

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
Discussion Highlights
June 3, 2015

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Secretary Dooley and Justice Raye extended a personal welcome to Council members, and Secretary Dooley announced that the Council has one new members: Michael Newman, Deputy Attorney General, Bureau of Children’s Justice, California Department of Justice. Justice Raye then called on members of the Council and others in attendance to introduce themselves.

II. Announcement – David Ambroz Honored by White House

Justice Raye asked Council members to join him in congratulating David Ambroz who was honored on May 19th by the White House as one of 12 former foster youth who are “Champions of Change” for making a difference in their communities.

III. Recognitions – Seneca Family of Agencies and Strategies /Children’s Bureau of Southern CA

Secretary Dooley gave certificates of appreciation to two organizations for their support to the Child Welfare Council staff:

1. *Seneca Family of Agencies*: Over the past four years, Ken Berrick has provided extensive staff support to many of the Council’s Work Groups, including meeting space, food, facilitation, creating draft reports, and formatting final reports.
2. *Strategies Program of the Children’s Bureau of Southern California*: Russell Brammer literally made this meeting possible, with Anvi Dinh as his right hand person and technical support whiz. The state gave the Council the room free of charge, but the Council had to bring its own equipment, which Russell lent from his organization. He also provided staff to create the signage, make the agenda packets, help set up the rooms, and give us logistical support throughout the day.

Secretary Dooley commented that these types of “behind the scenes” supports from Council members, in the spirit of collaboration, are most welcome and invited others to offer resources from their respective agencies to support future meetings.

IV. Approval of the March 4, 2015 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Justice Raye asked for comments or suggested revisions to the March 4, 2015 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights. There being none, they were approved on a consensus vote.

V. Steering Committee Membership – Update

Secretary Dooley directed Council members to the Steering Committee roster and reminded Council members of the application process that took place to select representatives of the many stakeholders on the Council, resulting in the appointments of:

- **Former foster youth**: Vanessa Hernandez, Policy Coordinator, California Youth Connections
- **Parent**: Leah Davis, Parent Leader, California State Parent Team; Parents Anonymous
- **Foster parent**: Cheryl Rave, Crave Productions
- **Tribal member**: Hon. Claudette White, Judge, Quechan Tribal Court, Fort Yuma Indian Reservation
- **Nonprofit service provider**: Ken Berrick, Founder, President and CEO, Seneca Family of Agencies
- **Nonprofit advocate**: Patrick Gardner, Founder and Director, Young Minds Advocacy Project
- **County Child Welfare**: Lori Cox, Director, Alameda County Social Services Agency
- **County Behavioral Health**: Terry Rooney, Ph.D., Director, Colusa County Behavioral Health Services
- **Juvenile Court Judge**: Hon. Shawna Schwarz, Judge, Santa Clara County Juvenile Court
- **State Mental Health**: Karen Baylor, Ph.D., Deputy Director for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services, California Department of Health Care Services
- **State Child Welfare**: Will Lightbourne, Director, California Department of Social Services

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Secretary Dooley reported that the Steering Committee met once by phone, and, as part of the discussion, suggested that Council meetings could be improved if the last item on the agenda – Committee Reports – were to be streamlined so that Committee Chairs only weighed in on significant pieces of work, and not report on the status of work in progress. If there were no significant developments, the Committee Chair can just pass. She suggested that the Council try that approach and see how it works. She also announced that the Steering Committee will meet again by phone before the September meeting and will meet in person on the afternoon of September 2, 2015. She thanked the Council members who stepped forward to serve in this role.

VI. Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Youth in Foster Care – Findings and Proposed Recommendations

Justice Raye called on Rochelle Trochtenberg and Vanessa Hernandez to present the report and recommendations of the Work Group on Supporting Healthy Sexual Development of Foster Youth. Vanessa began with an encouraging statement that assured Council members that the problem explored by the Work Group is a solvable one, and the findings and recommendations demonstrate how progress can be made. Vanessa and Rochelle then provided the following overview of the process and results attained.

The Work Group was formed to explore the topic of how child welfare systems can better support and promote healthy sexual development of foster youth. This topic stemmed directly from the personal stories, statements, and concerns expressed by former foster youth on the barriers they have experienced within the current system, and the lack of policies and practices to address young people’s healthy sexual development.

On February 5, 2015, the Work Group – in partnership with California Youth Connection, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, California Association of Child and Family Services, Seneca Family of Agencies, and Center for the Study of Social Policy – hosted a day-long gathering devoted to exploring issues and creating recommendations that will make meaningful improvements in our ability to support youth’s healthy sexual development. The “Big Questions” used to frame the discussion were:

- How does the child welfare system currently support the healthy sexual development of youth in foster care?
- What actions, policies, and practices do we need to create, clarify, or make visible to support sexual safety and well-being of youth in foster care?
- What are the strengths and needs of youth in the child welfare system that will impact their healthy sexual development?
- What practices or policies act as barriers? What might be our solutions and opportunities for breaking through these barriers?
- How do race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) affect healthy sexual development outcomes for youth?

There were 75 participants – representing current and former youth in foster care, foster parents, youth advocates, mental health clinicians, county social workers, state community care licensing managers and evaluators, state children and family services managers, and state education managers – who set the agenda for the day by identifying 35 topics related to these questions. Participants gathered in small groups to contribute their thoughts, experiences, discoveries, and ideas related to each topic. Details of

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these rich discussions are captured in a *Book of Proceedings*.¹ Significant themes and recommendations for improving policies and practice to address them, taken directly from the opinions expressed by participants, included:

Self-esteem: Youth report that self-esteem triggers decision making choices, and if they have low self-esteem they are more likely to make unwise choices about the way they handle their bodies. Feeling lonely or isolated causes self-esteem to drop. Temporary highs, like prostitution and exploited sex, are the cause for making choices that negatively impact a youth's whole life. Family-oriented love keeps the youth encouraged and empowered. Organic, trusting relationships help youth feel more complete.

Sex, dating, and masturbation: Youth in group and foster homes report that they most often do not have opportunity to engage in age-appropriate sexual exploration, and normal sexual development is often discouraged through policies and practices. Youth who engage in consensual sex, dating, or masturbation are often met with punitive responses from caregivers, social workers, administrators, and other adults involved. This results in missed opportunities to provide youth a chance to safely talk about their relationships, and to learn about healthy and non-healthy interactions in intimate relationships, safe sex practices, and how to communicate their needs to a significant other. Social workers, clinicians, and caregivers identified a need for more information on how to respond to youth's questions and behaviors relating to sexual curiosity. Sexual health appears to be a taboo subject, and there is confusion about what may be discussed with youth and what may be considered a violation of state regulations. Caregivers stated that they are not often informed about a youth's history of being abused, and it is not clear whose role it is to provide this information for the purpose of better understanding and supporting the youth. Even when caregivers are informed, they do not always know how to talk with young people who have been through these horrific situations.

Help for youth to recognize signs of abuse in a current relationship and to say "No": Youth reported that they may not be aware of abusive relationships, such as being manipulated and isolated from family and friends. They find ways to excuse or dismiss signs of abuse, resulting in a loss of self-confidence.

Conflict between religious and cultural beliefs of adults and their ability to support the sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) of youth in their care: Youth reported that foster parents vary in their understanding and acceptance of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and some do not accept orientations other than heterosexual. This may result in making the topic of identity taboo, which can be emotionally harmful to youth.

Youth who are fathers or mothers: Foster youth who are parents reported concerns about learning parenting skills that will break the cycle of abuse, while at the same time wanting to maintain and develop healthy relationships. Additionally, foster youth who become fathers are often not included in planning and raising their children.

Confidentiality: Foster youth's information in a court report is shared with the judge, parents, parents' attorneys, youth's attorneys, and foster parents. Foster youth stated they prefer that social workers keep information related to sexual development at a general level in court reports, with more detailed information in the case record, which should be sealed immediately upon emancipation. Youth expressed that they would like to see their court reports beginning at ages 12 to 15 instead of having it go directly to their attorneys, who often do not give them copies until right before the court hearing. Foster youth said they would like to be invited to discuss what goes in a court report with their social workers and to be able to talk with the judge directly if more information relating to sexual development is needed by the court.

From these themes and findings, participants identified the following practical recommendations in order to maximize, feasibility, increase impact and minimize barriers to implementation:

¹ Available at www.chhs.ca.gov/Pages/CACChildWelfareCouncil.aspx

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1. Utilize existing practices and policies – such as Child and Family Team, Continuum of Care Reform, Katie A Settlement, and other initiatives – and incorporate best practice guidelines that promote positive self-esteem, as a critical element of supporting healthy sexual development of youth in foster care. Based on findings, best practice guidelines may utilize a strengths-based, person-centered approach including, but not limited to, the following suggested elements:
 - Talk to youth first, before reading the file.
 - Ask youth to share information on everything they want known about themselves, creating a space for conversation where they are empowered to be in charge of their personal information.
 - Ask youth about their interests, hopes, dreams, likes, and dislikes.
 - Tell youth you want to be supportive and ask what they need.
 - Honor youth’s universal desire for love and healthy relationships.
 - Recognize the role of physical health in promoting self-esteem and healthy sexual development, and include opportunities for physical activity and healthy living into programs for youth in foster care.

2. Create robust guidance on how the intent of the “Prudent Parent” statute can be used in support of healthy sexual development, such as clarifying how group home staff, foster parents, and kinship caregivers can address various issues relating to sexuality:
 - Respond in a supportive manner to foster youth’s sexual curiosity.
 - Discuss youth’s sexual development and decisions regarding sexual behavior with them, and including information and guidance on sexual consent, use of condoms, and birth control.
 - Support and appropriately supervise youth’s normal dating relationships.
 - Allow youth to masturbate in private as a normal part of sexual development.
 - Appropriately supervise youth’s access to computers and phones to communicate with peers, build healthy relationships, and wisely use social media.
 - Develop and offer training by sex education specialists for child welfare workers, group home staff, foster parents, and kinship caregivers on how to involve the youth in genuine dialogue regarding their sexual development and learn how the youth would like to be supported.

3. Consider hiring youth mentors as a resource to support youth as they raise issues related to romantic relationships and sexual identity.

4. Use existing curricula, such as training programs developed by the California Youth Connections YOUTH Training Project, to clarify:
 - Whose role it is to talk with youth about past abuse, and what will that individual do with the information.
 - What caregivers need to know about youth’s past history of abuse, and if, when, and how to talk with youth about it.
 - Ways to help youth become survivors of past abuse and understand the impact on current relationships and healthy sexual development.

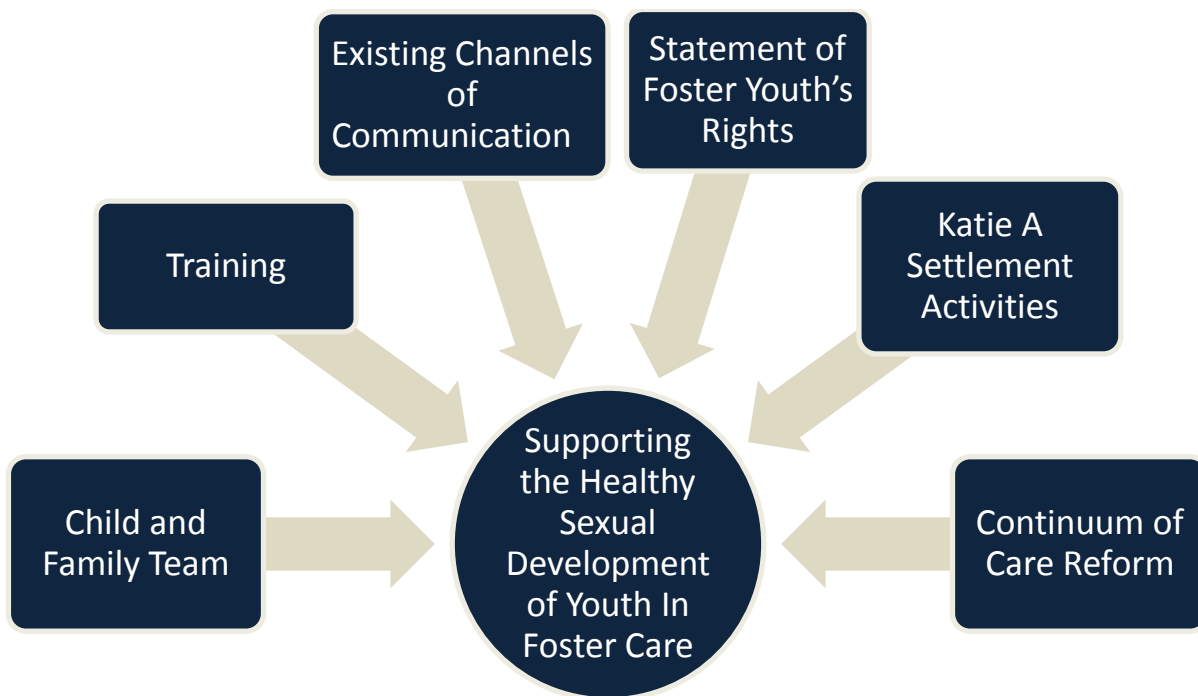
5. When developing best practice guidelines and training opportunities for foster youth and relevant stakeholders, consider an array of specific suggestions, topic areas, and perspectives that may be incorporated. The follow recommendations were specifically highlighted at the event:
 - Understand the signs and triggers of abuse, including physical, mental, verbal, financial, emotional, and sexual.

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- Be non-judgmental and help youth communicate about concerns in a relationship through in-person conversations, media materials, blogs, and forums.
- Support gender exploration and identity. Two possible resources for meeting this need include looking at the language that physicians use to describe SOGIE, and building on practices in Native American and Hawaiian cultures that support SOGIE.
- Identify legal issues related to the youth’s preferred legal name and pronoun, and create guidance for courts, such as “bench cards,” to promote inclusive courts for all youth.
- Emphasize that effective communication to address topics pertaining to a young person’s sexuality, follow the youth’s lead, and create a safe environment for communication
- Support young fathers and mothers in forming positive dating relationships, for instance, by utilizing curriculum offered by the Youth Training Project.
- Clarify how child abuse reporting requirements apply to youth dating older people, such as a 16-year-old dating a 20-year-old.
- Recruit foster parents who can accept the father or mother and baby as a foster family unit, preserving the family and educating them about healthy parenting and co-parenting The Children’s Law Center is currently developing an “Agreement” for this purpose.
- Determine who owns the information about a youth’s sexuality and what needs to be included in a court report regarding the youth’s sexual development.
- Write court reports that include only required information, and give youth the opportunity to verbally share information to the court on a need-to-know basis, so that what is private can remain in the case file only.
- Include youth input in court reports, and let youth know when they can expect to receive the report in advance of the hearing.

The following graphic illustrates how the recommendations can come together to improve supporting the healthy sexual development of youth in foster care;

Mechanisms to Implement Proposed Recommendations



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Following the presentation, Justice Raye invited Council members and the public for comments. Ken Berrick complimented the Work Group for its specific suggestions based on real life experiences. Others underscored the need for training of foster parent and group home providers on these specifics. Further suggestions included Bench check-lists, connecting the effort to the CSEC project, and incorporating information from the RISE project (Council meeting of March 2014). The Work Group will hold follow up meetings with the Community Care Licensing and Child and Family Services Divisions of the Department of Social Services (CDSS) and present the recommendations, as updated based on Council members' comments and CDSS actions, for approval at the September 2, 2015 Council meeting.

VII. Commercially Sexually Exploited Children – Status Report

Secretary Dooley informed the Council that the CSEC Action Team has been partnering with CDSS to implement the newly created CSEC Program statewide, as well as with the Child and Family Policy Institute of California to implement the recently awarded federal grant called Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking, or PACT. She called on Leslie Heimov, Greg Rose, and Ronna Bright to provide details.

CSEC Action Team Accomplishments

Leslie Heimov, Co-Chair of the CSEC Action Team, reported on the following products developed by the CSEC Action Team in support of all counties implementing basic services to CSEC and in support of enhanced services by counties that opt into the state CSEC program and/or that are pilots of the PACT federal grant:

1. Screening Tool
 - Memo and Matrix
2. Learning Objectives
3. Guidance to Counties
 - Model Interagency Protocol Framework, including background and purpose
 - CSEC Practice Guidance Toolkit – included a Memorandum of Understanding template for counties to use when implementing the CSEC Program; a paper on the Holistic Needs of CSEC, and Core Competencies for serving CSEC.

Leslie stated the CSEC Action Team will be developing priorities for additional projects in support of state, county and providers' efforts to prevent and serve CSEC in addition to beginning work on preventing and serving child labor trafficking.

CSEC-related work underway at CDSS

Greg Rose, CDSS Deputy Director for Child and Family Services, reported on efforts underway by the state to promote improved prevention and services for CSEC, including:

1. Clarification to W&IC §300
 - Clarified that commercially sexually exploited children are indeed within the jurisdiction of the child welfare system.
 - Two critical All-County Letters were recently released with instructions on how to apply as well as capture the data elements for the newly enacted state CSEC Program (SB 855).
2. Recent Federal Legislation
 - HR 4980, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act; SB 794 is the state's bill to comply with HR 4980.
 - S. 178 - Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act includes new funding for combatting sex trafficking.

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Greg concluded by observing that the CDSS Connection with the CSEC Action Team is a good example of government working with advocates to inform its policies and service delivery.

Preventing and Addressing Child Trafficking (PACT) Grant

Ronna Bright, Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), described the project as a multi-disciplinary system to address trafficking within California's child welfare population. She provided the following background information:

- The grant was awarded by: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families to the California Department of Social Services.
- The term of the grant is October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2019.
- CFPIC is the contractor selected by CDSS to administer the grant.
- The ten PACT pilot counties are Alameda, El Dorado, Los Angeles, Madera, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, San Joaquin, and Ventura.

Ronna shared PACT's mission statement as: To implement a state and county level coordinated cross-system, inter-agency collaborative model that effectively serves child labor and sex trafficking victims. Protocols and models will build on existing collaborations at the state level, leverage funding from the state to provide services at the county level, implement newly created state law, and ensure child-serving agencies coordinate to more effectively serve a population of extremely vulnerable and traumatized children.

She stated that the goals of PACT are to:

- Broaden the collaborative structure at the state level and develop the collaborative infrastructure in the pilot counties to support implementation of the PACT Program model.
- Develop, pilot, and modify the PACT Program Model to address child sexual exploitation in California's child welfare system.
- Broaden the CSEC collaborative structure, program model, and protocols to more fully address child labor trafficking.
- Disseminate lessons learned and program information to other California counties and states, and continue to sustain the project in the pilot counties.

Council members offered comments in support of the CSEC efforts underway, and noted that one of the All-County Letters included a screening tool developed by WestCoast Children's Center. Secretary Dooley thanked the presenters for their leadership of the projects to combat CSEC.

VIII. Funding Youth Permanency – A Guide for Counties

Justice Raye called on Carroll Schroeder to introduce the topic. Carroll reminded Council members about the work of Gail Johnson Vaughn to promote permanency over the course of her career as a nonprofit provider and now as the Executive Director of Families Now, which is dedicated to ensuring all youth who are placed in foster care are provided permanent, nurturing families. Because of Gail's leadership, written communication skills, and ability to collaborate with key stakeholders, the "Funding Youth Permanency" guide has been developed, and Carroll called on Gail to present it.

Gail began by putting guide in context by saying that the Permanency Committee as a whole, as well as individual members have long held a deep concern about the youth who age out of foster care without families. She said that there are some things we know about these youth: the more placement changes they have, the less likely they are to achieve permanency, and the longer they stay in foster care, the

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less likely they are to achieve permanence. The child welfare field and the general public tend to (falsely) think that permanency is not possible for them because they don't want families and they are too troubled, too unstable to succeed in a family.

Gail then laid the groundwork to help Council members understand why the Guide would be of interest to them, saying that there is a lot of good news in child welfare, e.g., the number of California children in foster care has been reduced by 46% since 1998, and there is bad news too, e.g., the number of youth who turn 18 or age out alone has remained constant at about 4,000 every year. This number gets lost. Why if we are doing so much better are these numbers not going down? Who are these kids? What happens to the after they age out?

Gail said she find statistics like "within two years 50% will be homeless, victimized, incarcerated, or dead" to be disempowering – dry, lifeless, so she proposed that Council members look at the statistic in terms of recent Council projects, including youth losing credit because they move too often; protecting youth from sexual exploitation; transition age youth having a place to live; giving youth support to succeed in school; getting physical and mental health care for youth; and helping youth to form lasting relationships. She suggested that these projects were necessary because we are not doing enough to secure permanency for youth, and hence the need for this Guide.

Gail compared and contrasted Federal Child Welfare Finance Reform with this Guide to Funding Specialized youth permanency services: the former relies on changes made at the federal level based on decisions made at the federal level, which take years, whereas the latter points out currently available county-controlled funding resources and allows decisions to be made at the county-level. In other words, federal financing reform is a long-term undertaking with multiple national stakeholders, funding youth permanency can be done now, under existing financing available to counties.

Gail reported the Guide says three things:

1. **We know how to achieve permanent families for older children and teens in foster care, such as through the Youth Permanency Movement.** This movement has strong California roots. One immensely important tap root was the Council's own Pat Reynolds-Hubbard and her California Permanency for Youth Program and her successor, Permanency Committee co-chair Bob Friend. The movement challenged prevailing beliefs: Teens don't want parents, Parents don't want teens, apple doesn't fall far from tree, kids will be disappointed, to unstable to have a family. It replaced "a family is no where" with "a family is now here." It changed organizational culture to "Do whatever it takes" by advocating non-traditional hours; involvement of youth; addressing youth's history of trauma, separation and loss; doing the grief work; and making youth permanency the job of everyone on the team supporting the youth.

Pilot after pilot demonstrated that is permanency is not only possible, it is probable. California had seven pilots between 2003 & 2010, funded by a variety of state and federal grants and contracts. Under the Older Youth Adoption Contracts in place from 2007-2010, 944 youth received services and 80% of them achieved permanency. Under the Destination Family Youth Permanency Project from 2003-2008, 157 youth received services and 86% achieved permanency. All were successfully achieved permanency for older youth long considered "unadoptable." All demonstrated significant fiscal savings for their jurisdictions – even after adjusting for costs.

2. **Keeping these children and teens in foster care is very expensive (the "Duh" factor).**

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3. **Funding saved by achieving permanence far outweigh the cost of effective permanency services.**
 The annual county level savings achieved when a youth moves into a permanent family, with savings accruing for *every* year the youth would have remained in care are:

- Adoption from:
 - Group Home Level 14 **\$103,540**
 - Foster Family Agency Home **\$13,710**
- Guardianship from:
 - Group Home Level 12 **\$92,477**
 - Foster Family Agency Home **\$11,442**

Average 1-time per/youth cost of specialized permanency services = \$12,000- \$15,000

Gail emphasized that we know how to find our youth permanent families, and there is no net county cost. The external funding for those successful pilots sunset at the start of the fiscal crisis, and unfortunately all but one closed down or significantly cut back; one – Sacramento County – had carefully tracked the savings achieved, and with the strong support of their board of supervisors reinvested those savings to sustain and ultimately expand the program with a return on investment of over 100% with the most conservative accounting methodology. It seems reasonable to ask, why hasn't it happened elsewhere? The chart below demonstrates the fiscal case.

Sample California Costs Avoided

Sample Total County Costs Avoided for 40 Youth Achieving Permanency at Age 14								
From:	To:	Annual County Savings	Years of Lower Cost	Savings Accrued from age 14-18	Average one-time youth permanency services cost	Net County Savings per youth	# of youth	total costs avoided
GH 14	Adoption	\$70,647	5	\$353,235	\$ 12,000	\$341,235	3	\$1,023,705
		\$7,022	5	\$35,110	\$ 12,000	\$23,110	14	\$323,540
GH 12	Kin	\$60,452	5	\$302,260	\$ 12,000	\$290,260	3	\$870,780
		\$6,185	5	\$30,925	\$ 12,000	\$18,925	12	\$227,100
GH 10	2nd Chance	\$60,717	5	\$303,585	\$ 12,000	\$291,585	2	\$583,170
		\$15,767	5	\$78,835	\$ 12,000	\$66,835	6	\$401,010
						Net county costs avoided		
						\$3,429,305		

Gail concluded by saying, "It's not what's there, it's what you see," urging that nothing the Council can do is more important than overcoming the barrier beliefs that permanency is not possible or that it is too expensive to achieve, advocating a moral and fiscal imperative to put the knowledge assembled in the guide to work for our children. She urged Council members to read it, share it, especially with decision makers in Council Members' jurisdictions such as members of their boards of supervisors, judiciary, children's attorneys, department heads, and CASAs.

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IX. The Invisible Achievement Gap – Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California’s Public Schools

Secretary Dooley called on Michelle Traiman to present this topic. Michelle started by providing background, stating that the Stuart Foundation has completed two reports that offer the first statewide comprehensive educational snapshot of all K-12 students in foster care that demonstrates their unique characteristics as a distinct population of students and illustrates the need for policies and strategies to improve their academic success. The three phases of this effort were: (1) Securing data sharing agreements with California Departments of Education and Social Services; (2) Making sense of the data; and (3) Supporting policy and practice to improve educational outcomes of students in foster care. The study partners were the Center of Teaching and Learning, West Ed; University of California, Berkeley; California Department of Education; California Department of Social Services; National Center for Youth Law; Children Now; and Stuart Foundation. The project was conducted over a four year period, from October 2010 through July 2014.

In order to make the study findings usable by target audiences, such as educators and child welfare agencies, Michelle reported that a great deal of thought went into making the data accessible through executive summaries, youth quotes, and charts; framing to inspire curiosity; providing the context of comparison groups; and naming the study so that it has relevance to key audiences, especially educators.

Emily Putnam-Hornstein, who worked on the study as a researcher at University of California, Berkeley, presented the key research findings (2009-10), which included:

- **Time in Foster Care** – More than 43,000 (or about one of every 150 K-12) public-school students in California spent some period of time in child welfare supervised foster care.
- **Reason for Removal** – Of these students in foster care, 78% were removed from birth families due to neglect, 11% due to physical abuse; 4% sexual abuse; and 7% for other reasons.
- **Grade Levels** – Of these students in foster care, 40% were in Elementary School; 23% were in Middle School; and 36% were in High School.
- **An At-risk Subgroup** – Nearly one in five students in foster care were classified with a disability compared to 7% of all K-12 students and 8% low SES students.
- **School Mobility** – Among students who had been in foster care for less than one year, 48% had changed schools during the academic year.
- **School Type** – Enrollment in a nontraditional school often suggests that students were unsuccessful in a traditional school setting and therefore were transferred to an alternative setting to better meet the students’ needs.
- **Achievement Gap** – Proficiency in English language arts for students in foster care was negatively correlated with grade level.
- **Drop-out and Graduation** – Students with three or more placements were more than twice as likely to drop out as students with one placement, although this single-year dropout rate is still twice as high as for low SES students and all students in the state.

Michelle offered the following concluding thoughts:

- Students in foster care constitute and at-risk subgroup that is distinct from low SES students regardless of the characteristics of their foster care experience.
- Yet, despite relative disadvantage overall, significant variations among students in foster care still emerged.

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- Findings should not be interpreted causally, but still provide information for policymakers and administrators that may help improve the academic success of students in foster care.

Before opening the topic to discussion, Michelle offered the following quotation by Bob Parsons, “Anything that is measured and watched improves.”

Council members expressed appreciation for the rich content of the study, and Secretary Dooley suggested that the Steering Committee consider working with relevant parties to have a follow up presentation using data from child welfare and education that examines the same dynamics under the current Local Control Funding Formula.

X. Translational Social Work – Bringing Together Practice and Research

Justice Raye called on Daniel Webster to introduce the topic and speaker. Daniel gave a brief overview of Dr. Lawrence Palinkas’s background and body of research. He is the Albert G. and Frances Lomas Feldman Professor of Social Policy and Health in the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California, where he also holds appointments as Professor in the Departments of Anthropology and Preventive Medicine. His primary areas of expertise are preventive medicine, cross-cultural medicine, and health services research. His presentation to the Council on “Translational Social Work” highlights his work in implementation science. Dr. Palinkas thanked Daniel for the introduction and provided the following information on this topic.

The Research to Practice Gap

- 90% of publicly-funded child welfare, mental health and juvenile justice systems do not use evidence-based practices (EBPs) (Hoagwood & Olin, 2002).
- Only half of all children in child welfare receive care consistent with any one national standard and less than 10% receive care consistent with all 10 national standards (Raghavan et al, 2010).

Implementation research is the scientific study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based practices into routine practice, and, hence, to improve the quality and effectiveness of health services.

Overview of study on Social Networks and Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice in Public Youth-Serving Systems (funded by William T. Grant Foundation)

Background

- Interpersonal contacts within and between organizations and communities are important influences on the adoption of new behaviors (Rogers, 2003; Palinkas, Allred, & Landsverk, 2005; Brekke, Ell, & Palinkas, 2007).
- Both the influence of trusted others in one’s personal network and having access and exposure to external information are important influences on rates of adoption of innovative practices (Valente, 2010; Valente et al., 2007; Valente et al., 2011).
- This study was conducted in California and Ohio, hence its title as the **CAL-OH Study**

Objective

Determine whether community development teams (CDTs) are more effective than services as usual in “scaling up” implementation of Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster care (MTFC)

- MTFC: EBP for youth who otherwise would be in congregate care and are placed in well supported foster homes
- CDTs: Key stakeholders from multiple levels (system leaders, organizations/agencies, practitioners, consumers) who are provided with peer-to-peer exchanges, Locally

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informed planning (including financing), needs-benefit analysis, monitoring and support, fidelity focus, and technical assistance

- Design: Adaptive or rolling RCT in which 40 California and 11 Ohio counties are randomized into two conditions (CDT vs SU)
 - Matched into 4 equivalent cohorts to deal with feasibility (8 equivalent groups)
 - Then randomized to 2 conditions (CDT or IS)
 - Wait-list feature

Study specific aims

- Aim 1. Describe the structure and operation of influence networks of public-youth-serving systems participating in the first cohort of the CAL-OH Study.
- Aim 2. Determine the influence of these networks on decisions related to participation in the CAL-OH Study during the pre-implementation and implementation phases.

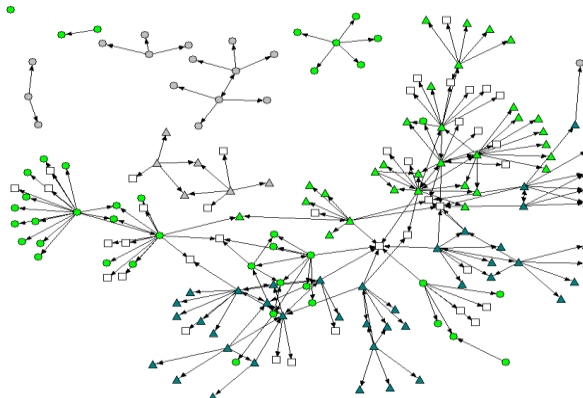
Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with 38 agency directors and senior administrators in 12 California counties (MTFC Cohort 1)
 - County response rate (12/13 = 92.3%)
 - Individual response rate (38/45 = 84%)
- Web-based survey of social network structure (n=30) in which each participant was asked to identify up to 10 people for whom they relied for advice on whether and how to use evidence-based practices for meeting the mental health needs of youth served by their agency
 - Examination of Network characteristics of 176 person network using UCINET
- Stage of Implementation Checklist (SIC: Chamberlain et al., 2010) to measure progress made in implementation of MTFC from engagement to sustainability

Lessons Learned

- Systems leaders develop and maintain networks of information and advice based on roles, responsibility, geography, and friendship ties.
- Social networking is central to implementation of EBPs through two mechanisms,
 - Acquisition of information and advice related to EBPs
 - Pooling of resources among agencies
- Both mechanisms involve collaboration between organizations
- Successful implementation of evidence-based practices requires consideration and **utilization of existing social networks or development of new networks** of high status systems leaders that often cut across service organizations and their geographic jurisdictions for **sharing of information and resources.**

The following graphic depicts various levels of social networking; the areas of higher intensity illustrate where implementation will be more successful.



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**Overview of study on Innovation and the Use of Research Evidence in Public Youth-Serving Systems
(also funded by the William T. Grant Foundation)**

- Implementation of evidence-based practices and policies (EBPPs) involves some degree of use of research evidence (URE).
 - To identify appropriate EBPPs
 - To support decision to adopt EBPPs
 - To support implementation of EBPPs
- However, the extent to which URE contributes to EBPP implementation is unknown.

Study Specific Aims

- Aim 1. Understand and measure the use of research evidence by decision makers of public youth-serving agencies.
- Aim 2. Identify factors that predict the use of research evidence.
- Aim 3. Prospectively determine whether use of research evidence predicts stage of EBP implementation.

Study Methods

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups to assess how systems leaders determine a practice is evidence-based and how they acquire information, evaluate it, and apply it in making decisions about adopting and implementing new programs and practices.
- Development of two new measures
 - Structured Interview for Evidence Use (SIEU)
 - Cultural Exchange Inventory (CEI)
- Web-based survey of 156 leaders of county child welfare, juvenile justice and mental health systems participating in the CAL-OH study, 10 leaders in other counties and states other than California and Ohio, and 37 state-level systems leaders participating in the AAIMS Study (total = 202).

Lessons Learned

1. Use of Research Evidence does inform policy and practice.
2. Systems leaders use three other types of evidence when considering whether to seek and apply research evidence in making decisions:
 - Evidence of resources necessary and available for making use of research evidence (supply),
 - Evidence of the need for research evidence, usually obtained from local conditions of client and service needs (demand), and
 - Personalized evidence gained from experience (i.e., is the research evidence consistent with practice experience).
3. Priority is given with respect to how evidence is accessed, evaluated and applied. For instance,
 - Systems leaders are most likely to rely on the internet for information, followed by interactions with program developers, training manuals, or attendance at conferences, workshops and professional association meetings.
 - **Above all, they are most likely to use the evidence to support existing decisions than to make new decisions.**
4. Two specific obstacles to use of research evidence
 - (1) The disconnect between “local” and “global” evidence
 - Global Evidence:
 - External – originates outside of agency or jurisdiction
 - Based on standards for scientific rigor (e.g., RCTs)

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- Emphasis on generalizability or transferability or findings from one state or county to another.

Local Evidence:

- Internal – originates within agency or jurisdiction, may include administrative data
 - Based on personal experience (either involvement in data collection and analysis or familiarity with population studied)
 - Emphasis on uniqueness of population and its needs (specificity)
- (2) The disconnect between the producers and consumers of research evidence
- Evidence constructed on the basis of Randomized Controlled Trials has poor external validity because these trials often cannot mirror real world conditions.
 - Much evidence is produced in the absence of engagement with consumers beforehand, resulting in limited utility and relevance to local conditions.
 - This is why EBPs are often used without fidelity, when they are used at all.
 - Consequently, the methods we use to generate evidence are often not properly aligned with the nature of current policy problems.
 - When you need answers now, waiting for a researcher to submit a proposal, get funding to conduct a study, publish the evidence, seek confirmation of the findings, etc., is just a frustrating experience.
5. Research evidence can better inform policy in timely and useful ways
- Through research-policy partnerships.
 - Through the use of local as well as global evidence.
 - Through the development of better methods for producing and disseminating research.

After the presentation, Justice Raye called for questions and comments from Council members and the public. Karen Baylor pointed out that in mental health treatment practices fidelity to the model is always a challenge. Will Lightbourne noted that the Bay Area Social Services consortium of County Directors serves as a successful model of a social network that shares information and resources. Dr. Palinkas stated that a similar organization of Southern California Directors, on which he participates, is also a successful model.

Council members commented on how the Council itself is serving as a social network through its information sharing role. Justice Raye thanked Professor Palinkas for his work and presentation to the Council.

XI. Status Reports from Committees and Task Forces

Secretary Dooley reminded Council members that, at the suggestion of the Steering Committee, updates should focus on significant developments rather than on the status of work in progress, and that it is quite okay to “pass.”

▪ **Prevention/Early Intervention Committee-Statewide Citizen Review Panel**

Lori Clarke, on behalf of Kathy Icenhower, reported that, as a CAPTA requirement, each year the PEI/CRP selects policy areas for review, engages in in depth analysis, and then develops a report of its activities, findings, and recommendations to the California Department of Social Services. For this cycle the Committee selected two policy review areas for consideration:

1. Review of prevention policy to identify core elements of practice that are a fit for California. Identification of the core elements of prevention practice could serve to unite prevention providers for a greater collective impact. It could also serve to inform policy and resource decisions regarding prevention practices.

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2. Review of prevention cost/benefit policy and determination of whether a cost/benefit analysis of prevention practices in California could set the stage for improving return on investment of federal, state, and county funds. Identification of cost effective prevention practices could serve to promote greater uniformity of prevention practice among community-based organizations, networks, family strengthening organizations, family resource centers and others, leading to improved outcomes.

Lori also informed the Council that at the Committee meeting in the afternoon there will be a presentation on a Community Child Maltreatment Study conducted at USC by Drs. McCroskey and Hurlbert.

- **Permanency Committee**

Please see above agenda item for report.

- **Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee**

Rochelle Trochtenberg and Gordon Jackson reported that the Psychotropic Medications Work Group, which had been following the progress of the State's Quality Improvement Project, had made major progress and called on Greg Rose and Mike Wolford to provide details. Greg reviewed three new products: (1) California Guidelines for the Use of Psychotropic Medications for Children and Youth in Foster Care; (2) Foster Youth Bill of Rights; and (3) Questions to Ask. He emphasized that these are living documents that will be revised and updated as new knowledge and best practices are developed. The documents have been widely disseminated to Counties and community providers.

Gordon also reported that the Committee has formed a new work group on Education that will be launching in the afternoon.

- **Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee**

Daniel Webster announced that Emily Putnam Hornstein, a frequent presenter at Council meetings, who is on the faculty at the University of Southern California School of Social Work and who also supports the work of the Child Indicators Project at UC Berkeley, was recently selected by the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators as the recipient of the prestigious Forsythe award.

- **Priority Access to Services and Supports Task Force (PASS)**

Dana Blackwell said she was pleased to inform the Council that all of the PASS Agency Teams had made substantial progress over the last quarter in operationalizing actions to promote priority access for parents of children in foster care. Each Agency Team developed an operational plan to ensure that priority access becomes the norm reflecting actions that are accountable and sustainable, as follows:

The **Workforce Investment Board** released a 4.2 million grant opportunity, a portion of which has been earmarked for partners to explore effective strategies for assisting parents in reunification with employment

The **Corrections/Probation Team** is hosting a Forum on July 29th to invite input from community and parent partners

The **Housing Team** is continuing to align existing and anticipated resources to better serve parents in reunification

The **Behavioral Health Team** will conduct a second Forum on July 28th with state and county child

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welfare and BH partners.

Dana added that all of the teams are also engaged in completing the mapping process previewed in March that illustrates how the new norm of priority access aligns with child welfare activities. Those maps will become part of a package of communication tools designed to promote education and awareness to improve interagency coordination. Also, the Pass Inter-Agency Leadership Team met to discuss operational plans and to leverage the impact of priority access across agencies.

Frank Mecca thanked each of the PASS teams for their focused, dedicated work and closed by reminding the Council of the significance of priority access, and why it is an imperative.

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

Karen Baylor reported that DHCS and CDSS have been working on a policy paper for improving timely and effective mental health services for foster children place outside the county of jurisdiction. The draft would be finalized by Friday, June 5 and sent to Council staff for distribution and posting. The proposed policy would build on work completed through the Katie A Settlement, the Continuum of Care Reform and the 2011 Realignment.

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

Please see above agenda item for report.

XII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

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