

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

March 3, 2021

Meeting Discussion Highlights

(Note: Due to the Pandemic, the meeting was Virtual, through Zoom technology.)

Present: Vance Raye, Co-Chair; Michelle Baas covering for Mark Ghaly, Co-Chair; Nancy Bargmann; Sarah Belton; Ken Berrick; Dana Blackwell; Stacy Boulware Eurie; Bobby Cagle; Leonard Edwards; Will Lightbourne; Patrick Gardner; Leslie Heimov; Kathryn Icenhower; Kimberley Johnson; Karen Larsen; Sharon Lawrence; Dan Prince; Cheryl Rave; Vaneisha Reed; Trent Rohrer; Cherie Schroeder; Shawna Schwarz; Chris Stoner-Mertz; Debra Silverman; Daniel Webster; Jevon Wilkes

Absent: Heather Bowlds; Sheila Boxley; Stephanie Clendenin; Rebekah Couch; Janay Eustace; Douglas Hatchimonji; Eloise Gomez Reyes; Martin Hoshino; Aubrey Manuel; Michael Olenick; Amy Price; Susan Rubio; Sarah Tyson; Cheryl Rave; Terry Rooney; Debra Silverman; Karen Staph Walters; Rebecca Couch; Rochelle Trochtenberg; Judge Claudette White;

Call to Order and Introductions (Fourth Zoom Mtg for CWC)

Staff noted that the meeting was going to be recorded and placed on the website. The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Director Kim Johnson personally welcomed council members and members of the public, in lieu of taking the time to do personal introductions of members and the public (anticipating that it may take longer on Zoom than in person). She then welcomed one new member of the council: Cathy Senderling-McDonald, new Executive Director of the California Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), replacing Frank Mecca on the Council. Co-Chair Mark Ghaly also welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Justice Vance Raye then welcomed members and the public and called on Paula, Chris, and Marymichael to introduce the Zoom “rules of the road” for the virtual meeting. Members of the Council were asked to “rename” themselves by adding “Member” to the end of their names and were asked to use the chat and/or hand raise function to participate with questions or comments.

I. Approval of the December 1, 2020 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Secretary Ghaly directed Council Members to the Discussion Highlights document that had been posted and sent to them prior to the meeting. He asked for comments, and/or

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

suggested revisions from the Council and the public. There being none, he called for a consensus vote and in the absence of any revisions or comments the highlights were approved.

II. Honoring Councilmember/Chief Tribal Court Judge Claudette White (Special Item)

Justice Raye acknowledged the passing, on February 6, 2021, of councilmember and Tribal Court Judge Claudette White from complications of Covid 19. Chief Judge White served for many years on the Child Welfare Council and was a long-time member of the Judicial Council's Tribal Court-State Court Forum. In addition, she worked with the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, and with the Chief Justice's Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Initiative. She was also featured in the documentary "Tribal Justice," which highlighted to worldwide audiences the value, traditions, and innovation of tribal justice systems while she was serving as Chief Judge of the Quechan Tribal Court. Judge White shared her passion and wealth of knowledge through numerous judicial related educational endeavors and initiatives, including a 2018 production with the Center for Judicial Education and Research, "The Indian Civil Rights Act: Fifty Years Later." Judge White was an incredible person who left a great legacy for all our communities. Her lifetime efforts to prevent violence and child sexual trafficking, along with her strong commitments to improving educational and foster care outcomes have made a notable difference for families and children in California.

III. CDSS Office of Equity and Its Connection to Child Welfare (Information Item)

Secretary Ghaly introduced councilmember Kim Johnson and Marcela Ruiz, Director of the Department of Social Services Office of Equity to present on the CDSS Office of Equity and its connection to Child Welfare. He then asked for comments and questions at the end of the presentation. There was active engagement from the councilmembers and members of the public. Councilmember Bobby Cagle noted that to make inroads on disproportionality, we need the state to as soon as possible: 1) take a close look at the legal parameters for what is considered neglect and mandated reporter requirements, 2) be more engaged in providing funding for prevention efforts, 3) offer reporters (especially mandated reporters) more than one option (i.e., report to PCS or not report), and 4) make efforts to train mandated reporters throughout the state on implicit bias since we know that the disproportionality starts at the point of first report. There was widespread agreement among the councilmembers with his statement. New councilmember Cathy Senderling-McDonald noted that CWDA is putting forth a budget proposal that will build on the Families First Prevention Services Act to provide funds to counties for engagement with local communities and individuals/families with lived experience in child welfare/foster care to develop, expand and offer prevention services much earlier, to strengthen

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

families, with a goal of reducing the disparities we know exist and helping families avoid formal involvement with child welfare to the greatest extent possible.

IV. Family Finding Efforts (Information Item)

Justice Raye called on Permanency Committee co-chair Bob Friend to present on statewide family finding efforts. This presentation, too, generated a lively engagement from councilmembers and the public. There was much conversation about the need to hear from youth, especially over-represented youth, and to hear from parents with lived experience to help the system begin to provide the needed communication with families. There was an active conversation about the critical need for appropriate Child Family Teams (CFTs). And it was noted that we have long been concerned about the inability of counties to grant exemptions to family members who have some kind of criminal history, often a long time ago and too often influenced by systemic racism in the development and enforcement of the laws. Noted that it would be helpful if these types of barriers should be revisited in order to allow relative caregivers to have some different rules, or reduce the number of non-exemptible crimes, so that we can work more closely with more relatives to help support children and parents. It was noted that there needs to be state support for the use of CFTs in the investigation stage to prevent unnecessary removals. There was general agreement that the Council needs to do something helpful with this issue.

V. Behavioral Health Committee Recommendations and Implementation Guide (Action Item)

Secretary Ghaly called on councilmember Ken Berrick who summarized and explained the Behavioral Health Committee's Recommendations and Implementation Guide.

Secretary Ghaly asked for comments, questions. The council was tremendously supportive of the Behavioral Health recommendations and they generated an active conversation. Councilmembers noted the need to think through the implementation and necessary resources to make sure they could be implemented effectively.

Secretary Ghaly then called for an individual roll call vote to approve and accept the recommendations, which were approved.

VI. Update on Office of Youth and Community Restoration (Information Item)

Justice Raye called on council members Stacy Boulware Eurie and Heather Bowlds, along with Stephanie Welch, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, California Health and Human Services Agency to provide an update on the Office of Youth and Community Restoration. Dr. Bowlds, who is a co-chair of the OYCR Committee began the presentation by updating the council on how the role of the former Department of Youth and Community Restoration (DYCR) Committee,

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

which was a subcommittee of the CWC that was to assist in the transition of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) from Corrections to DYCR within HHS, was now pivoting to be a committee to advise on the implementation of the realignment of all juvenile justice youth to county supervision as provided in SB 823. Dr. Bowlds noted the DJJ is now focused on downsizing while continuing to meet the needs of the youth that are housed there, and will work with locals to plan for transition of any youth still in DJJ as the June 30, 2023 closure date approaches.

Deputy Secretary Stephanie Welch then gave a brief overview of the key components of SB 823 and its intent. These include the closure of DJJ, and shift of its funding to counties to better serve youth in facilities and programs closer to home and the creation of the new Office of Youth and Community Restoration within HHS as of July 1, 2021. Ms. Welch noted that OYCR would serve as a state hub for research, best practices, and oversight and technical assistance for counties submitting realignment plans under SB 823, as well as an ombudsman function for all juvenile justice programs in California. She also noted that the OYCR Committee was included in SB 823, and had its first meeting in that role on February 24th.

Judge Boulware Eurie, who is the other co-chair of the OYCR Committee emphasized that uncertainty about some of the statutory provisions of the realignment that are expected to be resolved in trailer bill legislation shortly made it challenging for the committee to put in place a firm work plan, but noted that the greatest urgency at the local level was to engage in planning efforts to ensure that services are available soon to meet the needs of youth and that those efforts involve all stakeholders, including youth, families and community organizations who should all have a key place at the table where decisions are being made. Judge Boulware Eurie noted that the realignment efforts were an opportunity to improve services for youth, but that at present the exact outline of how the system will function is a work in progress. Chief Prince, who is a member of the OYCR committee noted that counties appreciate the leadership of the committee and have been engaging with stakeholders at the local level. A number of CWC members raised concerns about ensuring that adequate services are available before realignment becomes effective, and Ms. Welch noted that in addition to the ongoing funds to serve youth at the local level, the Board of State and Community Corrections would be awarding \$9.6 million in grants to improve or retrofit facilities to address realignment needs. It was noted that the next meeting of the OYCR Committee is scheduled for March 30th.

VII. Committee and Task Force Updates

Secretary Ghaly called for committee/task force updates, which primarily focused on what would be discussed at the afternoon meetings. He thanked the Committee chairs for their reports.

VII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

Justice Raye asked for any final comments from the members of the public and noted that conference lines and/or Zoom line numbers and links for the afternoon meetings were in the

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

agenda.

Secretary Ghaly thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and closed the meeting at 12:20 pm.