

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
Discussion Highlights
September 6, 2017

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Secretary Dooley called the meeting to order and welcomed Council Members and visitors. She acknowledged the Judicial Council for their hospitality and willingness to host the Council for the meeting in San Francisco. The Secretary then asked Council Members to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of the June 7, 2017 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Secretary Dooley asked for comments or suggested revisions to the June 7, 2017 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights. There being none, they were approved on a consensus vote.

III. Approval of the 2016-2017 Child Welfare Council Annual Report (Action Item)

Secretary Dooley directed Council Members' attention to the 2016-2017 Annual Report in their packets. She thanked the Council, Committees, and Task Forces, for all the work over the course of the past year and noted that collectively the group built on the work begun in prior years to improve services to children and families in the child welfare system. The complete report can be found online, [here](#). There being no changes offered, the Report was approved on a consensus vote.

IV. Approval of the Foster Youth Priority Employment Model Policy Framework (Action Item)

Justice Raye noted that this agenda item will be postponed until the December 4th meeting so that the Committee can finalize and provide sufficient time to the Council for review. There being no objections, this agenda item was held on a consensus vote.

V. Update and discussion on the Implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform Initiative (Information Item)

Secretary Dooley introduced Will Lightbourne, Director of the California Department of Social Services, and Sarah Rodgers, Project Director for the Continuum of Care Reform or CCR at the California Department of Social Services. They provided an update on the implementation of CCR, which began January 2017.

Ms. Rodgers noted that CCR draws together a series of existing and new reforms to our child welfare services program. CCR is designed out of an understanding that children who must live apart from their biological parents do best when they are cared for in committed nurturing family homes. CCR, also known as AB 403, provides the statutory and policy framework to ensure services and supports provided to the child or youth and his or her family are tailored toward the ultimate goal of maintaining a stable permanent family. Reliance on congregate care should be limited to short-term, therapeutic interventions, which is just one part of a continuum of care available for children, youth and young adults.

The fundamental principles of CCR are:

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- All children deserve to live with a committed, nurturing, and permanent family that prepares youth for a successful transition into adulthood.
- The child, youth and family's experience, along with, voice is important in assessment, placement, and service planning. A process known as a "child and family team," which includes the child, youth and family, and their formal and informal support network will be the foundation for ensuring these perspectives are incorporated throughout the duration of the case.
- Children should not have to change placements to get the services and supports they need. Research shows that being placed in foster care is a traumatic experience and in order for home-based placements to be successful, services including behavioral and mental health should be available in a home setting.
- Agencies serving children and youth including child welfare, probation, mental health, education, and other community service providers need to collaborate effectively to surround the child and family with needed services, resources, and supports rather than requiring a child, youth, and caregivers to navigate multiple service providers.
- The goal for all children in foster care is normalcy in development while establishing permanent life-long family relationships. Therefore, children should not remain in a group living environment for long periods of time.

Director Lightbourne and Ms. Rodgers also provided a few additional updates, including the following engagement and technical assistance activities.

- *Medi-Cal 101:* From December 2016 through May 2017, DHCS conducted a series of eight regional trainings on the Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) program for group homes and Foster Family Agencies (FFAs). Coordinated by the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS), and in partnership with CDSS, and the County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA), these trainings reached a total of 895 participants from Redding to Riverside. Geared towards group homes, future Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs), and FFAs who are interested in becoming SMHS providers, these trainings provided an overview of the core elements of Medi-Cal SMHS; requirements that group homes, STRTPs, and FFAs must meet in order to become SMHS providers; an overview of the Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) service model; an overview of the STRTP mental health program approval; and an overview of local county contract process.
- *Medi-Cal Manual:* On June 26, 2017, DHCS shared the draft of the third edition of the Medi-Cal Manual for Intensive Care Coordination (ICC), Intensive Home Based Services (IHBS), and TFC Services for Medi-Cal Beneficiaries for a 30-day stakeholder review and comment period. Feedback was requested by July 28, 2017. This edition of the manual includes

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content focused on TFC services, and removes previous lockouts regarding the provision of ICC and IHBS to children and youth residing in group homes or STRTPs. DHCS is reviewing all feedback, comments, and proposed edits provided by stakeholders and anticipates finalizing the manual in October 2017.

- *STRTP Mental Health Program Approval Protocol and Interim Regulations:* On May 5, 2017, DHCS issued Mental Health Substance Use & Disorder Services (MHSUDS) Information Notice (IN) #17-016 regarding the Interim STRTP Mental Health Program Approval process. The IN includes the following attachments: 1) Draft STRTP Regulations; 2) Interim STRTP Mental Health Program Approval Protocol, and 3) the STRTP Mental Health Program Approval Application. DHCS has completed its review of the stakeholder input that was received during the 30-day comment period and plans to issue final documents in September 2017.
- *Resource Family Approval:* The RFA Team is working on creating new policy for areas that will be included in the next version of the Written Directives. Several of the areas are included in proposed legislation, AB 404 such as allowing a Resource Family to move from a county to an FFA or FFA to county while maintaining their approval. CDSS hosts monthly statewide technical assistance calls. These calls were bi-weekly but have been reduced due to a decrease in questions being asked, although participation has remained steady with approximately 50 people calling each time. Counties, including child welfare agencies and probation departments, are able to call in and ask questions related to RFA policy. RFA staff manages the RFA email box for technical assistance. Counties, FFAs and the public send questions, suggestions or requests for policy interpretations to this email box.
- *Technical Assistance Resource Family Approval (TARFA):* Supported by the Department and the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), the TARFA meetings began in January 2017. They are held bi-monthly in six regional areas for all 58 counties. Attendees include child welfare services and probation staff responsible for approving and monitoring Resource Families. Since the January 2017 TARFA meeting, there has been a significant increase from county participation from the majority of the counties throughout the state. As we continue to hold these meetings, the counties have requested additional technical assistance and training from the Department, which has been provided over the past few months, in various areas related to the RFA standards, background checks, and due process.
- *Regional Information Transformation Exchange (RITE) Meetings:* CDSS, DHCS, CWDA, County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA), Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), California Institute for Behavioral Health Services, the Regional Training Academies, and Casey Family Programs are sponsoring the CCR meetings in the Northern, Bay, Central, Southern regions, as well as Los Angeles, in order to provide robust technical assistance at the local level. Initially these meeting were limited to state and county staff and now open to broader participation including youth, parents, providers, education, and judicial partners. Stakeholders are selected by the counties.

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- *Claiming instructions for CFTs:* DHCS has drafted an MHSUDS IN regarding claiming for CFTs. The IN is in internal review and DHCS expects to issue the IN by the end of September 2017.
- *Assembly Bill 1299:* DHCS and CDSS released a joint MHSUDS IN/All County Letter (ACL) #17-032/17-77 to provide initial policy guidance on AB 1299 implementation. This IN/ACL provides information regarding the conditions for presumptive transfer as well as the exceptions for which a waiver of presumptive transfer may be requested and information regarding the role of the CFT in this process. This IN/ACL includes feedback from the bill's sponsor, CBHDA, CWDA, CPOC, and other key stakeholders. DHCS and CDSS hosted a webinar on August 17, 2017 to provide an overview of this IN/ACL. Over 500 people joined the webinar. DHCS and CDSS continue to work with stakeholders and will issue subsequent policy guidance regarding AB 1299 implementation in the coming months.

For more information regarding the implementation of the CCR initiative, please visit the DSS webpage, [here](#).

VI. Resource Family Centers Vehicles for Change Volume II (Information Item)

Justice Raye introduce Sheila Boxley who introduced the agenda item and the guest speaker, Angela Ponivas, who serves as the Bureau Chief of the Office of Child Abuse Prevention at the California Department of Social Services.

Ms. Ponivas noted in April 2000, the California Family Resource Center Learning Circle (Learning Circle) published Vehicles for Change, Volume I. The Learning Circle was a diverse group of individuals including researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and funders. The group contributed experience and expertise to define family support as a model to prevent poor child and family outcomes by investing in the health and well-being of children, families and communities. Vehicles for Change was a seminal document that described the characteristics and activities of quality family resource centers (FRC) and became a guide to both funders and practitioners.

Vehicles for Change, Volume II will tells the story of the evolution of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) since 2000. The publication describes the factors that have contributed to the growth and development if FRCs and how these programs have expanded into other institutions including education, libraries, health centers and childcare centers. This publication reflects on what has been learned in the last fifteen years and provide a guide to the complex landscape of service provision, resident engagement and community development.

These documents can be found online on the DSS website, [here](#). To download Volume I, please click [here](#). To download Volume II, please click [here](#).

VII. Committee and Task Force Updates

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Justice Raye reminded Council members that, at the suggestion of the Steering Committee, Committees and Task Forces have the option of submitting a written status report summarizing activities and noted that three Committees had used this option. He then called on the Co-Chairs.

Prevention/Early Intervention Committee-Statewide Citizen Review Panel (PEI/CRP)

Dr. Kathryn Icenhower submitted a written report highlighting the following items:

- The Child Welfare Prevention Toolkit recently approved by the Council is aligned with the National Prevention Planning Tool and also Vehicles for Change Volume 2: the Evolving Field. Members are encouraged to review both documents with a view towards uniformity in core elements of prevention practice, as well as key strategies for change. The Action Guide of the Toolkit includes a description of Vehicles for Changes and a link to secure a copy.
- During this cycle, the PEI is focusing its policy review on the identification of individuals with substance use disorders and connecting them to effective programming. A full continuum approach to child welfare prevention will be employed to:
 - Gather necessary data
 - Call out the necessary elements of treatment; and
 - Fully utilize available funding streams.
- Recommendations will be aligned with child welfare prevention core elements as identified in the Toolkit, and may include recommendations to inform the CWS/CMS Redesign; encouraging use of evidence-based program registries; and developing a checklist, or criteria to review programs individuals with SUD are currently being referred to.
- The Department of Health Care Services/Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders) has been invited to work with the committee during this cycle to assure connectivity to the state's SUD delivery systems, including the many dynamic changes happening within the state relative to SUD.
- The PEI Co-Chairs have been informally notified that CDSS wishes to move the Citizen Review (CRP function) in a different direction, but the Prevention Committee will continue its core mission regardless. The committee is awaiting direction from CDSS regarding official notification to the CWC of the recommended change.

Permanency Committee

Bob Friend provided updates on the following activities underway:

- Noted the Committee's focus on decreasing time in permanency including reunification, adoption, and guardianship. The Judicial Council and the California Department of Social

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Services (CDSS) convened a team of trainers, which included Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and the Seneca Family of Agencies to provide training in four sites across California on Continuum of Care Reform implementation.

- Kelly Beck, and Permanency Committee co-chair Bob Friend co-authored *How Reasonable Efforts Leads to Emotional & Legal Permanence*, published in the Capital University Law Review, 45 Cap. U. L. Rev. 249 (2017). The article details how the leadership and oversight

provided by courts via reasonable efforts findings, combined with the innovative practices of child welfare agencies, advocates and partners, can advance and secure the safety, permanence, and wellbeing of the children, parents, family members, and communities they serve.

Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee

Rochelle Trochtenberg provided updates on the following activities underway:

- Noted the Committee's work on model policy framework for priority hiring of foster youth at the county and state levels. The draft policy is in final review and will be put forward to the Council at the December meeting for review and approval. Additionally, she noted that the Committee's priorities include: discussions with Permanency Committee regarding runaway and homeless youth; and work with the Department of Social Services on supporting healthy sexual development of foster youth.
- The Committee will have a presentation on Senate Bill 484 implementation. SB 484 mandates new data collection and distribution requirements concerning the use of psychotropic medications by residents in group homes. Under this legislation, the Department of Social Services is required to develop measures to identify group homes in which levels of psychotropic medication use by clients warrant further review in the form of special annual inspections. This bill also mandates recordkeeping requirements specific to children taking psychotropic medications—binding on all children's residential facilities, with the exception of runaway and homeless youth shelters.

Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee

Alicia Sandoval provided updates on the following activities underway:

- The Committee continues efforts toward linking data across major child serving agencies. These efforts provide information around child welfare, education, health, mental health, and alcohol and drugs, in order to give caregivers, social workers, multidisciplinary teams, and the courts the ability to ensure continuity of care and services for children, youth, and families. Additionally, the Committee is participating in national Data Leaders Group conversations and meetings. Meetings were convened by Casey Family Programs to discuss vital issues related to linkages and application of administrative data (e.g., predictive

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analytics, federal registers, and final rules on child and family service review outcomes and Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems).

- The Committee will have a presentation by Bridgette Leary, MSW, PhD, who serves as the Director of Research and Evaluation at the City and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency. Her presentation will focus on linking data from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System to Structured Decision Making data to fuel a continues quality improvement process.

VIII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

Secretary Dooley and Justice Raye thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.