



CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL



PREVENTION and EARLY INTERVENTION COMMITTEE/ STATEWIDE CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL 2015 Report and Recommendations

The California Child Welfare Council (Council) was established as a statewide multidisciplinary advisory body by the Child Welfare Leadership and Accountability Act of 2006. It is responsible for improving services to children and families in the child welfare system, particularly emphasizing collaboration among multiple agencies and the courts. It is also charged with reporting on the extent to which child welfare programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care. As a standing committee of the California Child Welfare Council, the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee identifies and promotes services and support systems that prevent the need for families to enter the child welfare system. The responsibility of a Citizen Review Panel, mandated under federal law, is incorporated into the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee, and serves in a statewide capacity as one of California's three panels.

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

The Prevention and Early Intervention Statewide Citizen Review Panel's efforts to date have focused on two broad areas: quality and uniformity of prevention practice statewide, and on resourcing/financing prevention. The two previous major activities under each of these for 2014 were: (1) Development and dissemination of a federal child welfare finance reform toolkit, and (2) Promotion of the previously developed Differential Response Framework.

Child Welfare Finance Reform 2015 Update (Resourcing Prevention)

Since California is the largest consumer of federal IV-E funds and faces an increasing general fund investment, a focus on finance reform continues to be important. A key for California is recognizing that the state's unique needs would not likely be well served by current finance

reform proposals, and thus expanding the conversation to include options that would better serve the state. To that end, the toolkit on Federal Child Welfare Finance Reform has been widely disseminated throughout California, and to child welfare leadership in at least twelve additional states.

Committee staff for Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance have formally discussed at a high level a child welfare legislative proposal. Titled the “Family First Act,” the legislative proposal incorporates provisions previously introduced in legislation by both Members and has been described by staff as a compromise for both Members signaling their interest and intent on a bipartisan process moving forward.

Staff for both Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden have expressed their interest in bringing this legislative proposal before the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance for its consideration in 2016 as part of a Committee markup session. As currently outlined, the legislative proposal would have two sections – one to provide funding for prevention services as well as other legislative changes, and one to outline federal policy around placement setting for children in foster care.

Differential Response Framework 2015 Update (Uniform Prevention Practice)

In 2012 the PEI developed, and the Child Welfare Council approved the “Differential Response Framework”. This tool identified core elements through the lens of Differential Response in an effort to promote more uniformity in prevention practice. Differential Response was initially implemented with broad variation, and since then, implementation and utilization have been on the decline.

Meanwhile, various child welfare initiatives, such as the California Partners for Permanency (CAPP), the Katie A. Core Practice Model, and Safety Organized Practice (SOP), incorporate and designate core elements of practice. Likewise, statewide and local prevention partners in Family Resource Centers, Family Strengthening Networks, and others have developed a range of practice models to guide prevention practice.

Although innovative and often lead to good outcomes, the multiple emerging and established initiatives and practices compromise the ability to have a consistent, uniform statewide approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. A stated 2015 goal of the PEI/CRP is to update the DR Framework by: (1) broadening it to represent the full spectrum of prevention practice; and (2) cross-walking or integrating existing initiatives and proven practices.

2015 Activities and Accomplishments

To fulfill its responsibilities for this year, the Statewide Prevention and Early Intervention Citizen Review Panel selected two policy review areas for consideration:

1. Review of prevention policy to **identify core elements of practice** that are a fit for California. Identification of the core elements of prevention practice could serve to unite prevention providers for a greater collective impact. It could also serve to inform policy and resource decisions regarding prevention practices.
2. **Review of prevention cost/benefit policy** and determination of whether a cost/benefit analysis of prevention practices in California could set the stage for improving return on investment of federal, state, and county funds. Identification of cost effective prevention practices could serve to promote greater uniformity of prevention practice among community-based organizations, networks, family strengthening organizations, family resource centers and others, leading to improved outcomes.

Core Elements of Practice

The PEI-CRP has made significant progress towards updating the Differential Response Framework by framing it more broadly as statewide prevention practice. One of the tools developed by the PEI.CRP during this period is the “*Prevention Practice Core Elements—A Cross-Walk*”. It lays out how the identified core elements of practice apply to the full continuum of prevention activities.

The PEI-CRP has affirmed their commitment that core elements should be framed within the context of a comprehensive prevention strategy for California. The overarching strategy discussed by the group is universal community-based support available to everyone through self-referral. Community-based prevention also encompasses at-risk children and families who do not rise to the level of CWS intervention, yet need an enhance community response that should be available through self-referral. Once the level of risk rises to meet criteria for child abuse and neglect, focused prevention could take place in two tiers: (1) Assessment by CWS and referral out to community partners; and (2) high risk families that require ongoing CWS supervision to ensure safety, who are jointly served by CWS and community partners.

In the next phase of its work, the PEI-CRP will look closely at the role of trauma-informed systems and practice that address the impact of early, adverse childhood experiences. Of particular concern is the role of substance use disorders as a contributor to child abuse and neglect. It is anticipated that the core elements of practice will incorporate a focus on promotion

of child, family, and community health and well-being, thus building resilience while mitigating risk.

Prevention Cost/Benefit Analysis

In conducting a knowledge management review, the committee determined that credible work is happening that can inform California's efforts. A subcommittee looking at this issue is using the framework of a modified Haddon's Matrix. (Haddon's Matrix is a brainstorming tool that combines the epidemiology triangle {host, agent, environment} and levels of prevention.) The discussion was focused at the continuum of risk and the corresponding spectrum (or levels) of prevention. Sample approaches were noted, along with their empirical support and whether costs and return on investment had been studied.

2015 Recommendations

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted to the California Department of Social Services:

Resourcing Prevention

1. Renew call to action for federal child welfare finance reform. With the introduction of the Hatch-Wyden Proposal, the PEI-CRP requests that the Department provides the committee with their stance on the Family First Act and consistent information on the State's input into the proposed regulations. In addition, the committee would like to be informed of the State's involvement and participation in the support of the legislation when it is introduced and respectfully requests that the PEI-CRP be used in an advisory capacity to inform any decisions that are made in regards to finance reform.
2. Support the continuation of the PEI-CRP's analysis of the advisability of a cost benefit analysis for California.
3. The PEI-CRP requests a briefing on Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) outcomes, particularly with respect to evidence-based practice and associated costs.

Statewide Prevention Framework

4. Support the PEI-CRP in continuing to develop a proposed statewide Prevention Framework that specifies core elements of prevention practice needed to promote uniformity.

5. Given the sizable investment in Strengthening Families, Differential Response, and other prevention programs by the state, the PEI-CRP requests a briefing on their efficacy (and associated costs) as an evidence-based prevention practice in California and as defined in other jurisdictions.