they emancipate from foster care. Some of the most frequently-cited are a series of reports from the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall based on the *Midwest Study of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth*.<sup>iv</sup> These reports document that youth who "age out" of foster care are more than twice as likely as other youth to have dropped out of high school, and are less likely to attend college, less likely to be employed, more likely to rely on government assistance, more likely to have children, more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs, and more likely to be arrested. All too often, entrance in the foster care system strips children of not only their custodial parents, but also the vast network of their extended family connections and friends. The resulting isolation and associated grief and loss, can lead to ongoing behavioral issues for children in care.<sup>v</sup>

- 3. Disproportionality** The failure of the system to achieve permanency negatively affects all children in care, with a disproportionate impact on African American and Native American children. A review of the literature on both the scope and nature of disproportionality in the child welfare system concludes that children's experiences differ by race and ethnicity at all system decision points except for reentry into foster care. Because children of color are more likely to enter the foster care system and be placed outside their homes than their white counterparts, increasing the number of these children placed with family members would reduce disproportionality in the child welfare system and the eventual pathway that many follow into the juvenile justice system.<sup>vi</sup> The committee's recommendations build on existing FFE work at the national, state, and local levels to implement FFE for all children and will necessarily lead to the improvement of permanency outcomes while reducing disproportionality in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

### **Current Federal, State and/or Local Efforts to address Issues and Challenges:**

#### ***California Practice-Local Level***

- **All County Survey Conducted** California has made great efforts to implement FFE. While many California counties have implemented some elements of FFE, no county is engaging in the practice universally for all children in care. Before developing its recommendations, the committee surveyed child welfare directors and court appointed counsel in California counties statewide to solicit information about the type and extent of local FFE practice. Those surveys, together with considerable committee discussion, identified significant barriers to broad FFE implementation as follows: funding and resources; staff resistance and turnover; lack of leadership/champions; lack of written protocols; multiple initiatives without statewide coordination and support; difficulty in bringing about culture change; inability to share confidential information; lack of technical assistance across systems; and county silos.
- **Successful Pilots/Transfer of Learning** Nevertheless, limited-scale FFE pilot programs have thrived in several jurisdictions statewide. Consistent with national data, all of these California efforts have resulted in improved permanency outcomes for pilot program youth.<sup>vii</sup> Information regarding four California pilot programs, in Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, and Sacramento counties, is provided in Addendum 1.

#### ***National-Legislation***

- **Federal Fostering Connections Act** The Federal Government passed HR 6893, *Fostering Connection to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act* (Fostering Connections Act), in October of 2008 (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351). The Fostering Connections Act will improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care in part through its mandate of FFE implementation, and specific provisions which facilitate that required implementation. The Fostering Connections Act:

- Requires that every state foster care plan provide that, within 30 days after removal of a child from the parent's or parents' custody, the state shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents) and: (1) explain the relatives' options to participate in the child's care and placement; (2) describe the requirements to become a foster family home, and the additional services and supports available for children placed in such a home; and (3) explain the availability, if any, of kinship guardianship assistance payments.
- Allows the state child welfare system to access Federal Parent Locator Services for the purpose of finding parents.
- Appropriates \$15 million annually for Family Connection Grants to support relative caregivers in obtaining services for their children, intensive FFE, family group decision-making meetings for children in the child welfare system, and residential family treatment programs. The funding will be allocated pursuant to the Family Connection Discretionary Grants program,<sup>viii</sup> a competitive solicitation that was posted on May 4, 2009, with a due date of July 6, 2009.

### ***California–Legislation***

- **eAssembly Bill 938** (Feuer, Brownley, Evans, Jones, Krekorian, Lieu, and Monning), sponsored by the Judicial Council, seeks to ensure better outcomes for children in foster care by implementing the notice requirement of the federal Fostering Connections Act. California must implement this requirement by January 1, 2010, or risk loss of significant federal foster care funds. AB 938 implements this federal mandate by requiring a social worker, when a child is removed from the home, to immediately begin conducting, *within 30 days*, an investigation, as specified in the bill, in order to identify and locate all grandparents, adult siblings, and other adult relatives of the child, in order to provide an explanation of various options to participate in the care and placement of the child. Further, the bill requires the child welfare agency to report to the court at the initial petition hearing regarding specified efforts.
- **TAssesmbly Bill 12** Through both AB 938, and concurrently pending legislation, Assembly Bill 12 (a two-year bill), which allows for the optional extension of dependency court jurisdiction to age 21, California is poised to comply with federal mandates to provide comprehensive family searching and engagement within 30 days of a child's initial removal, and to continue those efforts for youth still in foster care until age 21. The proposed recommendations lay out a framework for California to achieve these ends.

### ***California - Statewide Initiatives on Permanency***

- **The California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership<sup>ix</sup>** (Partnership) is a public-private partnership whose purpose is improving the lives of children and families who are in or are at risk of entering the state's child welfare system. Formed in 2006, the Partnership includes organizations committed to investing in the practices and supportive infrastructure that will improve the child welfare outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being.

The Partnership has prioritized permanent connections for children and youth, and specifically made key investments in FFE practice by seeding the formation of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) in 2003. CPYP is the leading organization in California championing FFE practice to achieve permanency for older children and youth in California so that no youth leaves the California child welfare system without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

- **Permanency Sustainability Workgroup** During 2008, the Partnership formed a Permanency Sustainability Workgroup comprised of 40 stakeholders who combined their systems and practice expertise to develop a plan for sustaining youth permanency in California, the culmination of which was a policy paper, *Permanency—A Statewide Approach to Sustainability*, containing essential strategies for permanency sustainability. Though the charge of the Permanency Sustainability Workgroup was to sustain "older youth permanency" training in California, the group was aware of and emphasized the need to broaden the focus beyond training, including technical assistance to support program development, organizational change, and implementation. The group also consistently recommended that sustainability address effective permanency practices for all foster children and youth regardless of age, in both dependency and delinquency cases, at the start of and throughout the life of a case. Inasmuch as training alone does not change systems, the group consensus was that sustainability needed to be approached from a cross-systems perspective with clear leadership, accountability and support provided for local implementation of key practices areas.

The strategic approach recommended by the committee is consistent with the Partnership's longstanding work in this area and that of the Permanency Sustainability Workgroup.

### **Strategic Actions:**

1. **Promote Collaboration and Implementation through Local Commissions.** The committee recommends that the presiding juvenile court judge in each county, in collaboration with the child welfare director and chief probation officer, and under the auspices of the local commissions, adopt a written local FFE protocol, that is consistent with the permanency principles outlined in the Partnership's policy paper, *Permanency—A Statewide Approach to Sustainability*, and that reflects:
  - the goal of increasing positive permanency outcomes for all children and youth in foster care through implementation of FFE;
  - the target population for the initial or continuing FFE effort;
  - a plan with timelines showing when FFE will be implemented for every child starting from the date the juvenile petition was filed;
  - the roles and responsibilities for FFE activities for each stakeholder;
  - the participatory collaborative team meeting model to be used in local FFE efforts;
  - permissions and communication protocols that ensure confidentiality; and
  - the method and process by which the county's implementation of FFE will be evaluated.

Each local commission would be responsible for implementing its FFE protocol. Each protocol component is described more specifically in Addendum 2.

- **Shared Responsibility/Phased Approach** The committee is sensitive to the workload implications associated with a recommendation to implement FFE universally, at one time. In light of these very real workload considerations, the committee recommends shared responsibility for FFE activities among all system partners (see *Roles and Responsibilities* Addendum 2), and that the local commissions develop an achievable plan for phased-in implementation of FFE for all children.
- **Permanency Teams** While the social worker or probation officer should coordinate all FFE activities in a given case, the committee recommends that specific FFE activities be carried out by members of “permanency teams” (see Addendum 2 for full listing of team members.) Together the permanency teams will carry out the six discrete, iterative implementation activities (also listed in Addendum 2). The committee recommends that the local protocol identify the primary responsible person/persons for each required activities and ensure that the social worker or probation officer be the one to coordinate all FFE activities in a given case.

2. **Facilitate collaboration and implementation on the part of the state child welfare, probation and court systems.** The committee recommends that the state and local child welfare, probation, and court systems take each of the steps listed in Addendum 3 to facilitate FFE implementation. The Administrative Office of the Courts, California Department of Social Services, local child welfare agencies, and probation departments each have a vital, interlocking role to play to ensure success.

3. **Facilitate sustainability through training and technical assistance**

Consistent with the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership’s statewide approach to permanency sustainability, the committee recommends that curricula and tools be developed for all system partners and that technical assistance including related organizational training and transfer of learning supports be made available and utilized.

- The committee recommends that the AOC, CalCASA, CalSWEC, and the Regional Training Academies develop, at a minimum, consistent FFE cross-system curricula, technical assistance supports and transfer of learning tools for all system partners;
- The committee recommends that current and former foster youth be involved in the development of curricula;
- The committee recommends that the AOC, CalCASA, CDSS, CalSWEC, and the Regional Training Academies train all system partners involved in FFE activities with recommended curricula;
- The committee recommends that CalSWEC, the Inter-University Consortium, and the Regional Training Academies incorporate FFE practices into core training requirements for social workers and social worker supervisors;

similarly, it is recommended that CPOC incorporate FFE practices into basic training requirements for probation officers and their supervisors;

- The committee recommends that, if the Justice Corps grant is awarded, the AOC and CDSS develop guidance for local child welfare agencies, probation departments, and the courts regarding the use of Justice Corps volunteers for FFE activities at the local level; and
- The committee recommends that the AOC, CalCASA, and the Regional Training Academies coordinate efforts to provide technical assistance locally or regionally to sustain local FFE practice.

### **Statutory and Regulatory Impact:**

The strategic approach identified here does not require any new legislation. The federal government has already mandated that the states conduct family search and engagement, for children up to the age of 21. If the California Legislature passes AB 12 and AB 938, it will have the enabling legislation to comply with the federal mandates. As outlined in the Collaboration and Implementation section above, the strategic approach does contemplate new rules of court and child welfare regulations, as a way of promoting comprehensive and uniform FFE implementation.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

The committee was sensitive to the fiscal impact of its recommendations, and took care to examine the costs associated with current county implementation and existing projections for statewide implementation, in determining the fiscal impact of recommendation implementation. Because the strategic approach proposed contemplates local flexibility in implementing FFE—recommending that the local commissions determine how best to staff and coordinate FFE activities, statewide implementation costs are difficult to determine.

The committee conducted an informal cost analysis of four pilot programs in Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Nevada and Placer counties. The table below identifies each program's implementation costs: Los Angeles had a cost of \$8,787 per youth; Alameda had a cost of \$9,500 per youth; Sacramento, Nevada and Placer had a cost of \$4,099 per youth; and Kern had a cost of \$1,867 per youth. Caseloads varied from 10 to 26 for a full time FFE worker:



**Table 1: Cost Analysis of Four FFE Programs**

	<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>Alameda</b>	<b>Sacramento, Nevada and Placer</b>	<b>Kern</b>
County or Private	<b>County</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>County</b>
Staffing	Social Workers	Social Workers	One Family Finder Two Youth Permanency Workers	Social Workers
Full or Part-time	Part time	Full time	Full time	Full time
Number of Workers	80 (40 FTE)	8	3	1
Number of Cases	745	80	101	30
Cases per worker	26 (13 half-time)	10	24	30
Total Cost	\$6,546,321	\$760,000	\$414,000	\$56,000
Time Frame for Cost Analysis	1 year	6 months	3 years	1 year
Cost per Case	8,787	9,500	4,099	1,867

The committee obtained an estimated cost for statewide FFE implementation for new entries into foster care and teens already in foster care from the CDSS. The table below shows this projected statewide cost. The CDSS estimate reflects costs associated with FFE implementation for new entries in foster care not placed with relatives, and youth age 16 and above not placed with relatives, and assumes 27.5 hours per case for teens, and 8 hours per case for new entries. The hourly rate is shown as \$72.60, for a total implementation cost of just over \$14 million. This estimate reflects costs for only the non-title IV-E waiver counties.

**Table 2: CDSS Estimate of Statewide FFE Implementation**

Type of Worker	Social Worker
Number of Cases (New Entries)	2,896
Hours per Case (New entries)	8
Number of Cases (Teens)	3,408
Hours per Case (Teens)	27.5
Cost per Hour	\$72.60
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$14,294,069</b>

The following table reflects a revised statewide estimate based on the current recommendations and an analysis of the fiscal data from the four county pilot efforts. This estimate assumes that a reasonable caseload for a full-time FFE worker is 25 teens, or approximately 83 hours per case. This estimate includes children in probation who are placed with non-relatives, and assumes the same number of social worker hours per case for probation youth and the CDSS hourly rate as for teens in dependency. Using the CDSS ratio of approximately 1/3 as many hours for new entries, the total cost of implementation is estimated to be approximately \$62 million.

**Table 3: Revised Estimate of Statewide FFE Implementation**

	Caseload per Full-Time Social Worker <sup>x</sup>	Hours per Case <sup>xi</sup>	Cost per Case	Total Cost
Dependency (New Entries)	86	24	\$1,756	\$22,644,176
Dependency (Teens)	25	83	\$6,040	\$20,585,411
Probation (3,166 cases)	25	83	\$6,040	\$19,123,653
<b>Total Cost</b>				<b>\$62,369,709</b>

While statewide implementation costs are considerable, the savings derived from engaging youth who have been living in restrictive placements for extended periods of time and reconnecting or connecting them for the first time with family with whom they can live are also considerable. And for those children who would otherwise have been placed in out of home care but for early implementation of FFE, the savings, while not quantifiable, are clear from the chart provided in Addendum 4 reflecting potential savings from youth permanence by placement type.

While clearly the costs of statewide implementation of FFE for all children in care are potentially quite significant, ranging from CDSS' estimate of \$14.2 million to the committee's estimate of

\$62 million, the purpose of the development of local implementation plans, to include the identification of an initial target population and a timeline for full scale implementation, is to ensure that the costs associated with this activity are phased in over time, and are relatively quickly mitigated through savings realized by reduced placement costs and increased exits to permanency. On a most micro basis, FFE can be implemented through the transfer of just one social worker's caseload to colleagues, such that that one worker can focus on FFE practices. This approach is cost neutral, and may be the most realistic given the current fiscal environment. Further, as noted above, in addition to identifying the target population for initial implementation, local FFE protocols are also designed to identify the respective roles of the "permanency team". Clearly delineating which tasks will be performed by individuals other than social workers and probation officers will facilitate the assessment of how many FFE cases each worker can handle, and what the related cost of the FFE effort will be.

During the upcoming year, the committee will work with strategic partners, namely the AOC, CDSS and CalSWEC, to complete the recommended activities for each respective agency as outlined in this document.

The committee will also work with the AOC to develop a model for two-way communication between the committee and local commissions, such that the status of local FFE implementation can be followed by the committee, and the broader Child Welfare Council, over the next several years.

### **Evaluation Plan:**

The committee recommends that the following components comprise the evaluation of each jurisdiction's FFE practice. All necessary evaluation tools will be designed by CDSS, CalSWEC, and the AOC, and provided to local commissions:

- **Baseline Data Collection Instrument.** Baseline data collection tools will measure each county's current FFE practices, and will capture county-level placement and permanency data.
- **Client, Agency, CASA, and Attorney Satisfaction Surveys.** Client surveys will measure client, agency staff, and attorney assessment of the scope, nature and success of local FFE implementation.
- **Process Evaluation Tool.** The process evaluation will be based upon a logic model tool that will enable counties to assess the fidelity with which the particular FFE model/s implemented locally adhere to a standardized FFE construct.
- **Judicial Review and Technical Assistance file review.** The AOC currently conducts JRTA visits to all juvenile courts, and reviews case files during those visits. FFE implementation will be incorporated into the file review process. The file reviews will help identify the nature of FFE implementation in each county.
- **Permanency Data.** Individual permanency data will be collected for all children receiving FFE services as follows:
  - race, ethnicity, and tribal ancestry;
  - number of relative and non-relative "important person" contacts identified;
  - reunification rates;

- relative placement rates;
- sibling placement rates;
- number of children living in alternative planned permanent living arrangements;
- number of children experiencing maltreatment when placed with parent or relative;
- re-entry rates; and
- number of failed adoptions.

AOC staff serving as liaisons to the local commissions will facilitate the data collection and evaluation process.

### **Conclusion:**

California can implement FFE for all children in the child welfare system and those children who are at risk of entering foster care or already in foster care in the juvenile justice system. The practice must be commenced as soon as the juvenile petition is filed with the court because the state cannot afford to do otherwise. The federal government has mandated that the state conduct an extensive family search within 30 days of removal or risk loss of significant federal foster care funds. The cost of keeping children and youth in out of home care comes at a huge physical and emotional toll to them, and a great fiscal cost to the state. Research on FFE has demonstrated that, where it is implemented, children are exposed to less time in care and they exit the system, either reunified with family, or with lifelong connections and a sense of family belonging.

The pockets of success nationally and in California's counties prove that FFE is achievable. More widespread implementation will take both leadership across systems at the state and local levels, leveraging funding and resources, and developing training and technical assistance capacity. The Child Welfare Council is in a position to adopt these recommendations and oversee how they are implemented at the state and local levels, through the vehicle of the local commissions and should do so because it is a priceless investment in the permanency and well-being of our state's foster children.

## **Addendum 1**

### **California's FFE Pilot Programs**

In Alameda County, the Step Up program was designed to move foster youth out of group home placements over the course of 6 months. During the initial pilot period, a team of case workers was dedicated to working at two large group homes with a combined population of 72 children who had limited or no connections. By the end of the study, more than half of the children involved were either placed out of the group home with family, or were anticipating placement within 1 to 3 months of the program's conclusion. The program has since expanded, and is embedded in all of the group home case management units, and plans are in place to use surplus federal title IVE funds to expand the FFE program, by implementing it at the front end for children in the family reunification stages of foster care proceedings.

In Kern County, FFE work initially targeted the older youth in the adoptions unit, with a goal of finding permanent placements. During 2008, 52 youth were served by the FFE project. Of 29 cases completed during that year, 19 transferred from congregate care to a lower level of care. The program employed one full time FFE worker to provide these services, and achieved savings of \$731,000 in 2008. That program has since expanded to take some referrals for children in family reunification.

In Los Angeles, the Permanency Partners Program (P3) recruited retired social workers to work on cases where youth had been in care for a substantial period of time. Between April 2005 and December 2008, the program provided services to 3,056 youth; permanent plans were identified for 1,193 youth, ranging from reunification, adoption, and guardianship. The breakdown of permanency dispositions is provided in the table on the following pages.

In 2006, a joint public-private partnership was formed between Sierra Families Forever (SFF- formerly Sierra Adoption Services) and Sacramento, Nevada and Placer Counties. The goal of the Destination Family Project is to ensure no child emancipates from foster care without a permanent family connection. During a three year pilot program ending in FY 2008-09, 101 youth were served by the Family Finder. The pilot achieved savings of \$454,294, based on children who achieved permanency during this period.

Consistent with national data, all of these California efforts have resulted in improved permanency outcomes for pilot program youth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Campbell, Sherry Castro, Nicole Houston, Don Koenig, John Rose MD and Mary Stone-Smith. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, *Lighting the Fire of Urgency...Families Lost and Found in America's Child Welfare System* (2005). Michigan State Court Administrative Office, *Absent Parent Protocol: Identifying, Locating and Notifying Absent Parents in Child Protective Proceedings* (2008). Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, *Completing the Circle: Uncovering, Discovering & Creating Connections for Your Foster & Adoptive Children* (2008). New York State Office of Children and Family Services, *Locating Absent Fathers and Extended Family Guidance Paper* (2005). Children and Family Research Center, Foster Results Project, *Family Ties: Supporting Permanency for Children in Safe and Stable Foster Care with Relatives and other Caregivers*. (2004). Rob Geen, The Urban Institute, *Finding Permanent Homes for Foster Children: Issues Raised in Kinship Care*. (2003).

	Type	Staffing	Caseload	Outcomes	Savings
Sacramento, Nevada and Placer	Public/private partnership between county and non-profit Sierra Forever Families (SFF)	<p>One Family Finder (FF) who also pursued family engagement. FF not a social worker, but has a bachelor's degree, and knowledge of the child welfare system. Salary was in the mid \$30,000 range.</p> <p>Two youth permanency workers took over cases after family was engaged. Youth permanency worker at MSW level (\$40k).</p>	FF = 24 YPW = 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>101 youth served by FF</li> <li>31 found permanent connections</li> <li>68 were in the process of establishing at least one connection.</li> <li>FF found over 1,000 possible contacts, but was allowed to contact only 175; (the county limited who they could contact); those 175 contacts provided an additional 281 contacts.</li> </ul>	Three year pilot achieved savings of <b>\$454,294</b> , based on children who achieved permanency.
Kern	County program	<p>One FFE position (SSW III).</p> <p>Two MSW interns two days per week</p> <p>3 Older Youth Adoption SSW'S</p> <p>3 Permanent Placement SSW'S</p> <p>Salary + benefits for each @ \$56,000.</p>	FFE = 28	<p>52 youth in project Jan – Dec 2008</p> <p>29 Cases completed in 2008.</p> <p>19 of 29 transferred from GH to lower level of care.</p> <p>1 transferred from FFA to Relative/NRFEM</p> <p>1 transferred from FFA to Guardianship</p>	<p>2008 savings:</p> <p>5 cases transitioned from Group Home to FFA = \$198,200</p> <p>8 cases transitioned from Group Home to NRFEM/REI = \$403,200</p> <p>1 case from FFA to Relative/NRFEM = \$129,600</p> <p><b>Total = \$731,000</b></p>

<b>Alameda</b>	County program – embedded in group home case management units.	8 CWWs and 1 supervisor.  CWW fully loaded cost = \$190,000 per year.	CWW = 10	Last quarter's IVE waiver data report indicates that on July 1, 2007, 351 youth were living in congregate care. As of March 31, 2009, there were 259 youth living in congregate care.	Rough estimate:  92 fewer youth in congregate care @ \$5,000 = \$460,000
<b>Los Angeles</b>	County program	80 retired and half-time CSWs  Hourly rate (no benefits) = \$27.	13	As of December 2008, P3 has provided P3 services to 3056 youth. Approximately, 39% (1193) of the youth now have a legally permanent plan identified or established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A total of 155 youth have returned home to a parent and had their child welfare case closed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 110 youth have returned home and continue to have their case supervised by DCFS and 123 are moving towards reunification with a parent;</li> <li>▪ 38 youth have been adopted, 24 youth are in adoptive placements, and 276 youth who were previously opposed to adoption are now involved in adoption planning;</li> <li>▪ 67 youth have had a legal guardian appointed and their cases closed through KinGAP, 33 youth were in a legal guardianship prior to their case closing due to emancipation, 150 youth are in legal guardianship and continue to have their case supervised by DCFS, and 217 youth have a plan of legal guardianship identified and are moving through the court process.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Los Angeles has multiple permanency initiatives that support one another; attributing cost savings to any one program in this type of collaboration is difficult. An analysis of the savings of each of the county's programs is being conducted.

## Addendum 2

### Description of FFE Protocol Components

#### *Positive Permanency Outcomes*

Positive permanency outcomes are defined as an increase in the number of children reunified with their parents, and if they cannot safely be returned to their parents, an alternative permanent plan with meaningful, enduring connections with family members and other significant adults who will support them throughout their lives.

#### *Target Population and Plan to Implement FFE for all Children*

FFE should be undertaken for all children in the child welfare system and those in the delinquency system who are either in foster care or at risk of entering foster care. Although FFE implementation will initially result in an increased workload, the reduction of children in foster care as a result of FFE will, in a relatively short period of time, lead to a reduced workload.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities of the Permanency Team Members*

While the social worker or probation officer should coordinate all FFE activities in a given case, the committee recommends that specific FFE activities be carried out by members of “permanency teams”, to include the child (if old enough), the child’s parents, the child’s extended family members, social workers, probation officers, attorneys for children and parents, group homes and foster family agencies, tribal representatives in Indian Child Welfare Act cases, and where available, Court Appointed Special Advocates, parent advocates, and interns. FFE is comprised of 6 discrete, iterative implementation activities:

- **Setting the stage:** The social worker or probation officer assembles a permanency team with the youth, caregivers, professionals and people the youth identifies as important to the life. The permanency team creates shared agreement as to the goals and initial tasks of the group.
- **Discovery and review of discovery:** The youth, with assistance from the permanency team, identifies the targets of the search. The team assigns the tasks and timeframes to conduct the search and initial engagement, and to report back to the team for review and further exploration.
- **Engagement, to include collaborative meetings:** The youth identifies who they would like to begin to engage with, and the team creates an engagement strategy for each person identified. Both the youth and the identified potential connections are prepared and supported throughout the contact process.
- **Exploration and planning:** The permanency team identifies and incorporates new members resulting from search and engagement to participate on the team. The permanency team begins the process of developing an individualized permanency plan for the youth reflective of the participation of those who have been recently identified.
- **Decision making:** The permanency team evaluates the results of the initial planning, and devises primary and backup plans for permanency. Legal issues are explored specific to the plans that are generated, progress is monitored and plans are reviewed and revised as needed.
- **Sustaining connections.** The primary permanency plan has been achieved. Contingency plans, risk factors, resources, successes and strengths are reviewed and updated to support the sustainability of the plan.

The committee recommends that the local protocol identify the primary responsible person/persons for each of these activities and ensure that the social worker or probation officer be the one to coordinate all FFE activities in a given case.



*Participatory Collaborative Team Meetings: Choosing a Model and Timing of First Meeting*

The committee recommends that the local protocol identify one or more collaborative meeting models that will be used as part of FFE implementation. The meetings should be family-driven and child-centered; with older youth, the meetings should be youth-driven. An outline of the primary types of collaborative meeting models is provided in the table below:

<b>Collaborative Model</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>
<i>Family Group Conferencing</i>	Independent coordinator – Not usually the case carrying social worker	Families (immediate and extended)	25 hours of preparation over 3 -4 weeks; private family time during meetings	Private family home	Identification of family strengths
<i>Family Unity Meetings</i>	Independent coordinator	Family, support persons, professionals	Private family time with less preparation than Family Group Conferencing	Public setting	Identification of family strengths
<i>Family Group Decision Making</i>	Child welfare worker	Family, support persons, professionals	Private family time	Public setting	Identification of family strengths and concerns
<i>Family to Family- Family Team Meetings</i>	Skilled and trained facilitator	Family, support persons, professionals	Held within days of removal	Public setting	Creation of safety and permanency plan for child
<i>Families for Life Meetings</i>	Child welfare worker or trained facilitator	Youth, family, extended family, connections and service providers	Youth takes the lead as much as possible and determines membership	Public setting	Multiple permanency options and plans for support
<i>Family to Family- Team Decision Making</i>	Skilled and trained facilitator who is not case carrying social worker	Family, support persons, community members, resource families, professionals	Held within days of removal	Public setting	Identification of alternatives to removal and determination of best placement options

The committee recommends that, for new filings, the first collaborative team meeting be held before detention if possible, but in no event later than 30 days after removal, and that the FFE activities of the permanency team be reviewed at every court hearing.

*Permissions and Communication Protocols that Ensure Confidentiality*

The committee recommends that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) publish a statewide protocol on confidentiality issues impacting FFE information sharing (both before and after a petition is filed), as a resource for local commissions in drafting their own local information sharing agreements.

*Method of Evaluation*

The committee recommends that local commissions evaluate FFE implementation by first collecting baseline data and then evaluating FFE practice with respect to both model fidelity and permanency outcomes. The evaluation plan is summarized on page 11.

### **Addendum 3**

#### **Steps to Collaboration and Implementation**

##### *Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)*

- The AOC, through the provision of staff support to the local commissions, will identify how the local commissions will implement the committee's FFE recommendations in FY 09-10 and FY 10-11;
- The AOC will publish a statewide protocol on confidentiality issues impacting FFE information sharing, as a resource for local commissions in drafting their own local information sharing agreements;
- The AOC, in partnership with the CDSS, will publish a sample local FFE protocol;
- The AOC will work with the Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee to recommend amendments to the California Rules of Court to require judges to make findings and orders regarding agency, attorney, and CASA FFE efforts, and to recommend adoption of a form, consistent with AB 938, requiring social workers, probation officers, CASAs and children's attorneys to document contacts and results from contacts so that during the life of the child's case there is one place in the court file where all the child's family contacts, as well as the results of each contact, are documented;
- The AOC will modify selected court-appointed counsel contracts to require that attorneys for children and parents inquire about family members (defined broadly) and other people significant to the child and, within the limitations of attorney client privilege, and provide that information to the social worker or probation officer;
- The AOC will modify its Judicial Review and Technical Assistance process, which involves an annual review of juvenile court case files, beginning in FY 09-10, to include a review of local FFE practices as reflected in the court files;
- The AOC will provide an on-line resource for counties to: 1) describe their FFE practices; 2) identify county-to-county mentoring opportunities; and 3) share funding and staffing strategies;
- The AOC will amend FY 09-10 CASA contracts to require CASA programs to report on FFE activities;
- The AOC will amend FY 10-11 CASA contracts to require FFE activity; and
- The AOC, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services and the California Youth Connection, will apply for an expanded Justice Corps grant in summer 2009, designed to expand the number of trained personnel available in selected jurisdictions to perform FFE activities.

##### *California Department of Social Services (CDSS)*

- The CDSS will modify Division 31 regulations and relevant handbook sections to incorporate FFE case planning and court reporting requirements;
- The CDSS will together with UC Berkeley, identify a special projects code to flag FFE cases and will consider including in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) redesign fields that will enable the documentation and measurement of FFE activities, including the number of family contacts and the outcome of those contacts, on both case-specific and aggregate levels;

- The CDSS will facilitate a master statewide contract for technology to assist local child welfare agencies and local probation officers, who opt into the contract, to use the technology for family finding;
- The CDSS, in partnership with the Department of Child Support Services, and consistent with the Fostering Connections Act will help county child welfare departments and probation departments access the Federal Parent Locator Services for the purpose of finding parents and other databases available to local child support enforcement offices;
- The CDSS, in partnership with local child welfare departments and probation departments, will work on a plan to permit all savings realized from local FFE activities to be reinvested locally to expand FFE practice to all children and youth;
- The CDSS, in partnership with the AOC and CalSWEC, will develop client, agency, CASA, and attorney surveys to be used by the local commissions in the self-evaluation process; and
- The CDSS, in partnership with the AOC and CalSWEC, will develop case tools for finding connections, such as genogram, life map, or Eastfield Ming Quong's "Connectedness Model", and will develop similar case tools for tracking connections.

#### *Local Child Welfare Agencies and Probation Departments*

- The local child welfare agency and probation department will include in their county contracts and agreements with care providers, a requirement that foster family agency or group home providers be responsible for inquiring about and engaging family members , and providing that information to the social worker or probation officer, or alternatively to the court directly; and
- The local child welfare agency and probation department will flag FFE cases and use fields in the CMS/CWS in order to extract FFE activities and permanency outcome data by county and statewide.

## Addendum 4

### PROJECTED COST SAVINGS

Savings Achieved Through Youth Permanence							
County, State and Federal Sharing Ratios							
assume a 75% federal eligibility rate for foster care & an 80% rate for adoption							
	Monthly				Annually		
	Total	Co Share	State Share	Fed Share	Total	Co Share	State Share
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from FFA</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	1826	\$685	\$457	\$685	\$21,912	\$8,217	\$5,478
Average Adoption Assistance Program Grants (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$818	\$534	\$3	\$282	\$9,816	\$6,403	\$35
Plus:							
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759
includes activities funded by county's cws allocation from the state, such as social worker time							
Admin Cost Savings 2 (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347
includes administrative costs of foster care such as eligibility worker time, processing payments etc.							
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$6,365</b>	<b>\$1,101</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from FFH</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	571	\$214	\$143	\$214	\$6,852	\$2,570	\$1,713
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	571	\$86	\$257	\$228	\$6,852	\$1,028	\$3,083
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$0	\$128	-\$114	-\$14	\$0	\$1,542	-\$1,370
Plus:							
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$6,365</b>	<b>\$1,101</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from GH 14</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	6371	\$2,389	\$1,593	\$2,389	\$76,452	\$28,670	\$19,113
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$5,363	\$2,238	\$1,139	\$1,986	\$64,356	\$26,855	\$13,670
Plus:							
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$6,365</b>	<b>\$1,101</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from GH 12</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	5613	\$2,105	\$1,403	\$2,105	\$67,356	\$25,259	\$16,839
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$4,605	\$1,954	\$950	\$1,702	\$55,260	\$23,444	\$11,396
Plus:							
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$6,365</b>	<b>\$1,101</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from GH 11</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	5234	\$1,963	\$1,309	\$1,963	\$62,808	\$23,553	\$15,702
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$4,226	\$1,812	\$855	\$1,560	\$50,712	\$21,739	\$10,259
Plus:							
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$6,365</b>	<b>\$1,101</b>	<b>\$3,434</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings Adoption from GH 10</b>							
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	4858	\$1,822	\$1,215	\$1,822	\$58,296	\$21,861	\$14,574
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$3,850	\$1,671	\$761	\$1,419	\$46,200	\$20,047	\$9,131
Plus:							

<b>Placement Cost Savings GH 8 to Adoption</b>								
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	4291	\$1,609	\$1,073	\$1,609	\$51,492	\$19,310	\$12,873	\$16,091
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	1008	\$151	\$454	\$403	\$12,096	\$1,814	\$5,443	\$4,032
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$3,283	\$1,458	\$619	\$1,206	\$39,396	\$17,495	\$7,430	\$12,059
Plus:								
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759	\$1,508
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347	\$496
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$6,365	\$1,101	\$3,434	\$2,004
<b>Placement Cost Savings Reunification from GH 10</b>								
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	4858	\$1,822	\$1,215	\$1,822	\$58,296	\$21,861	\$14,574	\$18,218
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$4,858	\$1,822	\$1,215	\$1,822	\$58,296	\$21,861	\$14,574	\$18,218
Plus:						\$356		
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759	\$1,508
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347	\$496
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$6,365	\$1,101	\$3,434	\$2,004
<b>Placement Cost Savings Reunification from FFA</b>								
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	1826	\$685	\$457	\$685	\$21,912	\$8,217	\$5,478	\$6,848
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$1,826	\$685	\$457	\$685	\$21,912	\$8,217	\$5,478	\$6,848
Plus:						\$356		
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759	\$1,508
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347	\$496
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$6,365	\$1,101	\$3,434	\$2,004
<b>Placement Cost Savings Reunification from FFH</b>								
Average Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18) (A)	571	\$214	\$143	\$214	\$6,852	\$2,570	\$1,713	\$2,141
Average Adoption Assistance Program Cost (B)	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$571	\$214	\$143	\$214	\$6,852	\$2,570	\$1,713	\$2,141
Plus:						\$356		
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)					\$4,020	\$754	\$1,759	\$1,508
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)					\$1,017	\$347	\$347	\$496
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$6,365	\$1,101	\$3,434	\$2,004
Note on KinGap sharing ratios. Used to be partially funded by federal TANF \$\$ @ child only rate. Discontinued in 07-08 because kin caregivers did not meet fed employment requirements which brought the state average down and diminished overall fed \$\$ to CA. State decided it was more fiscally prudent to fund the TANF portion with general fund \$. Balance is split 50/50 by state and county. New fed legislation authorizes fed financial participation. At that time feds share will be 50% for fed eligible children. For purposes of simplification, fed \$ are treated as constant for the period covered by this report which slightly overstates the state's savings and understates the fed's savings.								
<b>Placement Cost Savings KinGap+ from GH12</b>								
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	5613	\$2,105	\$1,403	\$2,105	\$67,356	\$25,259	\$16,839	\$21,049
Average Co KinGap + Cost	589	\$112	\$112	\$365	\$7,068	\$1,344	\$1,344	\$3,650
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$5,024	\$1,993	\$1,291	\$1,740	\$60,288	\$23,915	\$15,495	\$17,399
Plus:								
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)								
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)								
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
<b>Placement Cost Savings KinGap+ from FFA</b>								
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	1826	\$685	\$457	\$685	\$21,912	\$8,217	\$5,478	\$6,848
Average Co KinGap + Cost	589	\$112	\$112	\$365	\$7,068	\$1,344	\$1,344	\$3,650
Placement Savings (A-B)	\$1,237	\$573	\$345	\$320	\$14,844	\$6,873	\$4,134	\$3,198
Plus:								
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)								
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)								
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
Total CWS, Admin & Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	



<b>Placement Cost Savings KinGap+ from FFH</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	571	\$214	\$143	\$214	\$6,852	\$2,570	\$1,713	\$2,141
Average Co KinGap + Cost	589	\$112	\$112	\$365	\$7,068	\$1,344	\$1,344	\$3,650
<b>Placement Savings (A-B)</b>	<b>-\$18</b>	<b>\$102</b>	<b>\$31</b>	<b>-\$151</b>	<b>-\$216</b>	<b>\$1,226</b>	<b>\$369</b>	<b>-\$1,509</b>
<b>Plus:</b>								
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)								
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)								
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$1,328</b>		<b>\$1,328</b>	
<b>Placement Savings KinGap+ from basic fh + sci + 993</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	993	\$372	\$248	\$372	\$11,916	\$4,469	\$2,979	\$3,724
Average Co KinGap + Cost	597	\$116	\$372	\$365	\$7,164	\$1,392	\$4,469	\$3,650
<b>Placement Savings (A-B)</b>	<b>\$396</b>	<b>\$256</b>	<b>-\$124</b>	<b>\$7</b>	<b>\$4,752</b>	<b>\$3,077</b>	<b>-\$1,490</b>	<b>\$74</b>
<b>Plus:</b>								
CWS Cost Savings (source HHS) (C)								
Admin Cost Savings (source HHS) (D)								
Court Cost Savings (E)					\$1,328		\$1,328	
<b>Total CWS, Admin &amp; Court Cost Savings (C+D+E)</b>					<b>\$1,328</b>		<b>\$1,328</b>	
<b>Placement Cost Savings GH 12 to FFH</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	5613	\$2,105	\$1,403	\$2,105	\$67,356	\$25,259	\$16,839	\$21,049
FFH Rate	571	\$214	\$143	\$214	\$6,852	\$2,570	\$1,713	\$2,141
<b>Savings (A-B)</b>	<b>\$5,042</b>	<b>\$1,891</b>	<b>\$1,261</b>	<b>\$1,891</b>	<b>\$60,504</b>	<b>\$22,689</b>	<b>\$15,126</b>	<b>\$18,908</b>
<b>Placement Cost Savings GH 12 to FFA</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Co Share</b>	<b>State Share</b>	<b>Fed Share</b>
Average Co Placement Cost for Foster Youth (11-18)	5613	\$2,105	\$1,403	\$2,105	\$67,356	\$25,259	\$16,839	\$21,049
FFH	1826	\$685	\$457	\$685	\$21,912	\$8,217	\$5,478	\$6,848
<b>Savings (A-B)</b>	<b>\$3,787</b>	<b>\$1,420</b>	<b>\$947</b>	<b>\$1,420</b>	<b>\$45,444</b>	<b>\$17,042</b>	<b>\$11,361</b>	<b>\$14,201</b>

## References

<sup>i</sup> Positive permanency outcomes are defined as an increase in the number of children reunified with their parents if possible. Where not possible, positive permanency outcomes refers to an alternative permanent plan with meaningful, enduring connections with family members and other significant adults who will support them throughout their lives.

<sup>ii</sup> The CFSR is the federal government's program for assessing the performance of state child welfare agencies with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. It is authorized by the Social Security Amendments of 1994 requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to promulgate regulations for reviews of state child and family services programs under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>iii</sup> Barbara Boisvert, Gina Brimmer, Kevin Campbell, Don Koenig, John Rose, M.D., Mary Stone-Smith. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington-Family Preservation, *Who am I? Why Family Really Matters* (2002).

<sup>iv</sup> Available at [http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1355](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1355); last visited April 12, 2009.

<sup>v</sup> Wertheimer, Robert. *Youth Who "Age Out" of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects*. Child Trends

<sup>vi</sup> Hill, R. B., *Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update*, (2006). Washington, DC: Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System.

<sup>vii</sup> Kevin Campbell, Sherry Castro, Nicole Houston, Don Koenig, John Rose MD and Mary Stone-Smith. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, *Lighting the Fire of Urgency...Families Lost and Found in America's Child Welfare System* (2005). Michigan State Court Administrative Office, *Absent Parent Protocol: Identifying, Locating and Notifying Absent Parents in Child Protective Proceedings* (2008). Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, *Completing the Circle: Uncovering, Discovering & Creating Connections for Your Foster & Adoptive Children* (2008). New York State Office of Children and Family Services, *Locating Absent Fathers and Extended Family Guidance Paper* (2005). Children and Family Research Center, Foster Results Project, *Family Ties: Supporting Permanency for Children in Safe and Stable Foster Care with Relatives and other Caregivers*. (2004). Rob Geen, The Urban Institute, *Finding Permanent Homes for Foster Children: Issues Raised in Kinship Care*. (2003).

<sup>viii</sup> To view grant posting, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2009-ACF-ACYF-CF-0078.html>

<sup>ix</sup> Members of the Partnership include the California Department of Social Services, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the Administrative Office of the Courts and private philanthropic foundations including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Staff support is provided by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California.

The mission of the Partnership is to ensure a coordinated, collaborative approach to the investments that are needed to substantially improve the child welfare outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being in California. To achieve this mission, the Partnership focuses its energies in three ways: (1) champions key investments; (2) promotes strategic approaches; and (3) educates policymakers.

The Partnership sets priorities and identifies specific activities that are needed to promote those priorities.

<sup>x</sup> The caseload of 25 teens per full-time social worker was based on the survey of four FFE programs detailed in Table 2; the Alameda program's caseload of 10 cases per social worker was considered to be an outlier. The caseload for new entries was based on the CDSS estimate from Table 3, which showed that new entries take about 1/3 as much time as teen cases.

<sup>xi</sup> The hours per case was derived by dividing 2,080 hours by the number of cases. This figure does not take into account administrative time that is spent on non-case-related activities.



**Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee Recommendations  
to the California Child Welfare Council  
September 10, 2009**

***Executive Summary***

The California Child Welfare Council Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee was created to address the health, mental health, educational and social development needs of children and youth in the child welfare system. This includes supporting successful transitions to adulthood for youth aging out of foster care. The Committee's initial set of recommendations focus on two high priority areas within our charge – successful youth transitions and equal access to mental health services. Our recommendations are actionable within the next 12-18 months, build upon best and promising practices, and take into consideration the challenging California economic climate.

**Successful Youth Transitions (SYT)**

Compared to their peers, many foster youth do not receive the services, supports, life skills, opportunities, and guidance they need to complete high school and successfully transition to adulthood. Foster children and youth also disproportionately experience educational disabilities, health, mental health, and substance abuse issues. Adding to these individual challenges are missed system opportunities to collaborate, share data, and leverage resources to better meet the needs of some of California's most vulnerable children and youth. Given these poor outcomes for foster youth aging out of care, the Committee has proposed eight recommendations to improve outcomes in four critical focus areas – Transition Planning, Services and Supports; K-12 Education; Postsecondary Education; and Workforce Development and Employment.

***Recommendations***

**SYT Key Area 1: Transition Planning, Services and Supports**

- 1) California should promote the development of comprehensive, collaborative, youth-driven local support systems to foster connections for success for foster youth, aged 14-24.
- 2) California should extend child welfare benefits to foster youth, aged 18-21.

**SYT Key Area 2: K-12 Education**

- 1) Timely, accurate education data on foster youth should be made available to the courts, social workers, probation officers, and school personnel to both enable the early identification of foster youth at risk for school failure and/or dropping out and allow for effective educational case management.
- 2) The California Department of Education and the State Board of Education be authorized to promulgate a uniform partial credit transfer regulation to ensure foster youth receive academic credit for work completed.

### **SYT Key Area 3: Postsecondary Education**

- 1) All foster youth should have access to postsecondary education planning information beginning as early as age 13, and postsecondary education goals should be considered in the development of foster youth transition plans by Fiscal Year 2010-11.
- 2) All foster youth pursuing higher education either at a two-year or four-year public college or university should have access to comprehensive campus support programs in FY 2010-11, or as soon as fiscally feasible.

### **SYT Key Area 4: Workforce Development and Employment**

- 1) California should increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth transitioning from the foster care system by replicating statewide the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Program that provides public sector, entry-level job opportunities to untrained, economically-disadvantaged youth transitioning out of the foster care system.
- 2) California should increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth transitioning from the foster care system by funding a collaborative foster youth specific workforce development project from the Workforce Investment Act Governor's 15% Set Aside Funds in addition to other federal, state, local, and private funds under a collaborative partnership funding model.

### **Equal Access to Mental Health Services**

In addition to addressing successful youth transitions, the Committee is recommending improving access to mental health services, especially for youth placed out-of-county. Available research studies show that foster children and youth represent an extremely high-risk population for socio-emotional, behavioral and psychiatric problems requiring mental health treatment. While California has made recent strides to address mental health access with the passage of the Mental Health Services Act and SB 785, for example, many foster children and youth do not receive equal access to the mental health treatment to which they are entitled and need to succeed in school, at work or in the community.

#### ***Recommendations***

- 1) California should ensure access to appropriate, medically necessary mental health services for foster youth with a particular emphasis on those placed across county lines.
- 2) The California Department of Mental Health should provide annual reports measuring progress toward the goal of equal access for foster youth placed out-of-county.

## Transition Planning, Services and Supports

### ***Background/Problem Description***

Young people's transition to adulthood continues well beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Many rely on their families for financial and emotional support into their 20s. The picture is very different for foster youth emancipating from care. For these youth, there is an expectation that they will be able to make it on their own long before their peers, often without connections to caring, committed adults to provide them the financial and emotional support all young people need to face life's challenges. When compared to their peers, foster youth experience poor educational outcomes, increased criminal justice system involvement, less income, greater dependence on government benefits and increased pregnancy rates. However, there is promising evidence that when foster youth are supported through the difficult transition to adulthood – both with child welfare benefits and a comprehensive range of services and supports – outcomes are improved.

- **Large numbers of youth age out in California annually, and most do so without relative caregiver relationships, especially foster youth who are under the supervision of the juvenile justice system.** Between October 1, 2007 and September 30, 2008, 4,442 youth, aged 18-20, under the supervision of the child welfare system emancipated from foster care in California.<sup>i</sup> Thirty-four percent of those emancipating were Black, 33.7% were Hispanic, 28.3% were White, 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander (PI), and 1% were Native American.

During the same period, 355 California youth, aged 18-20, under the supervision of the juvenile justice system emancipated.<sup>ii</sup> Of these, 40.5% were Hispanic, followed by 27.8% White, and 26.4% Black. Two percent identified as Native American, and 1.6% were Asian/Pacific Islander youth. Of these 355 probation supervised youth, only 10 youth had a relative guardian or relative nonguardian caregiver relationship at emancipation.<sup>iii</sup> The overwhelming majority emancipated without a relative caregiver relationship. For child welfare system supervised youth emancipating, nearly 4 out of every 5 youth who emancipated did not have a relative caregiver relationship.<sup>iv</sup>

- **The transition to adulthood is challenging for all youth but especially for foster youth.** Young people's transition to adulthood continues well beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Many rely on their families for financial and emotional support well into their 20s. According to 2008 U.S. Census data, an estimated 5.8 million young adults, aged 18-19, and 8.3 million young adults, aged 20-24, in the U.S. lived in the household of their primary family.<sup>v</sup> Families often provide free or subsidized housing, food, financial support, transportation, mentoring, and emotional support while young people work, attend college, participate in vocational training programs, or simply take time, as young people do, in choosing their future career and life paths. A study cited in the *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21 (Midwest Study)*, reported that parents provided their young adult children with material assistance totaling approximately \$38,000 between the ages of 18 and 34.<sup>vi</sup>

The picture is very different for foster youth emancipating from care. For these youth, there is an expectation that they will be able to make it on their own long before their peers, often without connections to caring, committed adults to provide them the financial

and emotional support all young people need to face life's challenges. When compared to their peers, these youth experience poor educational outcomes, increased criminal justice system involvement, less income, greater dependence of government benefits, and increased pregnancy rates.

The *Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth* is a multi-year longitudinal study that provides a comprehensive picture of foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Since 2002, the *Midwest Study* has examined the transition to adulthood among foster youth from three participating states – Illinois which extends child welfare benefits to youth, aged 18-21, and Iowa and Wisconsin which extend benefits through age 18, and age 19 for youth completing high school. While California has made great strides in collecting and analyzing data on child welfare outcomes, there was no comparable study to the *Midwest Study* which tracked California emancipated youth outcomes through age 21. It also should be noted that the demographic characteristics of the *Midwest Study* youth were somewhat similar to the demographic characteristics of youth emancipating from care in California with the exception of African American youth which represented 55.6% of the *Midwest Study* youth and Hispanic youth which made up 7.8% of the youth in the *Midwest Study*.

The Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee considered the findings of the *Midwest Study* in the development of its two recommendations in the area of transition planning, services and supports. As the published study is over 90 pages, we have included only selected highlights in Addendum 5 to offer a snapshot of the successes and challenges faced by former foster youth, aged 18-21. Highlights are organized by study domains.

- **While there have been laws enacted at the federal and state level to address transition challenges faced by foster youth, there is no national or California policy that calls for comprehensive, collaborative transition systems to foster connections to success.** At the federal level, the recently enacted “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act” (P.L. 110-351) recognizes the importance of helping youth successfully transition from foster care to independence. This new law authorizes federal funds for States that opt to extend child welfare benefits to foster youth through age 21. The law also requires transition planning 90 days before a young person exits care at age 18, 19, 20 or 21.

In 2005, California enacted a number of new statutes and increased funding for programs to support foster youth transitioning from care. These included increasing support for transitional housing, improving access to health and education information, extending benefits to 19 year olds who are completing their GEDs, and expanding access to Supplemental Security Income disability benefits for transitioning youth with disabilities.

In addition, California was selected to participate in the National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care. The NGA Policy Academy provided an opportunity to develop new vision for California's Independent Living Program that promotes cross-system integration and service delivery to meet the

individual needs of youth and achieve fundamental goals in the areas of permanence, education, and employment.

At the local level, eight California counties have opted to participate in the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) to ensure that transition age foster youth, aged 14-24, have access to a true continuum of supports during transitional years and emerge as successful adults meaningfully engaged in their communities. The CC25I was launched in 2004 as a collaborative partnership between private foundations<sup>vii</sup>, public child welfare agencies, juvenile probation departments, youth, and their communities to foster connections to success. Through positive youth development and integrated systems of supports and services, transitioning foster youth are connected by age 25 to the opportunities, experiences, and supports that will enable them to succeed throughout adulthood. The eight counties participating in CC25I include Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Orange, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Solano, and Stanislaus. A ninth county – San Bernardino – will join the initiative this summer. At any given point in time, these counties serve thousands of youth in child welfare and probation supervised out-of-home placements from age 14 through the age of emancipation.

- **Transition planning for youth expected to age out of care begins too late.** Current state law requires social workers and probation officers to develop transitional independent living plans (TILPs) for foster youth in their caseloads who are expected to age out. The TILP is completed when a youth is between the ages of 15½ and 16, describes a youth's current level of functioning and identifies emancipation goals, services, activities, and individuals assisting the youth in the process of reaching self-sufficiency. The TILP is revisited (at least) every six months with the youth to ensure an accurate reflection of status and to re-evaluate goals. There is some anecdotal evidence that not all counties comply with these transition requirements.

Waiting until age 15 ½ to engage young people in transition planning is too late. The transition planning process should begin at age 14 – and ideally younger – to ensure that youth educational, life skill, work experience, and financial goals can be reasonably met. For example, if a young person chooses to attend the University of California (UC) as a transition goal, preparation for meeting UC admission requirements must begin well before the first year of high school.

- **Transition planning for youth aging out of care ends too early.** Most young people – whether in foster care or not – are not prepared to live as independent adults at age 18. As noted, over 14 million young people, aged 18-24, continue to live at home with their families. Yet, in California, State law terminates eligibility for child welfare benefits at age 18 for most foster youth. While youth may access independent living programs through age 21, few avail themselves of this resource after leaving foster care. Given the impact of poor outcomes for foster youth who age out of the system, it is in the best interest of the State – and the foster youth under its care – to continue supporting foster youth as they transition to adulthood up to age 24, not unlike the support families provide young adults who are not in foster care.

## **Strategic Approach**

### **Recommendation #1:**

**California should promote the development of comprehensive, collaborative, youth-driven local support systems to foster connections to success for foster youth, aged 14-24.**

The *Midwest Study* outcomes demonstrate the complexity and multitude of challenges faced by foster youth transitioning to adulthood. While the child welfare and juvenile justice systems often lead local efforts to ensure successful transitions for foster youth in their care, a broader collaborative support system must be developed locally to support youth aging out given their multiple needs. This includes the educational system, the higher education system, workforce development and employment agencies, health care providers, mental health treatment providers, substance abuse treatment providers, housing providers, youth development agencies, employers, caregivers, caring adults and other local stakeholders. For success, youth transitions must be the responsibility of multiple service agencies and organizations working together to meet the transition goals of foster youth.

Based on the experience of CC25I counties and a literature review of recommended strategies to foster successful connections to adulthood, California counties must be encouraged to develop comprehensive, collaborative, outcomes-based systems that support youth aging out of foster care across seven critical focus areas: K-12 Education; Employment, Job Training, and Postsecondary Education; Financial Literacy and Competence; Housing; Independent Living Skills; Permanency; and Personal and Social Asset Development. *Please refer to Addendum 6 for a detailed description of each focus area.*

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory or regulatory impacts associated with this recommendation.

While the Committee considered providing grant assistance to counties that wished to replicate the CC25I or another locally designed model, the current budget environment prevents a significant new state investment of funds at this time. As an alternative, the Committee proposed two low or no cost strategies to support the development of additional locally-driven, collaborative, outcomes-based transition systems (see below).

### ***Implementation Plan***

In the absence of new federal or state resources to support grants to California counties that wish to develop and implement transitional systems for youth aging out of care, the Committee recommends that the State promote the development of these systems by creating an interagency, inter-branch work group (or tasking an existing group) to within the next 12 months:

- a) Write a statewide framework/policy for fostering connections to success for youth, aged 14-24, that includes guiding principles, goals, model programs and practices, and outcomes; and
- b) Develop a set of fiscally viable options for promoting and implementing the statewide framework/policy within counties, including exploring the feasibility of existing CC25I counties providing peer-to-peer technical assistance.

The Committee recommends that the work group be chaired by the California Department of Social Services and include representatives from the multiple agencies and departments that have responsibility for the core components of developing comprehensive, collaborative transition systems in addition to members of the philanthropic community, CC25I counties, foster youth and caregivers.

## **Recommendation #2**

### **California should extend child welfare benefits to foster youth, aged 18-21.**

As noted, for most young people, the transition to adulthood is a gradual process with many continuing to receive financial and emotional support from their parents or other family members well past age 18. In a 2003 study, it was reported that approximately 55 percent of young men and 46 percent of young women between ages 18 to 24 years old were living at home with one or both of their parents.<sup>viii</sup> There is strong evidence that allowing foster youth to remain in care past age 18 promotes the pursuit of higher education, and more qualified evidence that extending care may increase earnings and delay pregnancy.<sup>ix</sup>

Clearly, there are positive outcomes for youth of extending care to age 21. *(Please refer to Addendum 7 for a citing of evidence associating length of stay in care to improved outcomes.)* There also are positive financial benefits to the State. Based on a recently released report, “California’s Fostering Connections to Success Act and the Costs and Benefits of Extending Foster Care to 21,” the State would realize four dollars in benefits for every dollar invested in extending care to age 21.<sup>x</sup>

Despite the opportunity that extending child welfare benefits to age 21 offers to improving outcomes for foster youth, California only authorizes counties to provide child welfare benefits to children and youth, aged 0-18, or until age 19 in the case of youth who are likely to graduate from high school or an equivalent program before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

A new State law would be needed to allow for federal financial participation to extend child welfare benefits to age 21. Assembly Speaker Karen Bass and Assemblyman Jim Beall have introduced legislation, AB 12, the “California Fostering Connections to Success Act,” which, among other things, will enable California to receive federal financial participation for current or former dependent children or wards of the juvenile court who meet federal requirements contained in P.L. 110-351. Specifically, P.L. 110-351 authorizes federal financial participation for states which opt to extend child welfare benefits, including foster care, kinship-guardianship, and adoption assistance benefits, to foster youth until the age of 21 provided they are either:

1. Completing high school or an equivalency program;
2. Enrolled in a postsecondary or vocational school;
3. Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;
4. Employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
5. Incapable of doing any of the above activities due to a medical condition.

By expanding eligibility under county foster care programs, AB 12 would impose a state-mandated local program. As such, additional State revenue would need to be allocated to reimburse California counties for these increased costs. Based on a recently released report, “California’s Fostering Connections to Success Act and the Costs and Benefits of Extending Foster Care to 21,”<sup>xi</sup> the total per person cost of extending child welfare benefits to youth, aged 18-21, is estimated to be \$37,948.<sup>xii</sup> Of this cost, it expected that the Federal government would pay \$13,282; the State of California would pay \$9,866; and placing counties would pay \$14,800.

This preliminary estimate is based on college participation rates at age 21 and data on increased work-life earnings associated with postsecondary education. The benefits of extending care until age 21 of bachelor’s degree completion range from \$27,000 to \$196,000. The wide range reflects assumptions about college graduation by former foster youth generally and the persistence over time of the educational advantages associated with remaining in care. The best estimate is that the increase in bachelor’s degree completion predicted to result from extending care to age 21 would increase per-person work-life earnings by approximately \$92,000. Thus, for every dollar invested in extending care to age 21, the State would realize over two dollars (\$2.40).<sup>xiii</sup> When federal financial participation authorized under P.L. 110-531 is considered (50% share of cost for Title IV-E eligible youth), the net benefit to cost ratio to California would increase to four dollars in benefits for every dollar invested.

Even with no continuation of the favorable outcomes associated with bachelor’s degree completion, the estimate of per-person work-life earnings of foster youth making the transition to adulthood would increase by an average of \$84,000 as a result of extending care to age 21. This is based on the expectation that remaining in care would result in at least some college and represented a return of two dollars for every one dollar invested. Finally, additional benefits to extending care to age 21 that were not factored into the analysis include a 38% reduction in the risk of becoming pregnant<sup>xiv</sup> and nonmarket benefits attributed to postsecondary education that are difficult to quantify such as improved education choices of offspring.<sup>xv</sup>

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that the Co-Chairs of the California Child Welfare Council write a letter on behalf of the Council supporting the provisions of AB 12 which extend child welfare benefits to age 21.

## **K-12 Education**

### ***Background/Problem Description***

Foster youth fail to graduate from high school at twice the rate of their peers. Effective educational case management requires that social workers, probation officers and school personnel have access to timely, accurate information to identify foster youth in need of academic interventions to prevent school failure. Currently, the California Department of Education’s California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System does not identify foster youth, making it difficult at best for social workers or probation officers to access important education information about foster youth such as program participation, grade level, enrollment status, course completion and discipline. In addition to the lack of education information,



another major barrier to academic success is frequent placement changes that can result in the loss of academic credits for work completed. While current state law requires schools to accept credits for work completed by foster youth while at a previous school, the law does not create a system or a consistent method for how academic credits are to be awarded. The result has been a maze of different school district academic credit policies that has resulted in foster youth losing credits for work performed when they are transferred to a new school.

- **Foster youth face unique challenges to their academic success.** A large percentage of children placed in foster care experience physical and emotional trauma as a result of abuse, neglect, separation from family, and lack of permanence. Although youth are placed in foster care for their safety, foster youth often do not find the security and stability they need to succeed academically through the foster care system. Recent studies in connection with the expansion of the California Foster Youth Services program<sup>xvi</sup> have shown that 75 percent of foster youth are working below grade level, 83 percent are being held back by the third grade, and 46 percent become high school dropouts.<sup>xvii</sup> Other studies indicate that 44 percent of foster youth entering the system in grades 3 through 8 are in the bottom quartile in reading;<sup>xviii</sup> and foster youth perform 15 to 20 percentile points below their peers on statewide achievement scores.<sup>xix</sup>
- **The inability to access educational data on foster youth is a major impediment to preventing academic failure.** Without access to timely educational data, social workers and probation officers are unable to effectively provide educational case management services. In 2004, a state law (AB 1858) was enacted to direct the collection of foster youth educational data by adding the following section to the Education Code:

“The department [CDE] shall ensure that the California School Information Services<sup>xx</sup> system meets the needs of pupils in foster care and includes disaggregated data on pupils in foster care.”

While this statute recognized the need for foster youth educational data, foster youth currently are not identified in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) even though they are assigned a Statewide Student Identifier with all other students. This means that important information about foster youth in the public school system, such as program participation, grade level, enrollment status, course enrollment, course completion and discipline, is not currently tracked to prevent and intervene early when foster youth are experiencing educational challenges. Having access to exit data and other information about foster youth would enable school personnel, social workers, and probation officers to better support the needs of foster youth and prevent undesirable educational outcomes such as academic failure, dropping out or expulsion.

In addition, child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments must include specified education information in a foster child’s case plan and must update that information periodically. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(16), 675(1)(c) & 5 (D); MPP-3-206.35. The California Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) is the single statewide data system for this and other information about foster children. Currently, the

education information captured by CWS/CMS does not include all of the information necessary to support good educational case management by social workers.

- **Frequent changes in home – and the resulting changes in school placements – have a detrimental effect on foster youth academic performance and future success in life.** Foster youth commonly experience multiple placements. The Institute for Higher Education Policy estimates that a change in placement occurs about once every six months and due to this movement, foster youth lose an average of four to six months of educational attainment.<sup>xxi</sup> According to a report by the Child Welfare League of America, the number of changes in youth foster home placements is associated with foster youth having at least one severe academic skill delay.<sup>xxii</sup> This leads to lower graduation rates for foster youth compared to their peers. About 50 percent of foster youth graduate compared to 70 percent of their peers.<sup>xxiii</sup> Of these high school graduates, only 20 percent are enrolled in postsecondary education compared to 60 percent of their peers.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- **One major barrier to academic success that can be attributed to frequent changes in placement is the loss of academic credits for work completed, resulting in increased risk of not graduating or dropping out of school.** When school transfers occur, foster youth should not be penalized by a loss of academic credits for leaving their prior school before the end of the semester. Yet due to the lack of a uniform partial credit policy among California's school districts, foster youth can be moved between different school districts within the same county and lose academic credits for work completed. Even though the California Education Code requires school districts to calculate and accept credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by a foster youth, there is no statutory mandate providing a uniform method of calculating or awarding these credits. **The result has been a maze of different school district academic credit policies that has created unnecessary barriers to foster youth academic success.**

In 2003, California enacted Assembly Bill 490 (Steinberg) to preserve educational stability and continuity for foster youth experiencing multiple placement moves and school transfers. This landmark legislation required:

- Foster youth be allowed to finish an academic year in the same school even if changes in living arrangements mean the student moves to another school zone;
- Each school district employ a foster youth liaison to ensure compliance with AB 490 requirements;
- Schools enroll entering foster students immediately without waiting for required paperwork;
- Schools provide foster youth access to the same resources available to all pupils such as afterschool programs, sports, and extracurricular activities;
- Schools transfer school records for foster youth who have changed schools within two days of a request;
- *Schools accept credits for work completed by foster youth while at a previous school.*

Though many jurisdictions across California have made progress towards implementing the requirements of AB490, there are still challenges to ensuring educational stability for foster youth. The Committee recommendations attempt to address two of the most significant challenges.

## **Strategic Approach**

### **Recommendation #1:**

**Timely, accurate education data on foster youth should be made available to the courts, social workers, probation officers and school personnel to enable the early identification of foster youth at risk of school failure and/or dropping out and effective educational case management.**

Social workers and probation officers have limited access to educational data for foster youth. Current educational data collected by California schools does not identify foster youth as a unique population. Without access to timely, accurate data, educational case management becomes difficult at best.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

A state statute is needed to require school districts and county offices of education to collect foster care status under CALPADS and to share education information with child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments for the purpose of educational case management. Based on a prior budget change proposal prepared by the California Department of Education to add data elements to CALPADS, it is estimated that the fiscal impact of adding foster care status to CALPADS would be \$100,000.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that the California Department of Education work with the California Department of Social Services to draft legislative language to explicitly require school districts and county offices of education to collect foster youth data under CALPADS and authorize schools to share this information with child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments for the purposes of educational case management. The Committee further recommends that this language be recommended to Assemblyman Adams for inclusion in AB 167 in this legislative session.

### **Recommendation #2:**

**The California Department of Education and the State Board of Education should be authorized to promulgate a uniform partial credit transfer requirement that public schools would be required to adopt to ensure foster youth receive academic credit for work completed.**

There is a need to develop a uniform statewide model policy which ensures that foster youth – or any student who needs to transfer to a new school throughout the school year – receive full credit for completed coursework. Current law requires that school districts and county offices of education “shall accept for credit, full or partial coursework, satisfactorily completed by a pupil while attending a public school, juvenile court school, or nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency.” [Education Code § 48645.5]. However, current law does not create a system or a consistent method for how this credit is to be awarded. The result is that school districts have a wide range of different requirements that create barriers for foster youth who must transfer to

another district at various times throughout the school year due to a placement change and as a result, lose academic credit for work completed.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

A state statute is required to implement this recommendation to authorize and require the California Department of Education and State Board of Education to develop and promulgate a uniform partial credit transfer regulation to ensure foster youth receive full academic credit for work performed and to require local governing school boards to modify their credit board policies and administrative regulations to comply with this regulation. Based on a fiscal analysis of previous legislation (SB 1545 - Romero) which sought to create a uniform partial credit policy, we estimate that it would cost \$150,000 - \$200,000 in one-time funds to develop and promulgate a new partial credit regulation.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that the California Department of Education draft legislative language to explicitly authorize the California Department of Education and State Board of Education to develop a statewide uniform partial credit regulation and to require school districts and county offices of education to implement the policy once developed. The Committee further recommends that this language be recommended to Assemblyman Adams for inclusion in AB 167 in this legislative session.

## **Postsecondary Education**

### ***Background/Problem Description***

Current state law required transition planning for youth aging out of care to begin at age 15 ½. This is far too late for young people who aspire to attend college after high school graduation. Preparation for college must begin in middle school. Of equal importance is that young people and their caregivers are introduced to the possibility of postsecondary education as soon as possible. Foster youth report that few people in their lives ever expected them to attend and succeed in college. For those foster youth who enroll in college after high school, chances for postsecondary success are greatly increased by providing access to comprehensive campus support programs that address their support needs, from housing and mentoring to academic counseling and financial aid.

- **The overwhelming majority of foster youth do not gain access to postsecondary education even though they want to go to college just like many other young adults.**<sup>xxv</sup> Among foster youth who are “college-eligible (high school graduates), only 20 percent attend postsecondary education compared with 60 percent of their peers.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Based on data reported through the *Midwest Study*, only 30 percent of foster youth at age 21 had completed any college (one or more years) compared to 53 percent in the study comparison group. Only 1.9 percent had completed a two-year college degree.
- **Foster youth – and those who care for and work with them – need to believe that they can attend college.** Connections must be made between foster youth postsecondary education and career goals. Foster youth reported that “few people in their lives *ever expected them to attend and succeed in college.*”<sup>xxvii</sup>

- **For those foster youth who enroll in postsecondary education, about two percent obtained a bachelor's degree in contrast to 24 percent of adults in the general adult population.**<sup>xxviii</sup> Foster youth face a number of challenges in college including difficulty navigating needed services, lack of access to year-round housing, mentoring and peer support networks. Campus support programs were created to provide former foster youth access the same educational services and opportunities provided to youth from intact families.<sup>xxix</sup>
- **Transition planning for foster youth begins too late for foster youth who wish to pursue higher education.** As previously noted, counties are required to commence transition planning for youth expected to age out of the foster care at age 15 ½. In order to meet coursework requirements for four-year colleges and universities, for example, postsecondary education planning needs to begin in middle school.
- **Since 1996, various federal and state laws have addressed the need for foster youth and their caregivers to have access to information about options for postsecondary education and training, financial aid, and other information to help support postsecondary education goals with mixed success.**<sup>xxx</sup> *(Please refer to Addendum 8 for a description of recent legislative approaches.)*
- In addition to federal and state statutes, the philanthropic community in California has led efforts to establish comprehensive foster youth campus support programs. In 1998, the Stuart Foundation provided a grant for the first foster youth campus support program – the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society at UC Santa Cruz. Since that time, the Stuart and the Walter S. Johnson Foundations have invested over \$4.7 million in 13 programs in California. According to the College Pathways Program, there have been initiatives implemented at 31 public and private postsecondary education institutions throughout the State (including those supported by philanthropy) to provide comprehensive support to foster youth funded primarily through nonprofit foundations and limited public resources.<sup>xxxi</sup>

More recently, in 2008, Casey Family Programs published a comprehensive technical assistance manual for campus support programs based on promising practices in California's higher education systems and colleges.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Despite all of these efforts, the percentage of foster youth enrolling in and completing college remains at unacceptably low levels compared with their peers.

## **Strategic Approach**

### **Recommendation #1:**

**All foster youth should have access to postsecondary education planning information beginning as early as age 13, and postsecondary education goals should be considered in the development of foster youth transition plans by Fiscal Year 2010-11.**

The State of California has long recognized – and more recently, the Federal Government- that there is a strong need to systematize communication with foster youth, their caregivers and others involved in their lives about the opportunity for postsecondary education, training and access to financial aid. There also are tremendous societal and public benefits to helping foster youth attend postsecondary education. Foster youth who attend college have increased work-life earnings, reduced pregnancy rates, and a reduced reliance on public assistance. Every effort must be made as early as possible to introduce foster youth and their caregivers to the opportunities that postsecondary education provides. Once youth take the first steps toward achieving their career and postsecondary education goals, the systems must provide the necessary information and transitional support for students to attain academic success and graduation.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory or regulatory impacts associated with the Committee’s recommendations. The Committee estimates that there would be minimal costs associated with developing and disseminating information on best practices for postsecondary education transition planning. There would be in-kind staff time associated with participating in the recommended work group (see below) and disseminating work group recommendations.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends the following activities to support postsecondary education planning:

- a) Create a State and local postsecondary education planning work group comprised of representatives from the Administrative Offices of the Court, the California Department of Social Services, the California Department of Education, the CCC Chancellor’s Office, the University of California Office of the President, the California State University Chancellor’s Office, the California Student Aid Commission, county child welfare agencies, juvenile probation departments, caregivers, foster youth, and other key stakeholders to define: 1) postsecondary education planning core components (what caregivers and youth need to know); 2) milestones (when caregivers and youth need to know it); and 3) practices across systems that ensure access to information (how we are going to provide the information to caregivers and youth and who is responsible);
- b) Develop and disseminate work group recommendations to caregivers, foster youth, and professional staff who work with foster youth such as AB 490 liaisons, social workers, classroom teachers, school administrative staff, probation officers, and college recruiters;
- c) Identify possible funding streams to expand access to postsecondary education planning information in K-12 schools such as the CCC K16 Bridge Program.

### **Recommendation #2:**

**All foster youth pursuing higher education either at a two-year or four-year public college or university should have access to comprehensive campus support programs in FY 2010-11, or as soon as fiscally feasible.**

When foster youth do access postsecondary education systems, foster youth like other at-risk populations may need additional, comprehensive supports and services including year-round housing and other basic needs such as transportation, and health insurance; financial aid; academic advising and career counseling; personal guidance, counseling and supplemental supports needed to succeed in college; opportunities for student community engagement and leadership; and planned transition to college between colleges and to employment.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Comprehensive campus support programs, like the Guardian Scholars, the Renaissance Scholars and the CCC Foster Youth Success Initiative, have been able to effectively provide the assistance and support that foster youth need to succeed in the postsecondary education environment.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory or regulatory impacts associated with this recommendation. Based on the cost of supporting current comprehensive campus programs for foster youth, the Committee estimates that the development and replication of campus support programs at UC and CSU campuses which currently do not have these enhanced supports would be less than \$4 million.

The Committee also recognizes that full development of the CCC FYSI program will require additional State support in the future. One low cost option to strengthen CCC campus support programs is to provide additional support for CCC Extended Opportunity Program & Services programs which help recruit, retain and assist the academic success of low-income and educationally disadvantaged students by providing them with the tools and resources for achieving a higher education.

Given the dire budget situation, the Committee recognizes it is likely to be challenging to establish new programs in Fiscal Year 2009-10 – *let alone sustain existing programs*. For this reason, the Committee has recommended low or no cost activities in the next fiscal year to expand campus support programs (see below).

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends the following activities to increase access to comprehensive campus support programs for foster youth:

- a) Utilize the state and local postsecondary education planning work group (see Recommendation #1) to determine the most appropriate means to provide technical assistance to higher education institutions interested in developing and implementing campus support programs, including the *Casey Family Programs Supporting Success Framework*;
- b) Explore with the UC President's Office and the CSU Chancellor's Office establishing foster youth campus support programs at UC and CSU campuses which do not currently have comprehensive programs including UC San Francisco, UC Santa Barbara, UC Merced, CSU Chico, CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU Long Beach, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Northridge, CSU San Luis Obispo, and CSU Sonoma;
- c) Identify low cost programs that could be replicated such as the CSU San Marcos Tutor Connection program;

- d) Work with the CCC Chancellor's Office to address challenges identified with the FYSI including seeking resources to sustain and expand programs; building community and interagency collaborations; and strengthening collaboration with the K-12 system to help foster youth bridge to postsecondary education and/or career training;
- e) Identify resources for funding new and sustaining existing campus support programs by FY 2010-11 or as soon as is fiscally possible.

## **Workforce Development and Employment**

### ***Background/Problem Description***

Foster youth aging out of care are underemployed or unemployed, have mean earnings below the poverty level, and progress more slowly in the labor market than their peers. Foster youth often do not meet minimum qualifications for entry level jobs in the private sector, and the systems which are charged with preparing foster youth for work often do not collaborate, fail to leverage their resources to better serve this population, and do not provide foster youth adequate mentoring and support while they are participating in workforce development or training programs. While there has been a progression of State and local initiatives focusing on foster youth workforce development and employment since 2004, relatively few California counties have implemented comprehensive initiatives.

- **Youth aging out of care as young adults are vulnerable to poor economic outcomes.**

A 2002 study by Chapin Hall Center for Children which examined patterns of employment and earnings for youth aging out of foster care in three states (California, Illinois, and South Carolina) reported the following disturbing findings<sup>xxxiv</sup>:

- Youth aging out of foster care were underemployed - no more than 45 percent of youth aging out had earnings in any of the three states during any one of the 13 quarters of the study;
- About 23 percent of California youth aging out of foster care were unemployed during the 13 quarters of the study;
- California youth who did not work prior to exiting care had a 50-50 chance that they would begin working after exit;
- Youth aging out of foster care had mean earnings below the poverty level;
- Youth aging out of foster care progressed more slowly in the labor market than other youth.

- **Youth aging out of care often do not meet minimum qualifications for entry level jobs in the private sector.** Workforce readiness is dependent on K-12 education success. A 2004 study<sup>xxxv</sup> published by the Chapin Hall Center on Children found that after completing 10th or 11th grade, students aging out were reading on average at only a 7th grade level. Few excelled in academic subjects; less than 1 in 5 received an "A" in English, math, history or science. Another study found that foster children and youth lagged at least half a school year behind demographically similar students in the same schools.<sup>xxxvi</sup>



- **The systems which are charged with preparing foster youth for work often do not collaborate, fail to leverage their resources to better serve this population, and do not provide foster youth adequate mentoring and support while participating in workforce development or training programs.** While there have been recent workforce development and employment training initiatives in several California counties targeting foster youth, there has been insufficient public and private funding consistently directed toward encouraging collaborative partnerships among K-12 education, child welfare agencies, workforce development partners, postsecondary education, employers, caregivers, foster youth and other key stakeholders to recruit, prepare, support, and link youth aging out of care to well-paying private and public sector entry level employment opportunities.
- There has been a progression of State and local workforce development and employment initiatives focusing on foster youth since 2001, but relatively few counties have implemented comprehensive initiatives.
- In 2001, the **Foster Youth Employment Training and Housing Task Force** developed a framework for interagency collaboration and service integration between local workforce development and foster care systems and successfully tested the framework through local area pilot projects.
- In 2004, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation funded several California counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Stanislaus) to implement the **Gateway Project College and Career Pathway Program** to provide a bridge program for transitioning foster youth, out-of-school youth and disadvantaged youth and adults leading to postsecondary training in high wage, high growth fields and/or college degree programs in the biotechnology, health and construction industries (see addendum for additional information). Lessons learned from this initial pilot have informed a new Governor's Career Technical Education Initiative launched in 2008 by the California Community Colleges in partnership with local workforce investment boards, community colleges and other local partners (see below).
- In 2006, California partner agency participation in the **National Governor's Association Foster Youth Policy Academy** resulted in the requirement that all emancipating foster youth register in their local One-Stop Career Center as part of their transition plan.
- **In 2007, the County of Santa Clara was honored with a top award from the California State Association of Counties for its Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program from among 260 entries throughout California.** (Please refer to Addendum 9 for a full description of EYF.)
- **In 2007, as part of the Governor's Career Technical Education Initiative, the California Community Colleges utilized the experiences and lessons learned under the Walter S. Johnson Gateway Project to develop and launch Career Advancement Academies (CAAs) in three regions throughout the State (East Bay, Central Valley,**

**Los Angeles).** (Please refer to Addendum 9 for a full description of Career Advancement Academies.)

- **While there have been a number of successful workforce development and employment initiatives implemented in California, access to these programs have been limited geographically and by program capacity limits.** For the fortunate foster youth who have benefited from workforce development initiatives, outcomes have been generally favorable as witnessed by outcomes data from the Gateway Project and initial data from the CAAs. What is needed is further replication of successful foster youth workforce development and employment initiatives in additional counties and regions of the State. There also is a great need for a commitment within State and local government to hire former foster youth in entry level positions to set an example for others to follow and to expand career pathways for foster youth.

## **Strategic Approach**

### **Recommendation #1:**

**California should increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth transitioning from the foster care system by replicating statewide the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Program that provides public sector, entry-level job opportunities to untrained, economically-disadvantaged youth transitioning out of the foster care system.**

As advocates for foster youth, child welfare agencies are uniquely positioned to serve as an example for other public agency partners in recruiting, training, hiring and supporting foster youth in entry level positions. Similarly, the California Department of Social Services should work with state partners and the State Personnel Board to place former foster youth in entry level positions within State Government.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory or regulatory impacts associated with this recommendation. There are negligible fiscal impacts associated with the implementing the Santa Clara County Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program within state and county government. In fact, there are benefits to state and local government of providing employment opportunities to former foster youth in terms of improved transition outcomes and reduced reliance on public welfare benefits and services.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that the California Department of Social Services work in collaboration with Santa Clara County, the State Personnel Board, and the Department of Personnel Administration to develop outreach and education strategies to encourage State and county agencies and departments to replicate the Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program. These strategies might include identifying a small amount of foundation or private funding to cover the cost of staff time for Santa Clara County personnel to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance to other counties and compiling a county and State roadmap for implementing the program using existing Santa Clara County information and materials.

## **Recommendation #2:**

**California should increase access to workforce development and employment opportunities for foster youth transitioning from the foster care system by funding a collaborative foster youth-specific workforce development project from Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Governor's 15% Set Aside Funds in addition to other federal, state, local and private funds under a collaborative partnership funding model.**

Nearly 5,000 foster youth emancipate annually from care. Many of these youth exit care unprepared for entry level jobs. The Career Advancement Academy model has proven successful in improving the skill level of disadvantaged youth, including foster youth, so that they are prepared for employment opportunities in the private sector and/or to continue their education at community colleges or four-year colleges and universities. However, the CAAs are not widely available to foster youth throughout California despite their promising success in working with foster youth.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory and regulatory impacts associated with this recommendation. There is no fiscal impact to the State to funding additional Career Advancement Academy sites using WIA Governor's 15% Set Aside funding.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The estimated cost of supporting a CAA site is approximately \$1.6 million. Funding is usually provided for a three-year period. These costs would be shared through a collaborative funding approach that fosters a state and local system partnership among WIA, child welfare agencies, juvenile probation departments, community colleges, local educational agencies, the private sector, labor organizations and other community-based organizations.

### ***Implementation Plan***

For the CAA replication, upon approval by the Governor's Office, the California Workforce Investment Board, the California Department of Education, the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and the California Department of Social Services would form a project team and develop an RFP to collaboratively fund the CAAs with WIA Governor's 15% Set Aside funds and other federal, state, local and private funding.

## **Mental Health Access for Foster Youth**

### ***Background/Problem Description***

In addition to addressing successful youth transitions, the Committee is recommending improving access to mental health services, especially for youth placed out-of-county. Available research studies show that foster children and youth represent an extremely high-risk population for socio-emotional, behavioral and psychiatric problems requiring mental health treatment. While California has made recent strides to address mental health access with the passage of the Mental Health Services Act and SB 785, for example, many foster children and youth do not receive equal access to the mental health treatment to which they are entitled and need to succeed in school, at work or in the community.

- **Foster youth face heightened mental health risks and may be unnecessarily placed in restrictive, expensive, out-of-home placements due to inadequate access to intensive, individualized community-based mental health care.** Foster children and youth are three to six times more likely than non-foster children and youth to experience emotional, behavioral and developmental problems.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Studies show that as many as 70 percent of foster youth will experience a mental health problem associated with their placement or the abuse or neglect that led to their removal from their homes.<sup>xxxix</sup> When foster youth mental health needs are not met, the result is often pain and suffering, placement instability, increased school failure, costly institutionalization in group homes, residential treatment facilities, and psychiatric hospitals, delinquency, and even death.<sup>xl</sup>
- Virtually all of California's foster youth are eligible for mental health services under Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program. Medicaid is a voluntary program, but participating states such as California must comply with controlling federal law and regulations. One of these requirements is to provide Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) services to all Medicaid-eligible children. EPSDT is a broad mandate that entitles eligible youth to receive any medically necessary service needed to correct or ameliorate their physical and mental conditions. Medicaid's mandatory coverage for children is much broader than is its coverage for adults. Under EPSDT, all services that a state *may provide* under Medicaid, *must be provided* to children, even if the state Medicaid plan does not include the service or treatment.<sup>xli</sup>
- **Foster youth currently are not receiving all of the intensive, individualized, community-based mental health services allowed under Medicaid.** Mobile crisis stabilization, safety planning and assessment in the home, and parent education on a child's disorder, to name a few examples, are often unavailable. As a result, California is losing out on federal Medicaid matching funds. Moreover, not providing access to Medicaid services violates federal law and reduces utilization of less restrictive, less costly alternatives to group home and institutional care. Providing increased access to intensive, individualized, community-based care will reduce costs and improve outcomes for foster youth.
- **About 20 percent of California's foster youth are placed across county lines and many experience great difficulty and lengthy delays in accessing mental health services.** Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services are provided using a system of county-based managed care agencies or a MHP under contract with DMH. Each MHP, in turn, contracts with local private mental health service providers (or uses county mental health staff) to deliver treatment and services. This system works efficiently for many children and youth. However, the county-based MHPs face substantial administrative barriers when services must be provided to individuals residing outside of the county, outside the service area for its network of providers. These problems include difficulty: 1) finding providers and services; 2) contracting for care; 3) getting treatment authorizations; 4) coordinating and monitoring care; and 5) securing adequate reimbursements from responsible parties including federal, state, and local agencies.

- **Administrative barriers significantly impede access to mental health services for children placed across county lines.** When a foster youth experiences delays in accessing mental health services, an exacerbation of his or her condition can fuel placement instability. When a child placed out-of-county with a relative foster caregiver, for example, is unable to access mental health services, a worsening of his or her condition may necessitate removal to an institutional facility, disrupting a potentially stable home. This broken system of mental health delivery is having adverse impacts on the lives of one of California's most vulnerable populations and is depriving foster youth of their federal and state statutory entitlement to medically necessary mental health services.
- **There are opportunities for California to receive additional federal funding to support mental health services for foster youth.** The federal economic stimulus legislation temporarily increased the Medicaid match percentage for States through Federal Fiscal Year 2011. To the extent that California and counties can identify new funds for mental health services, the federal government will contribute about 58 cents for every new dollar of mental health spending.
- At the State and local level, the primary source of mental health funding for foster youth is Medi-Cal, followed by Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding.<sup>xlii</sup> California counties have increased access to home and community-based services under MHSA although cuts in other areas may be eroding the impact of these expansions. In some cases, these efforts are being used to expand access to Medicaid matching funds. **State efforts to control EPSDT costs with audits and county cost-sharing requirements have reduced the growth rate for these services and limited access to Medicaid matching funds.** A Performance Improvement Plan for intensive users of EPSDT services also is underway.
- **Not all foster youth are treated equally under SB 785.** Recently, California enacted SB 785 to address the challenge of access to mental health services for out-of-county youth. SB 785 addresses three categories of youth: foster children; children receiving Kinship Guardian Assistant Payments (Kin-Gap); and children in the Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP). The main impact of this statute on foster youth is to streamline the contracting process between host county organizational providers and the county of origin. For Kin-Gap and AAP children, SB 785 *transfers responsibility for providing services* to the county of residence of the legal guardians/adoptive parents, enabling these children to access services in the county where they live, but did not impose this requirement for all foster children and youth in need of mental health services.

## **Strategic Approach**

### **Recommendation #1:**

**California should ensure access to appropriate medically necessary mental health services for foster youth with particular emphasis on those placed across county lines by:**

- a) Affirming that foster youth are entitled to all medically necessary mental health services allowed under Medicaid;**
- b) Affirming that greater access to individualized, community-based mental health services will improve outcomes for children in, or at risk of, foster care; and**
- c) Adopting a policy goal of maximizing federal contributions under Medicaid and other funding streams in order to provide all medically-necessary mental health services to foster youth as required by law.**

Providing mandated medically necessary assessment, diagnosis, and treatment under EPSDT improves outcomes for families and youth. Despite these very difficult budget times, the Committee recommends that California identify the required State and local matching funds to draw down additional federal funding to meet the mental health needs of foster youth. This recommendation will ensure recognition by the State that under the EPSDT obligation, foster youth are entitled to all services authorized by federal law, even if the state Medicaid plan does not provide them to adults. This affirmation is necessary to highlight the special status of foster youth and affirm their broad entitlement to mental health services.

Providing individualized, intensive, community-based services can improve outcomes. The most important factor in terms of development in a young child's life is a consistent and stable connection to a caring adult.<sup>xliv</sup> Children in group homes "almost certainly...experience fewer interpersonal experiences that support their well-being, including the chance to develop [a] close relationship with a significant individual who will make a lasting, legal commitment to them."<sup>xlv</sup> In fact, "the evidence is negative, mixed, or shows no effect for institutionally-based interventions— in hospital, residential or group home settings."<sup>xlv</sup> In contrast, there is strong evidence that individualized, intensive, community-based services in home or home-like settings are very effective in improving outcomes for foster youth or children at risk of entering foster care, including reduced reliance on out-of-home placement, reduced number of placements, fewer psychiatric hospitalizations, decreased behavioral problems, and increased overall functioning.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Providing individualized community-based mental health care has been shown to reduce costs where the alternative is high-level group home or institutional care.<sup>xlvii</sup> Preliminary estimates by Los Angeles County indicate that it has saved more than \$55,000 per child just in placement costs from providing wraparound services in a home or home-like setting instead of group home care. Furthermore, in Milwaukee, the overall cost of care per child enrolled in Wraparound Milwaukee dropped from \$5,000 per month for out-of-home placements to less than \$3,300 a month for intensive home-based services.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Medicaid services, including EPSDT, are an entitlement under federal and state law. Virtually all foster youth in California are Medicaid-eligible and therefore, entitled to medically necessary mental health services. Since all medically necessary services must be provided by law, it makes sense to ensure that the maximum allowable federal match is secured to fund the provision of appropriate care. Therefore, it should be the policy of the State of California to ensure that all medically necessary mental health services for children and youth are authorized under Medi-Cal

and billable by qualified providers. In addition, it should be the policy of the State of California to identify and secure other federal, state and local resources available to meet the medically necessary assessment, diagnosis, and treatment needs of foster youth with mental illness.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory impacts associated with the above recommendations.

With the exception of the recommendation to maximize federal contributions under Medicaid and other funding streams, there are no regulatory impacts associated with the recommendations. For the maximization of federal funds, a description of additional or alternative mental health services that are available under Medicaid, and therefore, covered and billable under Medi-Cal, can be accomplished through policy guidance or regulations by the California Department of Mental Health.

The fiscal impact of providing all medically necessary mental health services is unknown at present.

To the extent that all medically necessary mental health services are being provided to foster youth and are not drawing down the full federal match, maximizing federal contributions will reduce state and local costs. To the extent that such services are not being provided, capturing the maximum federal match will require the identification of additional State and local matching funds. Inasmuch as this policy makes no change to medical necessity or Medi-Cal eligibility, it is revenue neutral.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends the California Child Welfare Council affirm that foster youth have equal access to medically necessary, individualized, community-based mental health services and that California maximize federal funds to support the cost of providing mental health services to foster youth.

### **Recommendation #2:**

**California should ensure access to appropriate medically necessary mental health services for foster youth with particular emphasis on those placed across county lines by:**

- a) Affirming that out-of-county foster youth have equal access to mental health care as all other Medi-Cal eligible children; and**
- b) Amending State law to extend provisions of Senate Bill 785 (SB 785) so that foster youth are provided care by the county Mental Health Plan (MHP) in which they live.**

Out-of-county children frequently are unable to adequately access mental health services due to administrative barriers inherent to California's county-based public mental health system. These administrative barriers have existed for a decade or more in violation of federal and state law and policy which entitles foster youth to medically necessary mental health services regardless of where they reside. Affirming that out-of-county foster youth have access to mental health care is

necessary to ensure that the problem of out-of-county mental health access is resolved. To be successful, we must set an accountable, measurable goal that ensures adequate access to care as required by law.

While the enactment of SB 785 represented a positive step in the direction of improving mental health access for out-of-county youth, its benefits for youth currently in foster care are not as expansive as for Kin-Gap and AAP children. There is a need to extend these benefits to all foster youth. The requirement of SB 785 that the county of residence of legal guardians/adoptive parents<sup>xlix</sup> must provide services to out-of-county children for Kin-Gap or AAP children should be extended to all foster youth, making the host county responsible for the provision of mental health services.

Foster children should be served equally effectively wherever they reside. This can be achieved by extending to all foster youth SB 785's mandate on host counties to provide mental health care to Kin-Gap and AAP children and is an effective way of ensuring that the MHP of the host county serves all foster children, regardless of their Medi-Cal residency status. Reimbursement procedures and timelines are already addressed in SB 785. Thus, the host county would be responsible for connecting every foster child with a provider and acting as a liaison between the provider and county of origin, which will remain responsible for authorizing and paying for services. Shifting responsibilities between counties will reduce the barriers to mental health access and improve outcomes for foster youth.

### ***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

There are no statutory, regulatory, or fiscal impacts associated with *affirming* that all foster youth have equal access to mental health care. With regard to *providing* equal access to mental health services for all foster youth, this will require a new statute and regulations to extend SB 785 Kin-Gap and AAP mental health service requirements to all foster youth. Realignment of responsibilities between the county of origin and host county does not require the creation of a new funding stream. Payment arrangements between counties will follow the requirements of SB 785 in its existing form.

### ***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that the California Department of Mental Health (DMH) prepare the necessary legislative language to extend the benefits of SB 785 to all foster youth that require host counties to provide mental health care within the next two-years.

### **Recommendation #3:**

**The California Department of Mental Health should provide annual reports measuring progress toward the goal of equal access for foster youth placed out-of-county.**

Ample anecdotal evidence exists to show that out-of-county foster children experience significantly greater difficulty in accessing mental health services than in-county children. California Department of Mental Health data measuring access will enable an accurate assessment and assist in the development of effective strategies to achieve equal access for all foster youth.



***Statutory, Regulatory, Fiscal Impacts***

Under the WIC § 5777.6 (c), the DMH is required to collect and retain statistics enabling it to compare access to specialty mental health services for in-county and out-of-county children. The above recommendation reaffirms this requirement, and does not require any new statutory or regulatory initiative. This recommendation does not impose any new requirements on DMH, and therefore, is cost neutral.

***Implementation Plan***

The Committee recommends that consistent with California Welfare and Institutions Code § 5777.6, DMH be required to report to the California Child Welfare Council annually, beginning in June 2010, statistics comparing mental health access for in-county and out-of-county foster youth.

## **Addendum 5**

### **Highlights of the Midwest Study by Domain**

The *Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth* is a multi-year longitudinal study that provides a comprehensive picture of foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Since 2002, the *Midwest Study* has examined the transition to adulthood among foster youth from three participating states – Illinois which extends child welfare benefits to youth, aged 18-21, and Iowa and Wisconsin which extend benefits through age 18, and age 19 for youth completing high school. While California has made great strides in collecting and analyzing data on child welfare outcomes, there was no comparable study to the *Midwest Study* which tracked California emancipated youth outcomes through age 21. It also should be noted that the demographic characteristics of the *Midwest Study* youth were somewhat similar to the demographic characteristics of youth emancipating from care in California with the exception of African American youth which represented 55.6% of the *Midwest Study* youth and Hispanic youth which made up 7.8% of the youth in the *Midwest Study*.

The Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee considered the findings of the *Midwest Study* in the development of its two recommendations in the area of transition planning, services and supports. As the published study is over 90 pages, we have included only selected highlights in Addendum 5 to offer a snapshot of the successes and challenges faced by former foster youth, aged 18-21. Highlights are organized by study domains.

#### **Living Arrangements & Social Support**

- Former foster youth were much less likely to be living with their biological parents than the study comparison group;
- One-third lived in at least three different places since their discharge from care, including 20 percent who had lived in four or more places;
- Eighteen percent had been homeless at least once since exiting care and over half of these young people reported that they had been homeless more than once (11.8% reported being homeless for more than 90 nights since exiting care);
- While young adults perceived themselves as having social support some or most of the time, only a little over a half reported having people to encourage their goals or loan them money – a third reported not having people to help them with favors or people to listen to them.

#### **Independent Living Program**

- Although former foster youth are eligible for John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services through age 21, most young adults who received these services did so *before* exiting care;
- For most Chafee categories of service, less than one-quarter reported receiving the specific service such as education, employment/vocational services, housing, or budgeting and financial management services.

### High School Graduation & Postsecondary Education

- Foster youth fail to graduate from high school at twice the rate of their peers - nearly one-quarter of the young adults in the Midwest Study had not obtained a high school diploma or a GED by age 21;
- Only 30% had completed any college (one or more years) compared to 53% in the study comparison group;
- Only 1.9% completed a two-year college degree.

### Employment, Vocational/Job Training & Earnings

- Seventy percent reported being employed since their last interview (at age 20) but only half were currently working at age 21 (this increased to 56% when incarcerated youth were excluded);
- Those currently employed reported working a mean of 35.4 and a median of 35 hours per week, with mean and median hourly wages \$8.85 and \$8.00 per hour respectively;
- Of those who were not currently employed, 90% of those able to work reported wanting to do so and nearly three-quarters of these had actively looked for a job during the 4 weeks prior to being interviewed;
- Just under 10% reported being currently enrolled in a job training program and 37% had received some job training since their last interview (at age 20) – of those who had previously received training, 43% obtained their license or certificate.

### Income & Financial Literacy

- Three-quarters of young adults reported having any income from employment during the previous year – however, their earnings were low with median earnings of just \$5,450 compared with \$9,120 of the study's employed comparison group;
- Only half of former foster youth reported having a checking or savings account, compared to 81% of the study comparison group and only 39% of former foster youth reported owning a vehicle, compared to 73% in the study comparison group;
- Nearly 1 in 10 had borrowed at least \$200 from family or friends since their last interview and more than half still owed some of the money that they borrowed;
- Two-fifths reported having debt other than student, auto, and real estate loans.

### Economic Hardship

- Half of former foster youth reported experiencing at least one of five material hardships – not enough money to pay the rent (26.5%), not enough money to pay the utility bill (26.5%), gas or electricity shut off (8.3%), phone service disconnected (32.8%), or evicted (8.3%);
- One-quarter were categorized as having low or very low food security based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's measure of food security.

### Receipt of Government Benefits

- Three-quarters of young women and just over a third of young men had received benefits from one or more of the need-based government programs (excluding unemployment insurance) since their last interview (at age 20) including Supplemental Security Income, Food Stamps, public housing/rental assistance, TANF, and WIC.

### Physical Health and Access to Health Care Services

- Twenty-eight percent reported two or more emergency room visits and 19% reported one or more hospitalizations (top three ER visit reasons: 49.1% for pregnancy-related, 18.8% for illness, and 16.1% for an injury or accident);
- Only half reported they currently had medical insurance and 39% reported having insurance for dental care – most who were insured were covered by Medicaid;
- One-fifth reported not receiving medical care when they thought they needed it mostly due to not having insurance (71.4%).

### Pregnancy and Children

- Seventy-one percent of young women had ever been pregnant and half of these had been pregnant since their last interview (at age 20) – only one-third of the study comparison females had ever been pregnant;
- Repeat pregnancies were more the rule than the exception among former foster youth who had ever been pregnant – of those females who were pregnant in the study comparison group, the majority had only been pregnant once;
- Thirty percent of young women who became pregnant indicated that they wanted to become pregnant, and only a quarter were using birth control at the time they conceived;
- More than half of the young women and nearly one-third of the young men had at least one living child at age 21, and 38% of young women reported having two or more children living with them.

### Criminal Behavior and Criminal Justice System Involvement

- Thirty-one percent of young adults reported being arrested;
- Fifteen percent reported being convicted of a crime;
- Seven percent were incarcerated at the time of the study;
- 30% reported being incarcerated since their most recent interview, with a significantly higher level of criminal justice involvement among young men.

## **Addendum 6**

### **Seven Critical Focus Areas that Support Youth Aging Out of Foster Care**

Based on the experience of CC25I counties and a literature review of recommended strategies to foster successful connections to adulthood, California counties must be encouraged to develop comprehensive, collaborative, outcomes-based systems that support youth aging out of foster care across seven critical focus areas: K-12 Education; Employment, Job Training, and Postsecondary Education; Financial Literacy and Competence; Housing; Independent Living Skills; Permanency; and Personal and Social Asset Development.

- *K-12 Education* - Achieve shared responsibility between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and local school districts to provide foster youth with a stable, uninterrupted, needs-appropriate, high quality education that supports and encourages their academic success.
- *Employment, Job Training and Postsecondary Education* - Provide emancipating and emancipated foster youth access to and support in a broad array of youth-focused employment, training and postsecondary education programs that lead to meaningful, living-wage employment and careers.
- *Financial Literacy and Competency* - Make available to youth a broad array of instructional support, practical experience, and opportunities that lead to financial management skills, asset building behavior and the accumulation of assets such as savings accounts, cars, and homes.
- *Housing* - Ensure that every foster youth who ages out of care has access to a variety of housing options that are supportive and flexible enough to meet the developmental needs of young adults.
- *Independent Living Skills Program* - Integrate efforts to serve transitioning foster care youth with those of the child welfare and probation systems and to ensure that ILSP provides a comprehensive continuum of accessible transition services in community locations where youth feel safe, connected to peers, supported by caregivers and significant connections, and encouraged to excel.
- *Permanency* - Ensure that all youth who age out of care have with at least one lifelong connection to a caring, committed, loving adult, feeling both resilient and empowered to reach their full potential.
- *Personal & Social Asset Development* - Create and implement a continuum of specialized services to support emancipating and emancipated foster youth with special needs and assist them in identifying, utilizing and maintaining a network of supports and services throughout the transition period.

**Addendum 7**  
**Findings of the Midwest Study with Respect to  
Outcomes Correlated to Length of Stay in care**

- Youth in Illinois were four times more likely than youth in Wisconsin of ever attending college, and 3.5 times more likely to complete one year of college than Iowa and Wisconsin youth (Illinois extends care to age 21 while Iowa and Wisconsin extend care to age 18 like California);
- Each additional year of care was associated with an estimated increase of \$924 in annual earnings;
- Being in care from age 18-19 resulted in a 38 percent reduction in the risk of pregnancy;
- Although prior to their initial interview at age 17 or 18, Illinois youth were less likely than their peers in Iowa and Wisconsin to have received independent living services, at age 21, Illinois youth were more likely to report receiving services than their peers since their baseline interview, suggesting a strong correlation between remaining in care past age 18 and independent living services receipt.

## Addendum 8

### **Recent Federal and State Legislation to Support Postsecondary Education for Foster Youth**

Since 1996, various federal and state laws have addressed the need for foster youth and their caregivers to have access to information about options for postsecondary education and training, financial aid, and other information to help support postsecondary education goals with mixed success.<sup>1</sup>

- The federal “**Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008**” requires child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments to help youth make the transition to adulthood by requiring that the youth’s caseworker and other representatives as appropriate help the youth develop a personal transition plan. Transition plans are to be as detailed as a foster youth chooses and include specific options on housing, health insurance, *education*, local opportunities for mentoring, continuing support services, workforce supports and employment services.
- The federal “**College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2008**” lowered the age for federal financial aid application rules for foster youth from age 18 to youth who were in foster care “on or after their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.”
- **Assembly Bill 2463** (Caldera & Alpert, 1996) established a requirement (C.E.C. section 89346 *et seq.*) that the California Department of Social Services and county welfare departments, in coordination with the California State University (CSU), the California Community Colleges (CCC), and the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), expand outreach services to emancipated foster youth. No funds were appropriated for this activity and more than ten years later, there is still no regularly established way of communicating postsecondary education and training information specifically to foster youth.
- In **2004, state law** was amended to establish that foster youth have the right at age 16 or older to have access to information “regarding the educational options available, including, but not limited to, the coursework necessary for vocational and postsecondary education programs, and information regarding financial aid for postsecondary education.”
- Sections of the **California Education Code** encourage dissemination of information about admissions and financial aid to foster care agencies, as well as requesting that the University of California and California State University consider “admissions-by-exception” to assist the transition of students in foster care into four-year public institutions of higher education.
- In 2006, the CCC Chancellor’s Office sponsored a new outreach and retention effort – the **Foster Youth Success Initiative** (FYSI) – to provide guidance for California Community Colleges to better understand the unique needs of foster youth and how campuses can best support former foster youth in accessing available financial aid and support services. The goals of the FYSI include establishing and implementing an integrated student and academic support service model in order to improve access to student services and resources; improving access to academic support; improving retention; and improving academic performance, and outcomes. Through the FYSI, foster youth liaisons have been established on each of the 110 community college campuses, most of which were developed without state funding (some have been able to access nonprofit resources).

## **Addendum 9**

### **Model Workforce Development Programs for Foster Youth**

#### **Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program**

In 2007, the County of Santa Clara was honored with a top award from the California State Association of Counties for its Emancipated Foster Youth (EFY) Employment Program from among 260 entries throughout California. The EFY Employment Program provides entry-level job opportunities to emancipated foster youth from Santa Clara County, aged 17 ¾ to 24. Under the program, eligible youth must attend an EFY Application Workshop and submit an on-line County application. Applications are reviewed by Santa Clara County Human Resources and those meeting the minimum qualifications for entry level County jobs are kept on file for one year. When there are openings for positions in which youth have indicated an interest, they may receive a letter inviting them to an interview. Youth who are hired are hired as unclassified employees with full health benefits. After a three-month period of successful job performance, they are eligible for recommendation by their supervisor to become a permanent employee. At that time, they are required to take the employment test for their job classification. If they pass the test, they then become a probationary County employee. Once they successfully complete their probationary period, they become a permanent and coded County employee.

The program has now been expanded to include 22 entry-level classifications representing more than 1,000 alternately staffed entry-level positions county wide such as park service attendants, janitors, office assistants, and stock clerks.<sup>li</sup> Core elements of success in the Santa Clara County model include:

- A countywide commitment to the hiring, either in the classified or unclassified service, of employees under a specially designed program to assist persons who are unemployed, disabled, or untrained. Such rules may provide for employment of such persons without examination;
- A commitment and designation of staff within county human resource departments to work closely with child welfare agencies to identify available entry level positions for foster youth;
- A commitment and designation of staff within child welfare agencies to recruit, prepare, and support when needed, foster youth in the employment process including but not limited to oriented foster youth to the county hiring program, completing county job applications, working with foster youth to identify positions that meet youth career goals, follow up activities such as mentoring and assisting youth with employment challenges that may arise, and civil service test preparation;
- A commitment by a child welfare agency to first pilot the program to be able to effectively promote the program to other public agencies that may have misperceptions or concerns about employing foster youth;
- An agency outreach program to hire foster youth.

In addition, the Santa Clara County EFY Employment Program has proven successful. In the initial program, 24 of the 30 emancipated foster youth who were hired completed their assignment.



## Career Advancement Academies

In 2007, as part of the Governor's Career Technical Education Initiative, the California Community Colleges utilized the experiences and lessons learned under the Walter S. Johnson Gateway Project to develop and launch Career Advancement Academies (CAAs) in three regions throughout the State (East Bay, Central Valley, Los Angeles). The CAAs recruit, educate, train and prepare disconnected, underprepared, and underemployed young adults, aged 18-30, for careers in automotive technologies, biotechnology, construction, energy, health care, manufacturing technologies, office technologies, warehousing and logistics, and woodworking.<sup>lii</sup> Specifically, Career Advancement Academies:

- Integrate work readiness, career guidance, contextualized basic skills and technical training to accelerate progress;
- Support cohorts of students in "learning communities" where they take linked classes together;
- Use partnerships to leverage resources across community colleges, K12/adult schools/RCOPs, workforce investment boards, social service agencies, and community organizations, as well as the private sector, to recruit, support, prepare and place participants – maximizing efficiency, impact and reach;
- Work with employers and labor to target careers most in demand in the region – and ensure skills and competencies taught are relevant and what employers need;
- Have established pipeline programs in key industry sectors including healthcare, human services and early childhood education, utilities, energy and green jobs, logistics and transportation, and construction/building trades;
- Include strong partnerships with philanthropy to support the work, track participants, evaluate the program and document and share effective practices.<sup>liii</sup>

The Career Advancement Academies have leveraged some \$5 million in philanthropic funds. In addition, local colleges and their workforce partners have secured additional philanthropic investments to further the work of the CAAs.<sup>liv</sup> Partnerships are a key CAA ingredient. The CAAs in each region work with local workforce investment boards (WIBs), one stops and community organizations for outreach and recruitment, as well as to provide intensive supportive services to support students while in the program. Employers are critical to the design and success of the CAAs, ensuring that programs are meeting critical industry need, informing curriculum and program design, as well as potentially hiring program graduates, as are a wide range of community partners and labor organizations.

The CAAs statewide have engaged an independent evaluator, Public Private Ventures (PPV), to do a formative assessment of the program.<sup>lv</sup> PPV has visited sites in all the regions, conducting interviews and focus groups with students, faculty and outside partners. PPV combines the qualitative data with quantitative data on student outcomes to get a full picture of the emerging initiative. The Career Advancement Academies use the community college MIS and CalPASS systems to track and report student outcome data. This will enable the sites to do longitudinal tracking of students as the programs mature. While longitudinal data is not yet available, course success rates to date are very promising as noted on the chart below.

### Course Success Rates by Region for Matched CAA Students<sup>lvi</sup>

Region	FA07	SP08	FA08**	Total
Region I	74.50	68.67	77.19	73.62
Region II	62.75	62.65	77.28	70.47
Region III	85.73	93.73	Not yet available	88.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>74.33</b>	<b>75.02</b>	<b>77.24</b>	<b>78.28</b>

For the first three semesters of the program, CAA students have succeeded in their course work at rates much higher than students enrolled in comparable basic skills classes. As noted above, the CAA programs reach out to disconnected and disadvantaged youth and adults (including former foster youth), most of whom would not normally attend community college. Given that enrolled CAA students are overwhelmingly low-income, underprepared for college level work and face multiple barriers to college and career success, these rates are extremely encouraging.

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- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, January 2009
- <sup>vi</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Cusick, G.R., Havlicek, J., Perez, A., & Keller, T. (2007). *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 21*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Citation: Schoeni, R. & Ross, K. (2004). Material assistance received from families during the transition to adulthood. In R. Settersten, Jr., F. Furstenberg, Jr., and R. Rumbaut (Eds.). *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>vii</sup> Foundation partners include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- <sup>viii</sup> Fields, J. (2003). America's families and living arrangements: 2003. Current Population Reports, P20-553. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>ix</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., & Pollack, H. (2007). *When Should the State Cease Parenting? Evidence from the Midwest Study*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.
- <sup>x</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., & Peters, C.M. (2009). *California's Fostering Connections to Success Act and the Cost and Benefits of Extending Foster Care to 21*. Seattle, WA: Partners for Our Children.
- <sup>xi</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., & Peters, C.M. (2009). *California's Fostering Connections to Success Act and the Cost and Benefits of Extending Foster Care to 21*. Seattle, WA: Partners for Our Children.
- <sup>xii</sup> The estimate is based on: 1) the per day cost of caring for young people beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday; 2) the average amount of time young people would remain in care after reaching age 18; and 3) the costs of public assistance (SSI, Food Stamps, TANF, other cash welfare benefits) that could be avoided if young people remained in care. While California specific data was not available, an assumption was made that per-day costs of extending care in California would be similar to the per-day costs in Illinois, and that young people in California would remain in care an average of two years more.
- <sup>xiii</sup> The net cost of extending foster care to age 21 in Illinois and other Midwestern states is approximately \$37,948 per youth (this figure reflects the total cost of overall program participation with an average length of stay of two years).
- <sup>xiv</sup> Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., & Pollack, H. (2007). *When Should the State Cease Parenting? Evidence from the Midwest Study*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.
- <sup>xv</sup> Wolfe, B.L. and Haveman, R.H. (2002). Social and nonmarket benefits from education in an advanced economy. In, Yolanda Kodrzycki (Ed.), *Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Meeting the Challenges of a Changing World*. Boston: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2002. Baum, S., & Ma, J. (2007). *Education pays: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Washington, D.C.: The College Board.
- <sup>xvi</sup> The Foster Youth Services program is administered through the California Department of Education and provides
- <sup>xvii</sup> Assembly Bill (AB) 490, Chapter 862, Statutes of 2003. An overview of AB 490 (Steinberg, *Helping Foster Children Make the Grade*) developed by the California Youth Connection, Children's Advocacy Institute, and Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (2004), appears at the end of this report in Attachment E. The complete law can be viewed at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov> (Outside Source).
- <sup>xviii</sup> C. Smithgall, and others. *Educational Experiences of Children in Out-of-Home Care*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children (2004).
- <sup>xix</sup> M. Burley and M. Halpern, *Educational Attainment Of Foster Youth: Achievement And Graduation Outcomes For Children In State Care*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2001).
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- <sup>xxi</sup> Thomas R. Wolanin, *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers*. The Institute for Higher Education Policy. December 2005, 29. <http://www.ihep.org/Publications/publications-detail.cfm?id=58> (Outside Source) (accessed December 20, 2007).
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- <sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid., Executive Summary, xiv.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Martin, J. (2003). *News and Information, University Communications*. Washington University in St. Louis.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Wolanin, T. (2005). *Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: a Primer for Policymakers*. The Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> California College Pathways. (2009). *2007-2008 Annual Report: Campus Support Programs for Former Foster*

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*Youth in California.*

<sup>xxviii</sup> Casey Family Programs. (2008). *Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care/A Framework for Program Enhancement.*

<sup>xxix</sup> California College Pathways. (2009). *2007-2008 Annual Report: Campus Support Programs for Former Foster Youth in California.*

<sup>xxx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ibid

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<sup>xxxv</sup> Courtney, M.E., Terao, S., & Bost, N. (2004). *Midwest Evaluation of Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Conditions of the Youth Preparing to Leave State Care.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Smithgall, C., Gladden, R.M., Howard, E., Goerge, R., Courtney, M.E. (2004). *Educational Experiences of Children in Out-of-Home Care.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Laura Ewbank & Patrick Gardner, *Medicaid Mental Health Waiver Makes Life Difficult for Adopted and Foster Kids*, Vol. XXVII Youth Law News No. 2, at 3 (Apr-Jun 2006).

<sup>xl</sup> Patrick Gardner, *Crossing Guards Wanted: Navigating Among the Intersections of Public Mental Health Programs for Youth*, Clearinghouse Review: Journal of Poverty Law and Policy, Vol. 35 Nos. 3-4, at 181-182.

<sup>xli</sup> Patrick Gardner, *Crossing Guards Wanted: Navigating Among the Intersections of Public Mental Health Programs for Youth*, Clearinghouse Review: Journal of Poverty Law and Policy, Vol. 35 Nos. 3-4, at 181-182.

<sup>xlii</sup> National Youth Law Center Mental Health Services Grid circulated at December 2008 CWC Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee meeting.

<sup>xliii</sup> U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General* (1999) ("Surgeon General Report"), at 125-126.

<sup>xliv</sup> Richard P. Barth, *Institutions v. Foster Homes: the Empirical Base for the Second Century of Debate* (2002), at 791.

<sup>xlv</sup> California Institute for Mental Health, *Evidence-Based Practices in Mental Health Services for Foster Youth* (March 2002) ("CIMH Report" at 50; *See also*, Surgeon General Report at 170.

<sup>xlvi</sup> CIMH Report at 49, *See also*, Surgeon General Report at 175-177.

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<sup>xliv</sup> In most instances, but not all, the county of residence of the legal guardian(s)/adoptive parent(s) will be the child's county of residence.

<sup>li</sup> Santa Clara County EFY Employment Program Fact Sheet.

<sup>lii</sup> Collins, L., (March 19, 2009). *From Gateways to Career Advancement Academies.* PowerPoint Presentation to the CWC Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee. Oakland, CA: Career Ladders Project.

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<sup>liv</sup> Additional philanthropic partners include: Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Stuart Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

<sup>lv</sup> Additional philanthropic partners include: Bay Area Workforce Funding Collaborative, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Stuart Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

<sup>lvi</sup> Course success is defined as achieving a grade of A, B, C, Pass or Credit in attempted units. Not all data is available for match yet and will be updated. Source: Public Private Ventures and Cal-PASS, April 2009.

**Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee Recommendations  
to the California Child Welfare Council  
September 10, 2009**

**Executive Summary**

*The Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee of the California Child Welfare Council is focused on the problems that children and families in child welfare services face when governmental agencies do not appropriately share information. After reviewing the existing research and policy directives from many sources, and guiding original research conducted by both the University of California, Davis and the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Committee recommends the Child Welfare Council strongly support the sharing and linking of data related to children in child welfare. The Committee also recommends, in this document and in its on-going work plan, a series of concrete steps designed to bring state and local entities together with the long term goal of breaking down institutional and technical barriers to sharing data and information that will help children and their families achieve safety, permanency and well-being.*

**Background:**

***Description of issues***

Children and families involved in the child welfare services (CWS) system also receive services from multiple systems including the Department of Health Care Services (Medi-Cal), Department of Mental Health, Department of Education, and the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (for substance abuse counseling). Those charged with the care of children involved in the CWS system are faced with a fragmented aggregation of manual and electronic records and often incomplete data. Key information about the child and family that is needed to protect the child, ensure the child's well-being and achieve timely reunification or other permanent plan is found not just in the records of the child welfare agencies, but also in the records maintained by the courts, schools and school districts, medical offices, health services departments, probation departments, and many other providers. This fragmentation results in a general lack of coordination among care providers, leading to well-documented problems including service delays, placements in dangerous situations, and interruption of health care and educational services.

Sharing these data among agencies and departments is no easy task. The data systems currently in use in the courts, child welfare, education, health, juvenile justice, and other areas were independently developed without anticipating the technological advances that now allow for massive amounts of information to be compiled and exchanged. In addition, each type of data maintained for foster children— placement, health, education, mental health, substance abuse, and court records – is subject to its own complex set of privacy laws and regulations that make sharing data difficult even when the technology is in place to link systems.

Without electronic linkage, agencies are unable to efficiently manage cases or track dynamic child well-being measures. The cost-savings and administrative efficiencies that result from linked data systems, such as a social worker's ability to access to court calendars or file petitions and other court documents electronically, go unrealized. The broad outcomes of well-

being including health, education and transition to successful adulthood, cannot be measured, and the outcomes that are monitored offer only a piecemeal view of the well-being of children in foster care.

In addition to the problems these unlinked systems cause while children are in the care of the system, there are challenges in providing outcome information as the youth transition from care and enter the workforce, postsecondary education, and the juvenile and adult corrections systems. Greater availability of information as the system works with youth in their early transition planning could help emancipating foster youth select the best options available to them to create long term self sufficiency and well being.

### **Recommendations:**

**Articulate a policy supporting sharing and linking data related to children the in child welfare services system.**

**Create and maintain an inventory of national, state, and local level practices on data sharing and information exchange to disseminate and promote information sharing statewide.**

**Prepare a set of policy briefs on the laws relating to information sharing in the following areas: health, mental health, education and substance abuse.**

### **Problem Description:**

**What is currently being done to address issues/challenges at the Federal, State, and/or local level:**

Efforts to integrate data systems and promote information exchange are ongoing at the state, federal and local levels. Nationally, the Administration of Children and Families Court Improvement Program is convening court and child welfare agencies to formulate data sharing agreements and model protocols for the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). Other organizations working on information sharing at the national level include the American Bar Association and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Children's Partnership.

At the state and local level, the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care strongly recommended that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) develop their new case management systems in tandem, in order to facilitate information exchange. Through its own research, conducted by the University of California, Davis, the committee found numerous examples of data exchange taking place at the state and local level.

#### ***What is needed***

The committee identified several areas where the Child Welfare Council can work to improve data linkage and information sharing among stakeholders in child welfare:

- Establishing data linkage and information sharing as a priority of all the agencies and organizations represented on the Child Welfare Council.
- Providing tools to state and local stakeholders to facilitate data linkage and information sharing.
- Assembling information and providing guidance to stakeholders on the legal issues related to information sharing in child welfare.
- Monitoring and disseminating the examples of data sharing currently in place.

### **Strategic Approach:**

**Strategy 1: Articulate a policy supporting sharing and linking data related to children in the child welfare services system.** The committee recommends that the Council, representing many stakeholders who manage information on all persons served by the child welfare system, including children and their parents, agree to a policy that supports sharing data. This policy, by drawing together stakeholders beyond the court and child welfare agencies, is a necessary next step to both the Blue Ribbon Commission resolution on data sharing and the federal Pew Commission recommendations on data sharing.

**Strategy 2: Create and maintain an inventory of national, state, and local level practices on data sharing and information exchange to disseminate and promote information sharing statewide.** Many state and local entities are ready to explore data linkage and information sharing. The committee recommends facilitating access to existing agreements and other data sharing tools by collecting documents and maintaining them in a web-based archive for the use of all stakeholders. This inventory will include the memorandum of understanding for data sharing template developed by CDSS with the input of the committee, and an on-going update from local child welfare commissions on information sharing agreements.

**Strategy 3: Prepare a set of policy briefs on the laws relating to information sharing in the following areas: health, mental health, education and substance abuse.** The laws and regulations related to information sharing in child welfare are complex and interpreted in different ways. The committee recommends that, as a necessary first step, these laws be summarized by topic area and discussed with relevant legal counsel and others to more clearly identify legal barriers to information sharing. AOC staff will prepare and disseminate briefs in the four topic areas listed in the recommendation, and report to the committee the feedback they receive from stakeholders on legal barriers and suggestions for resolving them.

### **Strategic actions needed to move the strategic approach to fruition (summary):**

**Recommendation 1.** The Child Welfare Council must consider and approve the committee's policy statement for this recommendation to be implemented. The committee can disseminate the approved policy statement to executive branch agencies, the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee of the Judicial Council, local Blue Ribbon Commissions, local Statewide Improvement Program (SIP) teams, and other stakeholders.

**Recommendation 2.** The MOU template and other materials must be posted to a website where state and local agencies can access them, and add their own materials. This will be done on either a CDSS or AOC managed website. In addition, a baseline survey of information sharing agreements will be conducted at the local level, using the recently established local Blue Ribbon Commissions as respondents. This survey will be updated on a yearly basis, to track the progress of information sharing agreements in the state. Finally, AOC and CDSS staff will take responsibility for collecting information sharing agreements and tools and post them on an ongoing basis.

**Recommendation 3.** The AOC will write and disseminate the policy briefs and collect feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including court, state agency and post-secondary education general counsel. This feedback will be summarized and reported back to the committee for its consideration.

#### **Statutory and Regulatory Impact:**

There is no immediate statutory or regulatory impact for any of the recommendations. After the policy briefs have been distributed and discussed, the Data Committee and the Council may be asked to consider recommending statutory or regulatory changes.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

There is no immediate fiscal impact for any of the recommendations. Maintaining an archive of data sharing agreements will require some cost to the agency that takes responsibility. Both CDSS and the AOC have expressed their willingness to maintain this archive.

#### **Evaluation Plan:**

The Committee will evaluate, at each of its quarterly meetings, its progress both in implementing these recommendations and the many additional tasks outlined in its workplan for the coming year. The annual survey of state and local efforts will provide an on-going progress report on data linkage throughout the state.

The key outcome for all the Committee's work will be development of actual data system linkages and user portals for the linked systems. The September, 2009 deliverables of the Committee's workplan include a much more detailed review of these systems and the action steps necessary to



link them and provide access. A detailed outcomes evaluation plan will be produced after these deliverables are completed.

**Conclusion:**

These recommendations are first steps in solving the problem of data linkage and information sharing in child welfare. They reflect the overall strategic direction determined by the Committee in its discussions and workplan:

- Articulate that the Child Welfare Council and its member agencies support solving the barriers to data linkage;
- Provide tools to state and local agencies and other entities to implement data linkage;
- Provide background and a forum for experts to resolve the legal and regulatory barriers to data linkage and information sharing;
- Track the progress at the state and local level towards an integrated system of information on children and families served by child welfare.

