

# CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

## Discussion Highlights

March 12, 2014

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### **I. Call to Order, Introductions and Announcements**

Justice Raye and Secretary Dooley extended a personal welcome to members and others in attendance and expressed their special appreciation to Director Philip Browning and his staff at Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services for hosting the meeting. They then asked all Council members and others in attendance to introduce themselves.

Secretary Dooley called for announcements. Paul Curtis shared that the California Coalition for Youth annual *Taking Action* Conference will be held March 30-April 1 2014 at the Holiday Inn, Capitol Plaza, Sacramento. The purpose of the conference is to empower youth and youth advocates with strategies to create change and improve the lives of California's youth. The Conference will feature Keynote Speaker William (Bill) Bentley, Associate Commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the U.S. Health and Human Services Agency. There will be ten workshops that have been designed to appeal to both youth and staff who serve youth. More information may be found at: <http://www.calyouth.org/resources/taking-action-conference2014/>

David Ambroz announced that the Stuart Foundation and Walt Disney Company have partnered to launch the Foster More campaign for Foster Care Awareness Month. The Public Service Announcements produced by Robert Caruso Company may be viewed at: [http://stuartfoundation.org/OurStrategy/vulnerableYouthInChildWelfare/ChildWelfareVideos/ChildWelfareVideos\\_FYEVideos](http://stuartfoundation.org/OurStrategy/vulnerableYouthInChildWelfare/ChildWelfareVideos/ChildWelfareVideos_FYEVideos).

Leslie Heimov provided information on an AmeriCorps National Service position that has just been posted for a Peer Advocate who will be hosted by the Children's Law Center's Sacramento office. The position is open to former foster youth and will involve working closely with Children's Law Center attorneys and investigators to ensure youth have access to necessary resources and services to prepare for life after foster care. For more information, contact Catherine Zepp at [ZeppC@clcla.org](mailto:ZeppC@clcla.org).

Sylvia Pizzini reminded Council members regarding the dates and locations of the June and September meetings and announced that a date and location had been set for the December meeting, as follows:

<b>Wed., June 11, 2014</b>	<b>Wed., September 10, 2014</b>	<b>Wed., December 10, 2014</b>
CA Dept. of Social Services	Admin. Office of the Courts	Admin. Office of the Courts
744 P Street, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	455 Golden Gate Ave., 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	2860 Gateway Oaks Dr., Suite 400
Sacramento, California 95814	San Francisco, California 94102	Sacramento, California 95833

Justice Raye set the context for the meeting by reviewing the agenda.

### **II. Approval of the September, 2013 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)**

Secretary Dooley asked for comments or suggested revisions to the December 11, 2013 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights, and they were approved as written on a consensus vote.

### **III. Permanency Committee: Informational Presentation – “The Kinship Care Paradox”**

Justice Raye called on Carroll Schroeder and Bob Friend to introduce the topic and speakers. They reminded Council members that the topic of kinship care reimbursement rates had been under study by the Committee over the past year, and Committee members now wanted full Council to be informed. They welcomed Angie Swartz, Policy Director, Alliance for Children's Rights and Brian Blalock, Youth Justice Project Director, Bay Area Legal Aid. Highlights of their presentation include:

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**BACKGROUND**

- Federal and state law require relatives to be given preference in the placement of foster children:
  - States must “consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement of a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all of the relevant state child protections standards.” 42 USC §671(a)(15)(A)
  - Statutory preference for relative placements in state law. Fam. Code § 7950(a)(1); WIC §§ 361.3, 16000.
  - Whenever safe a child should be placed with a relative. WIC § 361.3(a), (e)(1).
  - Social workers have duty to seek out relatives for assessment and placement. WIC § 361.2.
  - Relatives must be notified within 30 days of child entering foster care. WIC § 309.
- Research has shown that children in kinship care have:
  - Fewer prior placements
  - More frequent and consistent contact with birth parents and siblings,
  - Felt fewer negative emotions about being placed in foster care than children placed with non-relatives
- Using an illustration with two foster children, Rachel (who is cared for by a relative) and Naomi (who is cared for by a non-relative): If Rachel and Naomi are both **federally eligible**, they receive the same level of support - \$820 per month.
- If both Rachel and Naomi are **not federally eligible**, their caregivers receive different benefits based on whether they are related to the child - \$820 vs. \$369. (Note that the CalWORKs grant for one child is equal to just 37% of the federal poverty line.)
- If Rachel and Naomi are placed with their respective siblings who are also **not federally eligible**, the inequities are even greater - \$1640 vs. \$606

To receive federal foster care benefits, the youth must meet the 1996 AFDC criteria in the home of removal in the month of removal or one of the six months prior to removal. In 1996, income limit for a family of 3 to qualify for AFDC was \$723. BY CONTRAST: The income limit for the same family to qualify for cash assistance today is \$1,200. What that means: a child can be removed from a parent receiving welfare benefits and STILL not qualify for federal foster care benefits IMPORTANT: Federal test has nothing to do with the needs of the child or the needs of the relative where the child is placed

- Little known facts re: federal eligibility
  - Federal eligibility is a *one-time determination* done at removal
  - Federal eligibility does not depend on the type of placement
    - If not federally eligible in a relative’s home, also not federally eligible in a non-relative home or a group home
  - Eligibility for federal foster care benefits is distinct from meeting federal home approval standards
    - A relative in California who meets federal home approval standards is still denied foster care benefits when the child does not meet the 1996 welfare standards
  - Fifty-six percent of California’s foster youth are NOT federally eligible

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- When relative foster parents care for youth with special needs who are **not** federally eligible, the relatives do not receive:
  - Specialized Care Increments to provide for the special needs of the youth
  - Dual Agency Rates for youth with developmental disabilities
  - Infant Supplement for youth who are parenting
- Impact on child outcomes
  - Children who grow up in poverty are likely to have
    - Lower earnings
    - Less education
    - Poorer health as adults
  - These risks are compounded for children who experienced abuse or neglect
  - The current TANF grant in CA for a single child is equal to 37% of the poverty line
- In comparison to group home rates, the non-federal kinship care rates appear penny wise and pound foolish:
  - Group Home Annual Costs
    - \$88,728/year for 1 youth at RCL 10
    - \$95,508/year for 1 youth at RCL 11
    - \$102,348/year for 1 youth at RCL 12 (**52% of youth in group homes placed in this level**)
    - \$116,028/year for 1 youth at RCL 14
  - By contrast – it costs \$9,840/year for a 15-year old to be supported in a non-relative home or a federally-eligible relative's home
    - Relative foster parents caring for the same 15-year old who is non-federally eligible child receive a maximum of \$4,428/year
- Demographics of Kinship Caregivers
  - Senior Citizens: 15 – 20% of relative caregivers are over the age of 60
  - Fixed Incomes: 39% of kinship households live below the federal poverty line
  - Disabled: 38% of kinship caregivers have a limiting condition or disability
  - Limited advanced training: Kinship foster parents receive little, if any, advanced preparation in assuming their role as caregivers. No training required by the state.
- In California, relative foster parents are required to be approved, but the home approval process utilizes the *same requirements* that are used to license non-relative foster homes, regardless of the child's federal eligibility, including:
  - Background check
  - Home approval requirements
  - Monthly social worker visits
  - Six-month reviews in court
- Subsidized Permanency
  - Subsidized permanency options help to alleviate the federal disparity
    - Once a foster youth exits foster care to adoption or guardianship, then the youth qualifies for support equal to the foster care payment
  - BUT – subsidized permanency does not solve the inequity for youth while they are in foster care and the disparity in funding for foster youth placed with relatives undercuts permanency efforts
- Youth placed in foster care with a relative who later obtains guardianship through juvenile court receive Kinship Guardian Assistance Payments (Kin-GAP) once the dependency/delinquency case is closed

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- Must be with relative in foster care for a minimum of 6 consecutive months before exiting to Kin-GAP.
- Relative caregiver has no control over when the court is willing to order guardianship and close the dependency case.
- What about Adoptions?
  - Relatives have no control over the timelines for adoption; family reunification and termination of parental rights can take many months and even years.
  - Even though relatives often provide long-term, stable care, they are less likely to adopt.
- Relative Caregivers voices – some quotes from interviews with Relative Caregivers
  - “We try to step up and do the right thing for these kids, but the way we are being treated is despicable”
  - “I’m so disappointed that they aren’t helping these family members, and I willingly took my grandson in. This is not what I had in mind for my 60s”
  - “The money we get is not enough to care for him”
  - “With the medication and the food, and other expenses, I spend maybe \$1,000 [of my own money] to care for my step-granddaughter”
- California’s support of Kinship Foster Parents lags behind the rest of the country
  - In *every other state*, if a relative foster parent meets the same home approval standard as a non-relative, they receive the same level of foster care benefits.
- The disparity between California’s cash assistance programs and the AFDC-FC benefits for foster youth have grown significantly over time
  - California could pay state-only foster care benefits when a child is placed with relative because this is not a matter of federal law.
    - Federal law *requires* California to pay federal foster care benefits to relatives caring for federally eligible children.
    - The federal government has no say over how a state spends state-only foster care payments.
    - California has made a *state* policy decision to not to reimburse relatives of non-federally eligible children at the same level as federally eligible children.
    - State-only foster care benefits are paid in every other type of placement.

**PROPOSED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING INEQUITIES BETWEEN RATES OF REIMBURSEMENT TO RELATIVE CAREGIVERS OF FEDERALLY ELIGIBLE VS. NON-FEDERALLY ELIGIBLE FOSTER CHILDREN**

- The California Department of Social Services/Continuum of Care Reform Workgroup (which presented to the Council in December 2013) provides a venue for addressing this issue:
  - Rate-setting systems can better support a continuum of programs and services that promote positive outcomes for children and families
  - Provision of an integrated, comprehensive set of services including mental health and other critical services supports the achievement of well-being, permanency and safety outcomes
  - To ensure services in family-like settings including after-care
  - To provide outcome-based evaluations of foster care providers or other methods of measuring quality improvement
  - Changes in the licensing, rate-setting and auditing processes can improve the quality of foster care providers, the quality of services and programs provided and enhance oversight
- California could align its policy preferences with the funding necessary to make these placements successful
  - California has already made the *policy decision* to provide preference to relatives when placing a foster child.

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- But California has not made the *fiscal decision* to provide the foster youth who are placed with relatives equal funding and services.

**IV. Prevention and Early Intervention Committee: Action Item – Federal Child Welfare Finance Reform Fact Sheets**

Secretary Dooley called on Dr. Kathy Icenhower to review the documents that were under consideration for adoption by the Council. She reminded Council members and the public that drafts of these fact sheets which are intended to serve as a toolkit for interested child advocates were presented to the Council in December 2013.

Kathy stated that she was pleased to present the Council with a toolkit on federal reform of child welfare finance. The toolkit is comprised of a Fact Sheet; a California Framework which highlights implications for our state; and finally a Call to Action, with the following purposes:

**Fact Sheet** – The Fact Sheet makes the case for why federal child welfare finance reform is needed. The current child welfare system does not adequately support the entire continuum of care; we need protected federal funding for all parts of the child welfare continuum including, prevention, early intervention, family preservation, foster care, and permanency support. It lays out the fact that a national conversation is underway among many partners and at many tables. While there is substantial agreement on some issues, consensus has not been reached in all areas. In particular, the issue of maintaining the Title IV-E foster care entitlement, or to lift the entitlement in exchange for greater flexibility in the use of federal funding. The documents before you do not establish a position on this issue. Finally, the Fact Sheet details, criteria, or critical next steps by which any finance reform should be evaluated.

**California Framework** – The California Framework document provides a snapshot of the discussion points in key finance reform areas such as the service population, service array, reinvestment, incentives, and accountability. It spells out some potential benefits to California in a finance reform scenario, but does not tie the benefits to specific finance reform strategies. It also does not point out the risk(s) inherent in some strategies.

**Call to Action** – The Call to Action to get involved, become better informed about the issues, form your own position, and partner with others who are involved in decision-making regarding this issue.

Kathy reported that the documents have already begun to hit the mark and accomplish the intended purpose, i.e., spark deeper discussion regarding options and opportunities. In addition to the feedback the Committee received in December when an earlier version was presented, The Committee also has received additional feedback from Council members and members of the public. She invited those who have provided substantive input to join with the Committee in implementing next steps.

Dana Blackwell reported that Casey Family Programs is actively involved in the national conversation regarding child welfare finance reform because ensuring federal dedicated child welfare funds are available to serve a broader population of families at risk and provide a more expansive array of services is critical to Casey's efforts to safely reduce the number of children in foster care. She then reviewed the process the Committee used over the past year, culminating in the development of the Toolkit. The Committee first conducted surveillance of the research and peer-reviewed literature on federal finance reform. The committee reviewed key documents (which are posted on the Council's website) and discussed them with each other, and with some of the contributing subject matter experts. The reviewed documents included briefs on this topic developed by Casey Family Programs, and also the briefs by National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ).

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Casey Family Programs brought in-house experts on finance reform to meet with the Committee on multiple occasions, and addressed the Council as a whole to raise awareness last March. David Sanders met with Secretary Dooley to brief her individually, and offered to do the same with Justice Raye. The goal of the PEI Committee was to make the national conversation accessible to everyone in “plain language”, and at the same time to highlight relevant issues that could elevate and further the dialog. To this end, the Committee had a policy team (Greg Rose, Frank Mecca, Sheila Boxley, Jacquelyn McCroskey, Kathryn Icenhower) work on distillation of key issues to highlight; and an education team (led by Don Pickens) worked with our committee’s consultant to develop the language, style, and design.

Kathy stated that going forward the Committee has more work to do that will include additional partners and asked Council members to approve the documents and support continuing activities to raise awareness and momentum to achieve effective federal financing of child welfare services.

Secretary Dooley called for discussion on the proposed toolkit documents. Carroll Schroeder acknowledged the depth of the Committee’s research into the issue and the quality of the documents that comprise the toolkit. Carroll expressed concern that the issue of retaining foster care funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act as an entitlement was not discussed in the documents because past efforts at reform in Congress fell apart when agreement on entitlement could not be reached. He also suggested that the documents be edited to make it clearer that there is no intent to establish a trade-off between funding for prevention and funding for foster care. He therefore offered a friendly amendment to the documents to include:

1. Strengthened language to convey the entire continuum needs to be adequately funded without transferring funding from foster care to prevention;
2. Indicate that there are risks to some types of finance reform, in addition to the potential benefits described in the toolkit documents, and that benefits are tied to specifics rather than overall finance reform.
3. A position to support maintaining the entitlement.

Secretary Dooley commented that flexibility in use of federal dollars is often accompanied by block grant structure for distributing the funds. She also noted that the Congressional Foster Care Caucus referenced in the toolkit consists of four members who may not be aligned on this issue. Further, in light of the previous discussion advocating for kinship foster care rates, the federal government would most likely not be inclined to cover costs for something that the other 49 states are currently funding.

Patrick Gardner drew an analogy to Medi-Cal funding which he described as now operating in effect like a “capped entitlement” because there is a set allocation even though everyone qualifies for Medic-Cal services is entitled to receive them; he cautioned against getting in the same position with foster care funding. Justice Raye stated that if there was no trade-off between prevention and foster care, then more funding would be called required to expand prevention efforts which are funded through a block grant. Bill Grimm said there should be a fourth principle requiring accountability added to the three set forth in the toolkit (see above). David Ambroz observed that there is both a moral and economic argument to be made based on the premise that paying a smaller amount now for prevention is better for families and for government budgets than paying a larger amount later for expensive placement and treatment costs.

Karen Grace-Kaho proposed that the Committee edit the toolkit documents off-line based on Carroll’s proposed amendments and the discussion and then distribute the revised version to the Council by e-mail,

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with a due date for comments (silence would equal consent). Council members agreed by consensus to finalizing the documents in this way.

**V. Permanency Committee: Informational Presentation – RISE Project, a Permanency Innovation Initiative of the RISE Project**

Justice Raye called on Carroll Schroeder and Bob Friend to introduce the topic and speakers. They set the context by informing Council members that the RISE project was one of the two federal grants awarded to California for the purpose of increasing our ability to achieve permanent families for children in foster care. They welcomed Lisa Parrish, Executive Director, and Dr. Curtis Shepard, Curtis F. Shepard, Ph.D., Director, Children, Youth and Family Services, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. Dr. Shepard presented the following information regarding the project.

The RISE Project is one of six Federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) projects funded by the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. It is a five-year demonstration project to improve permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth in the child welfare system. The project is a public-private collaboration led by the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center with foster care providers, including: Five Acres, Hathaway Sycamores Children and Family Services, Penny Lane Centers, Southern California Foster Family and Adoptions Agency and Vista Del Mar. Key partners also include the Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services and Mental Health; the Children's Law Center; Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law; Holarchy Consulting; National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness, Seneca Family of Agencies; and Westat.

The project is emphasizing evaluation as a critical component that will add to the body of knowledge regarding effective services for LGBTQ foster youth, with its purpose being to:

- *Survey* the number of LGBTQ children and youth in foster care
- *Test and evaluate* the effectiveness of two new program interventions to reduce barriers to permanency for LGBTQ children and youth in the child welfare system:
  1. Outreach and Relationship Building (ORB) organizational support via training and coaching for public and private agency staff
  2. Care Coordination Team (CCT) services for LGBTQ children and youth with open child welfare cases, including gender-variant children and dual-status youth involved with the Probation system

The Theory of Change driving the project is: *When LGBTQ foster youth and their families are competently identified and appropriately served, then they will be able to achieve safe and stable permanency.*

➤ **The RISE Youth Survey**

Advocates believe there is disproportionate representation of and disparities in experience and service provision within child welfare for LGBTQ children and youth, but there is a lack of data. Therefore, in 2011 RISE collected information about LGBTQ youth in the L.A. child welfare system:

- *Baseline data* about residents of GLASS (Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services) group homes
- *44 case reviews* of current and former youth at DCFS
- *Youth Speak-Outs*
- *DCFS Staff & Foster Care Agency Staff Speak-Outs*
- *Expert Roundtable* on Identification of LGBTQ Youth



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RISE also noted that identification of and data collection about LGBTQ youth in child welfare system is not done systematically and designed a one-time confidential telephone survey (sub-contracts with UCLA School of Law *Williams Institute, Holarchy Consulting, Westat*). The survey involved a random sample of nearly 3,000 contacts generated by Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, stratified by age 12-16 and 17+ to oversample older youth. A total of 786 (26% of those in the sample) surveys were completed in 2013. Preliminary results are generally demographically representative. The survey was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What percentage of youth in care identify as LGBTQ?
2. Is this percentage larger than that in the non-foster care population?
3. Are there key differences in experiences in foster care between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth?

The following represents a summary of preliminary findings from the survey:

- Disproportionate representation in out of home care.
- Some key differences in experiences in foster care.
- Perceived disparities in appropriate service provision for LGBTQ youth.

The Foster Youth Survey Report will be submitted to the Children’s Bureau for review in April 2014 and available publically later in 2014.

➤ **Outreach and Relationship Building Training and Coaching Development**

- Most public and private agency staff reported little or no professional training on LGBTQ identity and practice application. LA County DCFS has a module for new hires and select other staff developed and delivered by Al Killen-Harvey, a Southern California LGBTQ expert trainer.
- RISE developed an organizational level intervention component called “Outreach and Relationship Building (ORB)” designed to deliver six hours of LGBTQ training to public and private staff in the child welfare system.
- RISE also developed a “Coaching Network” so trained agencies meet regularly to build upon and sustain change in practice and policy.

**OUTREACH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING (ORB) TRAINING OUTLINE**

**Training Module One**

LGBTQ **Foundations** Module learning objectives:

- Language about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) and education about LGBT experience (i.e. coming out)
- Barriers to permanency experienced by LGBTQ youth in child welfare (i.e. anti-gay bias, heterosexism, anti-transgender bias)
- Function and elements of LGBTQ affirming environments, symbols
- Legal framework (AB 458) and professional responsibilities as social worker in child welfare system in California
- Guidance on managing disclosures as it relates to child or youth’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

**Module Two**

**Social Work with LGBTQ Children and Youth** learning objectives:

- Review active listening, motivational interviewing, and self-awareness to use with LGBTQ youth
- Asking about identity and using inclusive language
- Support for the coming out process or experience for youth or family
- Skills related to sustaining an affirming environment, responding to supporting/questioning comments, responding to negative comments



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- Challenges with managing disclosures about sexual orientation or gender identity
- Integrating principles of healthy relationships into conversations with youth

**Coaching Network**

**ORB Coaching Network is a** supportive peer network where coaches build capacity and skills to recognize barriers, intervene with best practice, and help agency staff strengthen skills that lead to safety, well-being and permanency for LGBTQ youth.

**The monthly Coaching Network provides support in:**

- Sustaining agency training and continued education
- Creating agency plans for implementation of best practices
- Identifying changes to agency policy as needed

**Coaching Network Strategic Goals**

- Two-thirds of agencies trained by ORB will participate in the RISE Coaching Network in 2014
- Training Boosters and Learning Labs delivered to partner coaches with content related to building capacity to respond to anti-gay bias, heterosexism, and transgender bias
- In 2014 partner coaches develop a mini-plans that address implementation and integration of coaching as a tool to sustain organizational change.

**Training and Coaching Progress**

- ORB Training Pilot from January-May 2013, 687 staff trained to test curriculum, fidelity assessment plan and evaluation instrument
- 984 staff trained in total in calendar 2013
  - 310 DCFS Staff
  - 674 private agency staff (5 pilot foster care agencies)
  - Fidelity assessment of training delivery monthly began February 2013
  - Coaching Network started to sustain organizational practice and policy change in April 2013, meets monthly

**Next Steps and Evaluation**

- **ORB Training and Coaching continues countywide** for DCFS Offices and private child welfare agencies, projected training of 1800+ more staff through 2015
- **ORB Evaluation Plan** target (voluntary research participation) of 470 participants for each of two more rounds of pre- and post-test training data collection focusing on knowledge acquisition, plus a web-based survey 2 months after completion of both modules focusing on application of training in practice
- RISE is currently designing a foster parent curriculum to be tested in 2014

➤ **Care Coordination Intervention Design**

- RISE has created Child and Family Teams modeled on the Wraparound program, each with a Facilitator, Parent Partner and Youth Specialist
- RISE includes Family Finding Specialist and the care coordination teams have been trained on Family Search and Engagement by Seneca's *National Institute for Permanent Family Connectedness*
- The RISE care coordination teams are also trained on LGBTQ identity and employ family education to increase LGBTQ support and acceptance under the direction of clinicians
- Goals: to increase family acceptance, emotionally permanent connections and legal permanent status

➤ **Care Coordination Team Progress**

- RISE tested care coordination services in 2012 – 2013 with 14 youth (ages 18 – 24) in the Transitional Living Program at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, with a focus on engaging and

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- strengthening family connections for runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth very promising for their well-being
- RISE Care Coordination enrollment for LGBTQ DCFS clients began in July 2013, clients ages 5 – 19 are now eligible, including children at home on family maintenance and dual status youth:
    - Seven clients are enrolled (currently ages ranging from 16 – 19).
    - One more will enroll by 3/14/2014.
    - Forty slots are targeted to be filled by July 2014.
  - **Westat evaluation of Care Coordination services**
    - Baseline interview surveys of enrolled youth (n=40) on wellbeing and permanent connections (children under age 11) and sexual orientation and gender identity (age 11+).
    - Mid-point qualitative interview with youth focusing on services to date and environment of support and acceptance.
    - End-point interview surveys on wellbeing and permanent connections (children under age 11) and sexual orientation and gender identity (age 11+).
    - Recruitment for an evaluation comparison group (n=20+).
    - Administrative data review on placement stability, legal permanency history.
    - Evaluation will be completed by September 2015.
  - **Looking Ahead: Year Five and Beyond**
    - Outreach and Relationship Building Training Evaluation Results
    - Care Coordination Evaluation Results
    - Implementation Case Study
    - Beyond 2015, continuing direct services in Los Angeles
    - Expanding training, coaching and services to other jurisdictions

**VI. Prioritization Task Force – Informational Report on the Priority Access to Services and Supports (PASS) Convening held on January 30, 2014**

Secretary Dooley introduced the topic by offering her personal observations on the PASS Convening that she had been hosted along with Justice Raye. She reported that the Convening was held at Sierra Health Foundation’s beautiful conference facilities offered a comfortable venue for the afternoon’s deliberations and that the Convening proved very successful in bringing together agencies that could partner on behalf of parents of children in foster care. Justice Raye commented that he too found the presentations and discussions informative and helpful in moving the PASS Task Force towards achieving its goals.

Dana Blackwell, Co-Chair of the PASS Task Force, thanked Secretary Dooley and Justice Raye for their active participation and support of the Convening. She provided the following background information about the event:

- At the invitation of Secretary Dooley, we hosted over 50 state and county partners.
- The purpose of the Convening was to (1) Confirm agreement and commitment to prioritize targeted services for families with a child in foster care who has a court-ordered plan of reunification; and (2) Establish a cross-systems collaborative process with clear leadership, structure and accountability.
- At the onset we were hoping to better understand families who are being served by multiple systems, as well as implications for how we will need to work together going forward to achieve outcomes within each of our systems.
- Parents who had experienced multiple systems as consumers were there to remind us of the importance of this work; and of what is possible when families are adequately supported.

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- Will Lightbourne and Toby Douglas both affirmed the urgency of priority access and committed the support of their respective Departments.
- We heard from a panel representing each of the five services to be prioritized: Workforce, Corrections/Probation, Housing; Mental Health; and Substance Use Disorders. Our partners gave us snapshot of what they are committed to doing in the short-run to prioritize access to services for families in reunification, as well as named some of the barriers they anticipate with solutions to overcome them.
- Breakout groups were asked to reflect on what is happening now that we can build on and what more can be done.

Dana reported that the PASS Task Force is now ready to move forward to build on the success of the Convening by establishing an Interagency Leadership team, comprised of representatives from the five partner agencies, the California Department of Social Services and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Frank Mecca, Co-Chair of the PASS Task Force, said he was delighted that the underlying assumption of the PASS project proved to be true: Participating agencies enthusiastically embraced the charge to prioritize services to parents of children in foster care. He reminded Council members that moving towards a solution will require accountable, shared leadership and fundamental shifts towards service integration resulting in changing conditions for families in reunification. It was clear that our partners are committed to the work (with the less traditional partners embracing the work more completely than traditional partners) and the panelists who represented each service area have agreed to serve on the Priority Access Interagency Leadership Team. Specific action items that surfaced during the Convening were:

- Critical need to identify clients/families in common
- Crosswalk and align practice for service integration
- Commitment to work through barriers to priority access (including confidentiality and federally mandated priorities that do not call out families in reunification) and to leverage current opportunities to ensure priority access.

Council members who attended the Convening agreed with these observations. Bob Friend pointed out that the parents/consumers who shared their stories provided a compelling rationale for the importance of doing whatever we can to help parents overcome challenges and safely reunify with their children.

Lori Clarke outlined next steps for the PASS project, as follows:

- Support Departments to follow through on initial commitments made at the Convening.
- Coordinate activities with the Data Integration and Information Sharing and Permanency Committees.
- Initiate the PASS Inter-Agency Leadership Team (Priority Access Task Force plus new partners from outside Health and Human Services) to ensure continual connection across systems as well as coordination of policy and practice at the state and county levels.
- Implement a cluster of strategies with varying degrees of readiness and scalability.
- Continue to report quarterly to the Council (accountability mechanism)

VII. **Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee – Status Report on the Implementation of the Partial Credits Model Policy**

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Justice Raye called on Gordon Jackson and Rochelle Trochtenberg to introduce the topic. They reported that the Walter S. Johnson Foundation provided funding to the Alliance for Children’s Rights to create a manual for school districts and child welfare workers to serve as a guide for implementing the Partial Credits Model Policy adopted by the Council. They called on Paige Fern who served as the lead author of the manual to update Council members on efforts to inform school districts and child welfare agencies. Paige reviewed highlights of the manual and reported that she had completed several training sessions with school registrars, school administrators and child welfare workers. To date, 50 of the 1000 school districts in the state have adopted the model policy, and others are using it as a guide to implement what is already a requirement in current law to ensure foster children’s education credits transfer when they change schools.

Ken Berrick commended the Partial Credits Work Group for its accomplishments and urged the Council to regard this work as a first step in efforts to improve educational outcomes of foster youth. Continued collaboration among education, child welfare and mental health agencies is needed to address challenges often faced by foster children to achieve success in school.

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

▪ **Prevention/Early Intervention Committee**

Dr. Kathy Icenhower announced that the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee has now taken on responsibility for serving as one of California’s three “Citizen Review Panels.” Federal law requires each State to create Citizen Review Panels to meet quarterly and report annually on efforts to ensure that the State is in compliance with child protection requirements. Panels review policies, procedures, and practices. State agencies must respond to panel recommendations for system and practice improvement. More information regarding the operation of Citizen Review Panels, including development, preparation and support of members, guidelines, and studies of effectiveness may be found at:

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/management/practice\\_improvement/reviews/external/citizen.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/management/practice_improvement/reviews/external/citizen.cfm) .

▪ **Permanency Committee**

Status included under the *California Partners in Permanency Project* item above.

▪ **Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions (CDSYT) Committee**

Rochelle Trochtenberg shared a personal story sparked by the fact that the meeting was held in a county child welfare office which brought back memories of her experience transitioning from foster care before she had the opportunity to graduate from high school and without resources to live on her own. While progress has been made to support youth transitioning from foster care, including extending the age for exiting care from 18 to 21 years, there is still much to be done. *Rochelle is to be commended for her outstanding accomplishments especially in light of the challenges she has had to overcome.*

Rochelle reported that the Committee’s Young Children in Foster Care Work Group has now linked up with First 5 California to incorporate information about the special issues related to developmental needs of young foster children into their media campaign that is being launched this month designed to educate everyone about developmental needs of all children. Social Workers, family therapists, foster parents, relative caregivers and birth parents will be the target audience for this specialized component.

Rochelle also announced that in the afternoon the Committee would be having a presentation on foster children’s use of psychotropic medications and the implications for their well-being and that the Committee would also be taking up a new topic – foster children’s health sexual development – based on

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a discussion the full Council had after the presentation on California Partners for Permanency Project. It was noted that Los Angeles County has a sexual health educator who has developed curricula for foster parents and social workers to prepare them to support youth in their healthy sexual development.

Gordon Jackson reported that the Committee continues to operate multiple projects and will continue to bring reports to the full Council as they are developed, such as the item on the agenda for this meeting that informed Council members about what is happening with the Partial Credits Model Policy approved by the Council as it is voluntarily adopted by school districts.

▪ **Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee**

Dr. Barbara Needell announced that Alicia Sandoval, CDSS Manager, had now joined the Committee. She thanked Alicia for quickly getting on board with the Committee's work and helping to organize the meeting.

Barbara reported that the Committee would be debriefed on the Advancing the Science of Children's Services through Large Data Convening by Emily Putnam-Hornstein (who presented to the Council at the December meeting). A second presentation titled "Moving Forward: Electronic Records for Children and Youth in Foster Care" would be made by Ginny Puddefoot of the Children's Partnership and Kiki Nocella, CEO of KCN Consulting.

▪ **Prioritization Task Force**

Status included under the *Priority Access to Services and Supports (PASS)* item above.

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

Dina Kokkos-Gonzalez reported that DHCS has developed a model for out-of-county mental health in collaboration with the County Mental Health Directors Association, the County Welfare Directors Association and the Young Minds Advocacy Project. The model is hybrid that incorporates both "presumptive eligibility" and "collaborative team" concepts and builds on the Katie A. Child and Family Team model as well as its concepts, goals and deliverables. The next steps are to vet this model with the Department of Health Care Services, California Department of Social Services, County Mental Health Directors Association, the County Welfare Directors Association and the Young Minds Advocacy Project.

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

Judge Stacy Boulware Eurie reported that the Blue Ribbon Commission's focus continues to be on follow up actions from the Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Summit held on December 3 and 4, 2013. The Council was briefed on the Summit at its December 11, 2013 meeting.

▪ **Ending Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Action Team**

Leslie Heimov reported that the four CSEC Action Team subcommittees continue to organize their work through the development of strategic plans and that the full Action Team is developing one survey that will capture information needed by each subcommittee to learn more about how counties across the state are addressing issues concerning children who are victims of, at-risk for, or survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. The information gathered from the survey will be used to identify current prevention, training intervention, and data coordination efforts, as well as services available for commercially sexually exploited children and will inform recommendations for a statewide protocol. The survey will be distributed widely to entities that have contact with commercially sexually exploited

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children, including county agencies and departments and providers offering services in placement, mental health, health care, wrap, education, vocational skills, cosmetics, case management, legal representation and immigration. All responses will remain confidential.

Dana Blackwell shared that Casey Family Programs foundation has been doing due diligence on CSEC to learn more about this issue and how to effectively serve victims and those at risk of victimization, including a survey of what states are currently doing. She will share this information with the Council when available.

#### **IX. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings**

There being no further comments, Justice Raye and Secretary Dooley thanked everyone for their participation and officially adjourned the meeting.