

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

Discussion Highlights

June 5, 2013

I. 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 announced and welcomed the following new members to the Council:

- Cory Pohley, Executive Director, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Crys O'Grady, former Foster Youth

Justice Raye announced that Carroll Schroeder has been appointed to serve with Bob Friend as Co-Chair of the Permanency Committee. He called for announcements from other Council members and the public.

- Sheila Boxley told the group that two reports addressing the horrific issue of child deaths in Sacramento County are now available. The first, [Twenty Year Child Death Review Team Report](#), is an analysis of 20 years of child death review in Sacramento County that included every child death for which a death certificate was issued regardless of cause or manner. It includes demographic data, risk factors in the family history, and current and historical geographic trends. Based on a finding in this study that that over the entire 20 year period African American children had died at a rate double that of other races, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors commissioned the second, entitled [Blue Ribbon Commission on Disproportionate African American Child Deaths Report](#).
- Don Pickens informed the group about a national Parent Partner certificate program being launched by Parents Anonymous, Inc. Registration information may be found at: <https://www.strengthening-families.org/leadershipcertification/home.aspx>
- Kim Suderman let the group know she is retiring, and the California Mental Health Directors Association whom she represents will be nominating another County Mental Health Director to replace her.
- Gail Johnson Vaughn (member of the Permanency Committee and executive director of Mission Focused Solutions) announced that Sierra Health Foundation has requested Mission Focused Solutions write a Youth Permanency Funding Guide to help California Counties navigate the fiscal opportunities to reinvest the significant savings achieved through specialized youth permanence programs such as Sacramento's Destination Family Youth Permanency Mental Health Program and San Francisco's Dumisha Jamaa project. Gail would like input from counties about what they would like to see in the guide. She seeks input from county departments and from Boards of Supervisors. Those interested in providing input may reach her at 530-477-2900; or gail@missionfocused.org.

Secretary Dooley took this opportunity to thank two key state leaders who are retiring soon for their service. Michael Cunningham, Acting Director of the Department of Alcohol and Drugs, not only has led the Department to carry out its day-to-day responsibilities, but he also has been instrumental in supporting the integration of the Department's programs into the Department of Health Care Services. Vanessa Baird took the helm of the newly created Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Services Division within the Department of Health Care Services and facilitated its transfer from the former Department of Mental Health.

Secretary Dooley reviewed the agenda for the day which included action items on two topics based on previously presented recommendations: The Prioritization Task Force would review draft recommendations presented at the December meeting and ask for approval of a plan to move this work to the next phase,

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and the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children Work Group would request approval of a project plan to implement the recommendations presented in March in order to move this work to the next phase.

For both these items, as outlined in the Council's *Operation Manual*, Secretary Dooley identified that consensus would be used as the decision making process, meaning that Council members agree that the recommendations are a good idea or if at least they can live with the directions for moving forward that are being proposed by each group. As a fallback to consensus, the Co-Chairs, would ask for majority vote.

Secretary Dooley also noted that the Council would get a brief update from the **Partial Credits Work Group** about its progress to date and planned next steps.

II. Council Business (Action Item): Approval of the March 6, 2013 Discussion Highlights

Justice Raye called for a motion and second to approve the March 6, 2013 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights, and they were approved as written.

III. Prioritization Task Force Report and Recommendations (Action Item)

Secretary Dooley called on Lori Clarke to introduce the Task Force members who would be presenting the recommendations. Lori Clarke introduced members of the Task Force: Dana Blackwell, Michael Cunningham, Kevin Gaines, Kathy Icenhower, Frank Mecca and Don Pickens. She also acknowledged contributions by Jacquelyn McCroskey, University of Southern California and Amy D'Andrade, San Jose State University as well as by those who served on the Knowledge Management Review, Data, and Inventory Teams.

By way of background, Lori reminded everyone that Family Reunification is one of the primary goals of California's child protection system. Defined in plain language, "Family Reunification" means returning a child who has been placed in foster care to safe care by their parent(s). Once a child is placed in foster care, public child welfare agencies are required to make reasonable efforts to help families reunify. These services must meet "reasonable efforts" standards, and the expectation is that services will resolve issues that led to child being placed in foster care, thus facilitate family reunification.

Services alone as currently configured to not meet the need for all families. Only 50% of families in the child welfare system nationally experience reunification, and the overall rate in California is similar. Approximately 10% of children who have been reunified return to foster care due to subsequent allegations or instances of child abuse and neglect within 12 months. Services and supports are linked to improving family reunification outcomes. Services are generally available for children in the child welfare system, however attention is needed to address the availability and timing of services to their parents while their children are in foster care and after they return home.

Don Pickens then shared his own experiences as an adoptive parent who needed support from the child welfare system and experiences of other parents whose children had been removed. The common theme was that needed services were not always available to them in the quantity needed or in a timely way.

Lori Clarke reviewed the Task Force's process in compiling the report and recommendations. Over the past year, the Task Force conducted an inventory of the state departments that direct policy and funding for services most often needed by parents with a reunification plan. Information regarding family strengthening was provided by leadership of the California Strengthening Families Roundtable, hosted by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention. She noted that page two of the Task Force report depicts the link between needed services and supports and barrier or opportunities for reunification.

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Frank Mecca reminded Council members of the motion passed at the September 2011 meeting recommending that the Governor take the lead in prioritizing access to resources and services to families in the Child Welfare System who have a court-ordered reunification plan and that activities related to implementing this motion could include the issuance of an Executive Order by the Governor to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Workforce Development; Corrections and Rehabilitation; and Business Housing and Transportation to, among other things:

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

Currently, within Health and Human Services, target services and supports for families in reunification are prioritized to varying degrees. Families' needs are complex and overlapping and thus Child Welfare Services also relies on the brokering of services from other systems whose eligibility and funding requirements may not align in every case with the Council's vision for prioritization. Families in reunification may qualify under one or more of these populations (e.g. veterans, homeless) however families in reunification are not currently called out as a priority population.

Therefore, the Task Force respectfully requests that the Secretary of Health and Human Services convene state and county prioritization partners to:

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

The Task Force anticipates the convening will occur no later than December 31, 2013 allowing for a March 2014 report back to the Council. The Task Force recognizes the high level of engagement and commitment among prioritization partners and proposes that leadership from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, together with a defined accountability process will accomplish the originally intended function in lieu of an Executive Order.

Secretary Dooley then invited discussion of the Prioritization report and recommendations. After a few clarifying questions were answered, she asked for a consensus vote. There being no objections, Secretary Dooley declared approval by the Council.

IV. Partial Credit Subcommittee Presentation

Justice Raye called on Gordon Jackson to introduce the topic and presenters. Gordon reminded Council members that the issue being addressed involves foster youth, as well as homeless and migrant youth, often experiencing school changes during the course of the school year and, all-too-often, their course credits are not transferred in a timely or accurate way. The "Partial Credit" Work Group of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee convened on May 6, 2013 at the offices of the California School Boards Association to develop strategies to address the problem statewide. The convening involved diverse stakeholder participation including representatives from:

- Child Welfare Council
- California Department of Education
- California School Board Association

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- California Department of Social Services
- Child Welfare Directors Association
- Foster Youth Services and school counselors
- Legislature
- Legal counsel services
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

David Ambroz and Ken Berrick stated that all Work Group members recognized the urgency of addressing the issue and agreed that a statewide, consistent policy is needed. To support a statewide solution, (1) a model policy, (2) clear roles and responsibilities and (3) defined strategies for disseminating and educating key stakeholders are needed. The Work Group members are now working on each of these three parts of the solution and will reconvene on July 10, 2013 to finalize recommendations for the Council's consideration at its September meeting.

V. Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Work Group Report and Recommendations

Secretary Dooley called on Gordon Jackson to introduce the topic and presenters. Gordon reminded the group that in March the CSEC Work Group of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee presented its report and recommendations to the Council, with the plan to bring recommendations back to the Council for approval today. He asked members to note that the first recommendation, called the Global Recommendation, includes moving the Work Group from its current structure as part of a Committee to a CSEC Action Team under the auspices of the full Council. He then called on Judge Boulware Eurie to introduce the Work Group's proposal.

Judge Boulware Eurie stressed the need to come up with solutions to prevent CSEC and to provide services to youth who are victims. She stated that building on the research presented in the report, "*Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California*," the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Workgroup identified a series of recommendations to address the issue. These recommendations are based on three key premises:

- (1) Many children involved in the child welfare system are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and an unknown number are being exploited;
- (2) Action by the child welfare system in collaboration with other child-serving agencies and organizations could prevent exploitation and aid victims;
- (3) Building on the collaborative strength of the Child Welfare Council, a CSEC Action Project would provide a leadership opportunity to implement a coordinated plan that empowers agencies and organizations to take action to reduce exploitation and protect and treat victims.

Judge Boulware Eurie then introduced Kate Walker who reviewed the proposed action plan. By way of background, Kate reminded the group that the CSEC Work Group spent over a year meeting and brainstorming key priorities, and then in the last three months an even larger group of advocates and service providers further vetted the recommendations and priorities for moving forward.

Kate described how the overarching or Global Recommendation is to launch a CSEC Action Project to implement the other recommendations in order to improve outcomes for at-risk and trafficked children in California. Because public systems face many challenges in formulating an effective response to child sex trafficking, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is needed. It is proposed that the Project will be coordinated by a CSEC Action Committee under the auspices of the Child Welfare Council. The Committee is to be co-convened by the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency and a

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community-based advocacy organization representative who has experience working with exploited children. Membership will include state and local government agency leaders, CSEC service providers, CSEC survivors, youth, CSEC advocates, court representatives, and other stakeholders.

The CSEC Action Project would also seek government and private funding to support the work of the Project over the next two years. The four priority areas for the CSEC Action Project are:

- 1) **Prevalence and Assessment.** In order to understand the scope and nature of the problem in California and provide appropriate services, screen all children across systems for exploitation and risk factors and assess their CSEC-related needs on an ongoing basis.
- 2) **Prevention and Training.** Establish programs to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children, and train child-serving professionals to understand the CSEC problem, how to identify CSEC and at-risk children, and how to provide or refer to appropriate services.
- 3) **Specialized Services.** Develop and provide specialized services that will enable CSEC children to be safe, overcome trauma and thrive.
- 4) **Multi-System and Data Coordination.** Establish and support a systematic approach to multi-systems coordination, including strategies to improve service delivery to CSEC and at-risk children and enable the collection and sharing of data.

The CSEC Work Group identified short and long term strategies for each priority area as described in the Project plan posted at:

<http://www.chhs.ca.gov/initiatives/CACChildWelfareCouncil/Pages/MeetingInformation.aspx>

Secretary Dooley announced that Leslie Heimov had been selected to serve with her as co-convenor of the CSEC Action Committee. Secretary Dooley asked for questions and comments from the Council and public and a brief discussion ensued with the following main points:

- **Advisory Role of CSEC Action Committee**
 - Action Team will operate under the auspices of the Child Welfare Council, thus it is advisory.
 - Participating agencies could implement recommendations using current authority; the Action Team would not have authority or power to compel any entity to take action.
- **Data on Prevalence**
 - It is important to recognize that we have very little data on which to determine prevalence of CSEC in California; there is a lack of systems/places to record and document occurrences.
 - Until a CSEC victim has a trusting relationship, he or she may not want to reveal the truth so information on victimization needs to be collected throughout the time a child is receiving services.
 - In addition to screening tools, there may be ways of identifying CSEC through responses to questions asked by other providers besides Child Welfare.
 - AB 12 clients could be given opportunities to identify themselves and receive services as CSEC victims.
 - Sacramento Advocates for Girls Empowerment (SAGE) has noted that there are challenges in sharing data, thus screening tools may not be a good data source. They also noted that the move to decriminalize CSEC may result in CSEC victims being more willing to share information.
 - The Legislature will be further pursuing how to collect and share data when in the best interest of the child.
- **Training**
 - The key principles in the CSEC Project Plan underscore the role that Child Welfare can play in addressing the issue.

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- The Child Welfare Council should stay focused on foster children who being exploited and on preventing foster children from being exploited.
 - Child Welfare staff should be trained to identify CSEC during intake calls.
 - Need to recognize that the issue goes beyond the child receiving money for sex, e.g., the parent or guardian may have received benefit (such as money or drugs); the child may have received consideration other than money (such as survival sex for homeless youth).
 - When considering gender identity and sexual orientation, stereotypes must be avoided.
 - Need to work with parents when CSEC are reunified with them.
 - Need to ensure that youth understand that being CSE is not their fault; they have been exploited.
- **Related Initiatives**
- Assembly and Council Member Stone is convening a group in Contra Costa County to create special programs for youth that will build life skills, including awareness of CSEC and how to prevent victimization or seek help if they have already been victimized.
 - Efforts to address CSEC must move beyond Child Welfare and include groups such as Prevent Child Abuse America; public awareness CSEC must be increased.
 - The California Endowment has an initiative that may inform the CSEC Action Project.

Justice Raye asked for a motion and second to adopt the recommendations presented in the report, and then asked for a consensus decision. There being no objections, Justice Raye declared approval by the Council.

VI. Status Reports from Committees and Task Forces

▪ **Prevention/Early Intervention Committee**

Kathy Icenhower said the Committee has been continuing its studies of Federal Child Welfare Financing reform and will present recommendations to the Council at the September meeting.

▪ **Permanency Committee**

Bob Friend and Carroll Schroeder reported that the Committee continues to look at strategies for successful Family Reunification, in collaboration with the Prioritization Task Force, and also at how Dependency Drug Courts operate. The Committee plans to present recommendations to the Council at the September meeting.

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

Gordon Jackson started by welcoming back his Co-Chair, Rochelle Trochtenberg, who had to miss a couple of meetings and said he is looking forward to sharing leadership of the meeting with her going forward. Gordon reported that the Committee continues to tackle tough issues, as evidenced by today's Council agenda which included two topics initiated by our group: Partial Credits and CSEC. At the meeting later today, the Committee will have a speaker who will present on another important topic, Young Children in Foster Care. Rochelle shared that as a former foster youth, she is impressed with the dedication of the Committee members to dig into tough issues. While solutions are difficult to come by, to do nothing is not an option. Our foster youth deserve the very best we can give them, and we need to keep their voices front and center in our deliberations.

▪ **Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee**

Barbara Needell welcomed Sarah Tyson as the new Co-Chair of the Committee. She reported that the Committee would have presentations on the discussions held at the California Systems Integration and Interoperability Symposium held in May. Sara would provide updates from Foster Youth Work Groups and Task Forces, and Maya Cooper from the National Center for Youth Law would provide updates on data sharing provisions in the Governor's Budget Proposal.

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

Dina Kokkos-Gonzalez reported that the County Mental Health Directors Association, County Welfare Directors Association, California Department of Social Services and Young Minds Advocacy Project have been working on a plan to implement “presumptive transfer,” including when it is appropriate and under what situations it is not appropriate. The plan is aligned with the Katie A Settlement and Congregate Care Reform initiatives. A report is expected to be released within a week.

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

Justice Raye reported that the Blue Ribbon Commission has a statewide initiative to keep youth in schools and out of Juvenile Court. The Initiative is co-convened by the Chief Justice and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and a report is planned for a September release. Justice Raye also reported that the Blue Ribbon Commission has adopted the Council’s Data Sharing Statement.

VII. **Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings**

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

DRAFT