1. **Call to Order, Introductions and Announcements**

Justice Raye and Secretary Dooley extended a personal welcome to members and others in attendance and called for introductions.

Secretary Dooley welcomed the following new members to the Council:

* Heather Dearing – Executive Director, California Coalition for Youth;
* Howard Himes – Director, Fresno County Department of Social Services; and
* Judge Steven Jahr – Administrative Director of the Courts.

Justice Raye reported on the status of Council Membership. A survey sent the 48 individuals who were members in fiscal year 2011-12, provided the following results:

* Forty-three members affirmed their ongoing commitment to serve on the Council; and
* Five members resigned from the Council due to other commitments.

In addition, since July 1, 2012, eight new members have been appointed to the Council, netting 51 members as of December 2012.

Secretary Dooley reported back on a suggestion made at the September 19, 2012 Council meeting regarding the advisability of switching the order of the full Council and Committee meetings, i.e., having the Committees meet in the morning and the Council meet in the afternoon. Based on feedback to the Co-Chairs from discussions at the September meeting, the decision is to keep the current arrangement with the Council meeting in the morning and the Committee meetings in the afternoon.

Justice Raye reviewed the proposed agenda for the day to set the stage for the meeting.

1. **Council Business (Action Item): Approval of the September 19, 2012 Discussion Highlights**

The September 19, 2012 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights were approved as written.

1. **Prioritization Task Force Report**

Justice Raye called Lori Clarke to introduce the Prioritization Task Force and to present an update of the efforts to date. Lori reminded Council that the long-term goal of the Prioritization Task Force was to develop strategies for families at risk of or involved in the child welfare system to have priority access to resources and services in order to ensure that all efforts are made to achieve the Council’s vision of *every California child living 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 prepared to become a contributing adult member of society.*

Considering the operational and political/fiscal advantages of beginning with a key subpopulation, the Council determined that initial prioritization activities were to be focused on children and families involved in the Child Welfare Services system who have a reunification plan and who continue in the dependency system post-reunification. This recommendation is supported by the Council’s vision and mission, and by the clear legal, moral, and fiscal obligation held by the State with regard to children who are in the foster care system.

The Task Force’s approach involves the following action steps:

* Identify the extent to which services are already being prioritized, defined as these families receiving services on a “first call” basis.
* Detail barriers to full prioritization and what could be done to move beyond them.
* Develop and implement a plan for moving towards full prioritization of reunification families and reporting back on implementation of the plan.
* Identify data to be used for tracking and monitoring/reporting.
* Explore feasibility of expanding prioritization to other populations of children and families who are in the CWS or at risk of entering CWS.

In brief, the following activities reflect progress on these steps:

*Knowledge Management Review*

An initial expedited review of the literature and research underway has been completed, including a description of (1) lessons learned and proposed guidelines derived from collaborative, cross-systems work in general, including historical context, and (2) a brief inventory of known prioritization practices that appear to hold implications for California’s context. Based on the initial review “lessons learned” and “proposed guidelines” were presented to the Child Welfare Council in March 2012. (*See “Ideals and Realities of Providing Timely Access to Effective Treatment.”)* A more exhaustive review of prioritization practices that could hold implications for California is nearing completion. This more thorough review will answer the following questions:

*Prioritization Inventories of State Departments*

The Prioritization Task Force and its consultants have completed inventories of current criteria for access to services of following California State Agencies/Departments that hold oversight and accountability for these services and supports:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| California Departments Participating in Inventory | | Targeted Service or Support | |
| * Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs * Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation * Department of Social Services/California Family Strengthening Roundtable * Department of Housing and Community Development * Department of Healthcare Services/Mental Health Services | | * Alcohol and Drug Treatment * Community transition * Family Strengthening, e.g., parent skills training and in-home support * Housing * Mental Health Services | |

Preliminary findings suggest that California families in reunification are not being prioritized to a sufficient extent; however there is renewed focus and opportunity to make a significant shift to do so. Several vehicles for further prioritization were identified, a few of which have recently been put in place through voluntary administrative actions. Departments across the board, both in the Health and Human Services Agency and other State Agencies have indicated a willingness to work with the task force to develop strategies that would move prioritization forward.

*Prioritization Data Plan*

The Task Force is looking at data that describe: (1) Scope of the need, i.e., the number of families and children are in the reunification component of Child Welfare Services program; (2) Tracking of broad outcomes, such as whether or not prioritization of access to services leads to more timely, safe reunification and what are the potential barriers to reunification.

Jennifer White, California Department of Social Services, presented data extracted from the publically accessible CWS/CMS Dynamic Report website that is maintained through a partnership between CDSS and UC Berkeley. These data represent approximately 51,610 children who were served on July 1, 2012 through the Family Maintenance and Family Reunification service components of the Child Welfare System.

Some highlights from the data include:

* Post-placement services are protective and supportive of successfully reunifying parents with their children.
* The Child Welfare System is more successful in helping parents raise children free from physical or emotional abuse,
* And less successful in helping parents overcome incapacities or issues (i.e., mental/physical health, substance abuse) that led to neglect or abuse of their children.
* The system is most successful in reunifying Asian/Pacific Islander families, and
* Least successful in reunifying Native American/American Indian families.

Following the presentation, Justice Raye observed that the data were difficult to follow and suggested that the Task Force clarify the optimal outcome of services provide to families and children who are in the Family Reunification component of Child Welfare and what specific services are needed to achieve this outcome. He cautioned that it would be important for policy makers to have assurance that by establishing a method for prioritization of services to families in reunification, outcomes would improve.

Patrick Gardner reminded Council members that the Task Force was established to figure out how to put Child Welfare clients “at the front of the line” and that consideration be given to an Executive Order that could serve as a “bully pulpit” for communicating the purpose and value of prioritizing services to families in reunification.

Successes associated with prioritizing other populations were offered as examples of how this strategy can work: Judge Boulware Eurie shared that the Blue Ribbon Commission was looking at best practices for courts to promote priority employment of foster youth as demonstrated in Santa Clara County; David Ambrose commented that the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee was examining ways of prioritizing access to services by foster youth and transitioning foster youth.

1. **Data Integration – Informational Briefing**

Secretary Dooley called on Barbara Needell, Co-Chair of the Data Committee to introduce the guest speaker on this topic. Barbara introduced Erin Dalton, Deputy Director for Research and Evaluation, Allegheny County Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, who briefed the Council on data integration efforts in her county that give social workers information needed to determine what services should be prioritized for what clients, as well as supporting a culture of collaboration across agencies.

Ms. Dalton said that Allegheny County had established a Data Warehouse where multiple agencies serving families and children stored data for the following purposes:

* Improve Services to Clients
  + Avoid providing information redundantly
  + More timely delivery of services
  + Holistic view of client
* Improve The Ability Of Workers To Perform Their Jobs
  + Efficient use of workers’ time (less paper, more use of electronic information, elimination of duplicate paperwork)
  + Full view of clients’ needs
  + Ability to accurately match services to client needs
* Improve Ability To Manage & Administer Program Operations
  + Identification of duplication & / or gaps in services provided
  + GIS mapping – better identification of geographic needs
  + Management information to improve planning & allocation of resources
  + Improved consolidation of reports – trends, state, federal
  + Better connection between services & fiscal systems
* Support the use of this community asset

Ms. Dalton showed some examples of (1) how the data are used to inform social workers and policy makers about services received by parents in the child welfare system; and (2) the percent of Pittsburg Public School students who have involvement with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. She pointed out that thorny issues persist in accessing drug and alcohol data because of federal confidentiality requirements; sharing detailed data with the courts and probation; and sharing data with schools. She also noted that data sharing requires a culture change within the child welfare agency and among community service providers. Ongoing challenges include funding, maintenance of the Data Warehouse, correct use of the data and legal issues associated with confidentiality.

1. **Update from Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)** **Work Group**

Justice Raye called on Kate Walker to present a status report from the CSEC Workgroup. Kate stated that the

purpose of presentation was to build on the information shared at the September meeting by providing highlights of the CSEC report that is in process. The CSEC Work Group is preparing a comprehensive, scholarly paper that examines the problem and makes recommendations and the CSEC Fact Sheets distributed at the meeting distill the essence of the paper. The CSEC Work Group’s efforts complement things that are already happening such as Prop 35, the Attorney General’s report and the recent Task Force formed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The Work Group plans to present the final report with recommendations at the March Council meeting.

Kate then introduced Nola Brantley, Executive Director of MISSSEY, Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth). Nola informed Council members that many CSEC are also involved with the child welfare system. She described the efforts of her organization and others to serve CSEC throughout California, including training social workers and policy makers about the problem and establishing programs specifically aimed at serving CSEC. Nola applauded programs established in Alameda, Sacramento and Los Angeles Counties as models for other counties to build on.

Judge Boulware Eurie and Patrick Gardner joined Kate and Nola to engage Council members in a discussion. Suggestions included (1) add a category to CWS/CMS that would capture data on children reported to child welfare system as CSEC victims or who are already in the system when they become commercially sexually exploited; (2) staff training across all systems serving youth regarding the dynamics of CSEC and the impact on victims; (3) create specialized placements and safe houses for CSEC victims; and (4) create interventions that incorporate promising practices for addressing the trauma experienced by CSEC victims.

David Ambrose pointed out that CSEC victims are developmentally at the stage of “sexual awakening” and that by appropriately helping all youth learn about sexual development we may also give them opportunities to talk about sexual exploitation. Philip Browning expressed that there may be need for further legislation to clarify public policy for serving CSEC, especially if there is to be an increased role for the child welfare system.

1. **Status Reports from Committees and Task Forces**

* **Prevention/Early Intervention Committee**

Members of the Prevention/Early Intervention Committee served as outreach hosts to share the Differential Response Framework adopted by the Council in September 2011. The DR Framework was well received. A few questions were raised as to how the document would be used in the longer term.

In partnership with the California Department of Social Services, the PEI Committee conducted a brief survey of the 11 pilot counties who were the first to implement DR in California. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about:

1. What counties are doing now to implement Differential Response and/or other prevention frameworks
2. Opportunities that facilitate and barriers that impede full implementation of prevention activities
3. What counties need in order to fully implement the prevention activities appropriate for their county

*Survey Results*

It is evident that counties want to implement prevention activities, including Differential Response. However, multiple counties reported reducing or eliminating DR activities due to funding constraints. (Funding is the only barrier to increased implementation cited consistently by counties.)There is currently a heavy reliance on First Five funding and most counties are finding ways to implement some form of prevention framework.

* **Permanency Committee**

Robin Allen reported that the Committee is working on the recommendations for goal of increasing family reunification and reducing reentry of children to foster care. She also asked Council members for feedback on whether to include probation youth in the recommendations.

* **Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee**  
  Gordon Jackson stated that the Committee is 45 members strong – a mix of Council members and representatives from state departments, counties, nonprofit direct service providers, education, health and advocacy groups. At the last Council meeting that a question was raised regarding whether or not the Committee had too broad a scope and should be divided into two Committees. Gordon reported that Committee members were unanimous in their opinion that we should remain one Committee.

The Committee’s agenda for the afternoon included:

* + The issue of “partial credit” to ensure that foster children who change schools can accumulate credits from each school and not be denied graduation when they have completed the required work;
  + The services to young children in foster care which will ensure that the needs this subpopulation are met at a time in their lives where brain development is at its most rapid pace and where meeting attachment and nurturing needs is crucial to long-term health and well-being.
  + The benefits and drawbacks of requiring that group homes be accredited.

As the Committee completes it studies in these areas, Gordon will bring reports and recommendations to the full Council.

* **Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee**

Barbara Needell reported that at the Committee meeting in the afternoon Erin Dalton would be giving an in-depth presentation regarding data linkages and Allegany County’s experiences in using data to inform decision-making.

* **Out-of-County Mental Health Task Force**

Dina Kokkos-Gonzalez reported that the Heath Care Services Department/Mental Health Services Division was working on an All County Information Notice that counties must provide, or arrange for the provision of, Medi-Cal specialty mental health services, including specialty mental health services under the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment benefit and that this requirement is not abrogated or diminished in any way under the 2011 Public Safety Realignment. The requirement applies to foster children regardless of whether they live in their county of jurisdiction or in another county.

* **Blue Ribbon Commission/Child Welfare Council Joint Membership**

Justice Raye reported that the Blue Ribbon Commission recently completed a report on school truancy that will serve as a resource for California courts to develop collaborative solutions to truancy and school discipline issues and provide some key examples of the major types of initiatives in which courts have been involved. The BRC/CWC Joint Membership group will look at ways to bring this information forward to the Council.

1. **Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings**Justice Raye and Secretary Dooleythanked everyone for participation at the meeting and appreciated the work of Committees and Task Forces to further the goals of the Council.