

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
Discussion Highlights
June 7, 2017

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Justice Raye called the meeting to order and welcomed Council Members and visitors. He acknowledged the California Department of Social Services for their hospitality and willingness to host the Council for the meeting. Justice Raye then asked Council Members to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of the March 1, 2017 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Secretary Dooley asked for comments or suggested revisions to the March 1, 2017 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights. There being none, they were approved on a consensus vote.

III. Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership *Insights* Issue (Information Item)

Laurie Kappe of the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership presented on the newly released *insights* Issue entitled “*Challenges and Responses to Parental Substance Use in Child Welfare*”.

According to national data, parental substance use disorder (SUD) is one of the leading underlying factors contributing to the finding of neglect as the basis for child removal. While the number of children in foster care nationally has dropped significantly over the last decade, recent data is showing an upward trend associated with the opioid epidemic, which includes both prescription drugs as well as illegal drugs, such as heroin. Child welfare removals have increased in some California counties, though case file reviews suggest that opioids may not be the primary contributing factor.

In this issue of *insights*, the Co-Investment Partnership presents California’s methods for capturing and reporting SUD-related child welfare entries, as well as other sources that measure the impact of parental substance use in California and nationally. After discussing the potential number of families affected by substance use disorder, the Co-Investment Partnership looks at how much the state’s efforts to integrate child welfare services with behavioral health, the courts, and Alcohol and Other Drugs programs have supported family reunification even in the face of an upward trend of SUD in some California counties. And finally, the Co-Investment Partnership discuss ways to keep moving forward with focused state efforts during a time of possible rollbacks on health care coverage and other social services.

The full issue can be downloaded online, [here](#).

IV. Youth Who Run Away from Foster Care Best Practices Protocols (Action Item)

Council Members Carroll Schroeder, Bob Friend and Rochelle Trochtenberg presented on the development of a model protocol for multi-system response to serve the needs of youth who are missing, homeless, or have run away from foster care.

The Child Development and Successful Youth Transition (CDSYT) Committee and the Permanency Committee believe that a broad-based collaboration and coordination effort by child welfare, juvenile justice, probation, law enforcement, shelters, school liaisons, health and mental health, [others], is

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necessary to support youth who are missing, homeless or who have run away. Further the CDSYT and Permanency Committee Members believe a model protocol would make clear the agency and individual roles related to implementing SB 794, The Runaway and Youth Homelessness and Preventing Trafficking Act of 2016, and the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014.

Background

A workgroup of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee of the California Child Welfare Council has been studying the issue of youth who run away from foster care. The initial idea for this came from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Memo dated November 4, 2014, titled "Serving Youth Who Run Away from Foster Care". The "Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008" cites the term "homeless", used with respect to a youth, as an individual who is less than 21 years of age, or in the case of a youth seeking shelter in a center, less than 18 years of age, or is less than a higher maximum age if the State where the center is located has an applicable State or local law (including a regulation) that permits such higher maximum age in compliance with licensure requirements for child and youth serving facilities not less than 16 years of age and either less than 22 years of age; or not less than 22 years of age, as of the expiration of the maximum period of stay permitted under section 5714-2(a)(2), if such individual commences such stay before reaching 22 years of age; for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative; and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

The term "runaway", used with respect to a youth, means an individual who is less than 18 years of age and who absents himself or herself from home or a place of legal residence without the permission of a parent or legal guardian. The term "street youth" means an individual who is a runaway youth; or indefinitely or intermittently a homeless youth; and spends a significant amount of time on the street or in other areas that increase the risk to such youth for sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, prostitution, or drug abuse. The ACF memo notes the unique challenges facing foster youth ages 12-17 and that coordination is critical at the local, community, and state level. The memo noted the signing of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (Public Law 113-183), which authorize federal child welfare programs to develop policies related to supporting youth who have run away from foster care. Such a policy and the implementation is also of importance to runaway and homeless youth providers, dependency attorneys, resource families, adoptive homes, and other caregivers as well. The Act had many provisions designed to increase the oversight by child welfare of youth in foster care vulnerable to sexual trafficking and exploitation. The memo notes the requirements of child welfare agencies with respect to youth who runaway and/or are at-risk of becoming a sex trafficking victim.

The memo also notes the critical issue of youth and young adult homelessness, the challenges and issues they face living on the street, and the importance of services and programs provided by runaway and homeless youth (RHY) providers. It also discusses that the majority of youth who run away from foster care are between the ages of 12-17, with many of these foster youth entering the system after age 12. These youths often face the same challenges that homeless youth do with respect to substance abuse and mental health issues. The memo ended with the recommendation, "We encourage child welfare agencies and RHY providers to meet, inventory and recognize their

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various strengths in serving youth who run away from foster care, and develop coordinated approaches for effective services to youth persons who have run away from foster care placements.”

An initial investigation by the CDSYT and Permanency Committees has shown that protocols for youth who run away from foster care vary by county in California. Various county protocols have been gathered, however, a summary of each and the similarities, differences and gaps still needs to be done. In addition, the California Department of Social Services established a work group to implement SB 794, which has been working on guidance as it relates to the new federal requirements of P.L. 113-183 that are set forth in the background section of the ACF memo. This workgroup, however, has not focused on the parts of the memo that relate to the recommendations around RHY shelters (e.g. recommendation of MOUs and contracts between child welfare and RHY programs; what to do if foster youth shows up at RHY program specifically). The group has however released the following All County Letters, ACL 16-15, ACL 16-20, ACL 16-82 and ACL 16-85 and has prepared a new All County Information Notice (ACIN I-13-17) which details best practices regarding the creation of a run prevention plan, understanding and responding to reasons the child left care, what to do when a child refuses to return, handling personal property, and other practices. These guidance letters begin to support the implementation of the federal acts, but a model multi-system protocol would help to ensure that youth who encounter systems other than child welfare and probation are connected and supported with the right resources and services.

Problem Description

There have been numerous reviews of literature regarding youth who run away, including *Youth Who Run Away from Care* (Courtney, 2005) and *Homelessness and the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood*. From the literature, it is known that while running away occurs in approximately 1 in 8 youth, it is particularly more common for youth experiencing abuse and neglect or who have been disconnected from siblings and family members and have no coordinated visitations. Factors typically associated with risk of running away include gender, sexual orientation, age, high family conflict, level of family involvement and visitation while in care, among others. Running away puts youth at risk of victimization, exploitation, substance abuse, offending and exposure to criminal activity. Running away also disconnects youth from many social and medical services that would help protect them from further victimization.

California has limited reporting and data on the true number of youth who have run away, but some information is available on the Child Welfare System/Case Management System. The number of children and youth who are identified as runaway at a given point in time, January from 2006-2016, has been between 2,000 and 1,150 children and youth. Most youth who are identified as runaway are ages 11-17.

The workgroup reviewed the data and literature regarding runaway and homeless youth, a model multi-systems protocol would more comprehensively support youth who are most at risk of running and becoming homeless no matter what system reaches them first. The model protocol would also expand upon the best practices that prevent a youth from running in the future. As noted above, protocols for preventing and addressing the issues for youth who are missing, homeless, or who have run away from foster care, why they do so, how they are brought back into care and methods for

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addressing why they run away vary by county. In addition, some counties work closely with runaway and homeless youth providers in this area but many others do not, or there are not direct services for RHY in their counties.

The workgroup provides a unique opportunity to address the broad issue of youth who run away from foster care and look at all the various inter-related issues such as why they run away, how to meet their needs, preventing further abuse and neglect, and what can be done to prevent other youth from running away. In addition, runaway and homeless youth providers often end up serving these youths and a more coordinated response between RHY providers and the child welfare system can benefit all. Finally, while the SB 794 work group has done some of the work in this area, their work has remained within the department. The California Child Welfare Council, with its mission as a collaborative, interagency approach, provides a unique opportunity to bring all the various relevant agencies, departments and others across the board to develop a broad-based strategy to address this issue. The development of a model protocol on a collaborative, inter-agency/department approach is key to the success of this workgroup.

The CDSYT and Permanency Committees requested approval from the Council to begin the development of a model protocol for dissemination to counties and agencies. The Council approved the request on a consensus vote.

V. National Changing Minds Campaign (Information Item)

Council Member Judge Stacy Boulware Eurie, introduced Brian O'Connor, Director of Public Education Campaigns and Programs at Future Without Violence. Mr. O'Connor presented on the National Changing Minds Campaign.

In 2016, the White House and the Department of Justice (DOJ) launched a national campaign to raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of children's exposure to violence and the trauma that may result; motivate adults to be more caring, concerned, and supportive figures to the children around them; and support programs and practices that help to make homes, schools, and communities safer for children and youth. The campaign, called *Changing Minds*, is a collaboration led by DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Futures Without Violence, the Ad Council and the advertising agency Wunderman.

Research suggests that over the course of a year, nearly 60 percent of the children in the United States will either experience or witness violence, crime, or abuse in their homes, schools, or communities. Exposure to violence leaves physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. Youth who have been exposed to violence are more likely later in life to abuse drugs and alcohol, suffer from depression and other disorders, have difficulty in school, and engage in criminal behavior. Too

often, the violence that children experience and witness is regarded as little more than the price of growing up.

Changing Minds is about transforming public attitudes about children's exposure to violence and the

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corrosive effects of trauma on healthy brain development. New and evolving brain science reveals that a child's positive and negative experiences can literally shape, and reshape, the brain. One of the most significant predictors of a child's resiliency in the face of trauma is consistent interaction with a caring and supportive adult. With proper support and the presence of a consistent, caring adult, a child can overcome the negative impact of trauma. With a new understanding of violence and its effects on young minds, together we can offer a brighter, more hopeful future to our children.

For more information on the *Changing Minds* campaign, visit <https://changingmindsnow.org>.

VI. California's Children and Youths' System of Care: An Agenda to Transform Priorities into Practice (Information Item)

Council Member Patrick Gardner presented on a recently published report, "*California's Children and Youths' System of Care: An Agenda to Transform Promises into Practice*", authored by Young Minds Advocacy in recognition of Children's Mental Health Awareness Day.

The report highlights why children's mental health is important and why California needs a distinct children and youth-focused mental health policy. Next, the report provides a brief overview of California's publicly funded mental health system for children and youth; what it has accomplished; and the challenges that remain, including limited access to community-based services, a lack of coordinated care, inadequate data on quality of services, and insufficient system accountability.

The report then sets forth a series of recommendations that stakeholders may pursue to overcome the existing challenges and ensure that all young people in California receive the mental health care they need and deserve to live happy successful lives. The report calls for:

1. Fulfilling existing promises to provide appropriate care to covered youth;
2. Simplifying the system so that families and youth have one individualized plan that guides a team of cross-system helpers and resources using the wraparound model;
3. Closing the quality and performance gap by systematically gathering, disseminating, and using timely, accurate, relevant, and actionable data at every level of the system;
4. Greater accountability through sustainable community engagement and coalition-building;
5. Transparent, responsive state and county leadership with clearly articulated responsibilities and goals; and
6. Setting a timeline for providing all of California's children and youth full and equal access to mental health care.

The full report can be downloaded online, [here](#).

VII. Committee and Task Force Updates

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

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activities and noted that three Committees had used this option. Due to limited time the Co-Chairs of each of the Committees provided a very brief overview of current activities.

VIII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

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