



Education Coordinating Council

July 25, 2007

3:00 p.m.

The California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities

Yosemite Room A

1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

Present: Yolie Flores Aguilar
William Arroyo, representing Marvin J. Southard
Berisha Black
Carol Clem
Amy Cooper, representing José Huizar
Julie Eutsler, representing Howard Sundberg
Mónica Garcia
René Gonzalez, representing David L. Brewer III
Leslie Heimov
Helen Kleinberg
Rafael Lopez
Machelle Massey
Darline P. Robles
Bruce Saltzer
William Stelzner, representing Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
Robert Taylor
Rick Tebbano, representing Christopher Steinhauser

Guests: Nick Ippolito, Fourth Supervisorial District
Gail Tierney, Fourth Supervisorial District

Vice Chair Berisha Black brought the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m. and asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves. Neither Chair José Huizar nor Vice Chair Michael Nash could attend today's meeting, and Wednesday afternoons also present a conflict for Department of Children and Family Services director Trish Ploehn. A discussion item later in the meeting will address the possibility of changing the ECC meeting day to better accommodate member schedules.

Black congratulated Yolie Flores Aguilar on taking office July 3 as a member of the Los Angeles Unified School District board, and on her new position as chief executive officer of The Chil-

dren's Planning Council Foundation, Inc.. Black also congratulated Mónica Garcia on her July 3 election as president of the LAUSD board.

Bill Stelzner from the Pomona Unified School District is retiring next month, though he will remain active during the transition to his successor, and Black thanked him for his service to the ECC since its inception. Because of his involvement, the Pomona district is in the midst of conducting a data match with both DCFS and the Probation Department, the results of which will be presented at the ECC's October meeting.

Black expressed appreciation to DCFS and Probation for their contributions to the ECC of \$50,000 each for fiscal year 2007–2008, and also announced that the W.M. Keck Foundation has awarded the ECC an extremely generous grant of \$450,000 over the next two fiscal years to implement its Blueprint recommendations.

Staff Report

Lead consultant Sharon Watson thanked Black for her participation in the Keck site visit, and for all the work she does on the council's behalf outside of quarterly meetings.

Implementation of the ECC Blueprint is going “full speed ahead,” and Watson expressed gratitude to everyone who has taken leadership within their own organizations and in reaching out to work with others. The goal is to fully implement the Blueprint within another two years, at which time the need for the ECC as a formal body may no longer exist. A progress report on its last six months' work is due to the Board of Supervisors on August 14, and Watson would appreciate hearing from anyone about relevant achievements so they may be included in that report, which will be posted on the ECC's website once it is finalized.

Updates

- René Gonzalez reported on a number of Los Angeles Unified School District initiatives.
 - ✓ Over the last six months, LAUSD has been working with the Los Angeles County Office of Education to establish better protocols for helping probation youth enroll in school and receive the appropriate placements and services upon their release from camp. (These protocols do not yet apply to youth being released from juvenile hall.) The plan is that LACOE educational facilitators in each camp will look at the educational, special education, and mental health needs of each youth, review that information with LAUSD liaisons, and, together with the youth and the youth's parents, design a plan for providing a network of services upon release—including, ideally, returning youth to their home schools and communities. Five counselors within LAUSD's camp returnee program have responsibility for supporting these transitions and functioning as case managers who pre-prepare schools for these youths' enrollment.
 - ✓ Foster children graduating from high school with a grade point average of 2.8 or higher are eligible to receive a \$5,000 scholarship toward their continuing education, but only a small percentage now qualify. A pilot project with DCFS's Metro unit in SPA 4 concen-

trates on identifying potentially eligible youth and wrapping services around them so they can raise their grades to qualify for these grants.

- ✓ LAUSD is partnering with the RAND Corporation to study the effect of trauma on youngsters in care, piloting a UCLA-developed therapy model in middle schools with high populations of foster youth, and measuring its effect.
- ✓ District-wide last year, 400 foster youth advocates were cross-trained with DCFS and Probation staff, raising to 800 the number of advocates trained within the last two years.
- ECC program director Carrie Miller (formerly Watson, prior to her recent marriage) announced LACOE's recent determination that it is now able to freely share student educational information with the Probation Department without parental consent. In response to a query by LACOE, the U.S. Department of Education clarified that parental permission is *not* required for the release of education information to probation officers for court reports or to assist with school enrollment, and pupil records may be shared without that delay. County schools superintendent Darline Robles distributed LACOE's guidelines for the release of records, and suggested that her agency's counsel speak with counsel for LAUSD to convey the documentation.

Right now this data-sharing permission is exclusive to Probation but other efforts are underway for DCFS and for multidisciplinary teams, though parental consent is not always the stumbling block in those circumstances that it can be for incarcerated youth. Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor expanded on the protocol through which Probation requests the minor's school records from LACOE, includes those records in the youngster's treatment plan, and shares them with the school district the youth will attend upon his or her release. Taylor praised Bill Stelzner's efforts in the Pomona Unified School District, whose representatives visit the camps four weeks prior to a youth's release and arrange for an education plan to follow the youth with a continuity of care. "I'm sorry to see you retire," Taylor said to Stelzner, "and I'm hopeful the process will continue." Stelzner assured him that it would.

The ECC is working with Probation to implement the student records release form introduced in January, and ensure that everyone is trained in its use.

- Mónica Garcia's staff has been working with the ECC and LAUSD's general counsel to include DCFS, Probation, the Department of Mental Health, and other city and county departments in LAUSD's Directory Information List. This will allow the district to share student data—name, address, date of birth, dates of attendance, and previous school history—with all these entities unless the student's parents opt out. The LAUSD school board will vote on amendments to the list before it is put in place next April.

Other statewide and national efforts around data-sharing are being conducted, and Miller hopes to have announcements to make at the January meeting.

- The Federal departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, and Education recently made available a collaborative grant to reduce violence and increase the well-being of students in target areas. In Los Angeles, a partnership consisting of LAUSD, the Sheriff's

Department, and the county departments of Mental Health, Health Services, Public Health, and Probation applied for this grant for the Washington Prep High School complex, which has the highest concentration of foster and probation youth in LAUSD. If awarded, the grant will bring in a total of \$10 million—\$2.5 million each year for four years—beginning in October. The application process was a collaborative one, with each department offering its grant writers during a very short timeframe, and René Gonzalez particularly thanked Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke’s office for its help and support. (Independent of this effort, the Compton Unified School District—another ECC member—has also applied for this grant.) Award notifications are expected in September.

- With regard to the residential academy model for foster children approved by the ECC in 2005 and mentioned by LAUSD superintendent David Brewer in April, Miller reported that a new working group has been formed, California Academies for Residential Education (CARE), involving the counties of Sacramento, Santa Barbara, Orange, and Los Angeles, as well as the ECC, which will work with other CARE members to incorporate its approved model in whatever moves forward. The group wants to propose state legislation to secure funding, and to hire a consultant to assist the process. Its next meeting will be in September.

One of the models that Los Angeles has studied—the SEED Academy in Washington, DC—admits at-risk youth who have not yet entered the system, but approximately 15 percent of its student body are in foster care; the San Pasqual Academy in San Diego County accepts only foster youth. Helen Kleinberg recommended obtaining all available data on the children in residential models in other areas, particularly regarding their family connections and other supports, and how those affect their achievement. Mónica Garcia, who accompanied Brewer on his site visit to SEED, related one student’s comment that he “needed to get away from the drama at home.” Garcia went on to stress that residential academies affect only a small percentage of children needing help. “The SEED cost was \$32,000 per kid,” she said. “At LAUSD, we spend about \$2,800 per student. Graduation rates would go up, but this can’t be the only thing we’re working on.”

From the audience, Ruth Stalford, formerly with the SEED Foundation and now with the New Visions Foundation, said that the SEED Academy has graduated four classes, 100 percent of whose students have gone on to four-year colleges. “These kids began significantly behind grade level,” she said, “under very challenging circumstances.” SEED begins at seventh grade, the only entry point for students, and includes an innovative middle-school curriculum combining academics and life skills. San Pasqual, on the other hand, has ninth through twelfth grades, with students entering at any point.

Procedures for the Granting and Transfer of Partial Course Credits

Darline Robles reviewed a June 6 letter from Jack O’Connell, the state superintendent of public instruction, outlining the legal responsibilities school districts have for granting and transferring partial course credits. The problems associated with determining and accepting partial credits have a great impact upon mobile students such as DCFS probation and homeless youth, and have been brought to the attention of the ECC by system youth, caregivers, and caseworkers on multiple occasions. Partial credits are a particular problem for students in court schools, since the

schools they attend on their release often don't accept credits for the courses they've taken while incarcerated. According to Robert Taylor, many young people complain that their time in juvenile hall is "dead time" and they earn no academic credit—especially, as Machel Massey pointed out, if they are not there very long. In Los Angeles County's juvenile halls, the average stay is 19 days, while youth are in camps for three to six months or longer. (Minors in the halls, if they are being tried as adults, can sometimes stay as long as three years.) With a standards-based curriculum, the greatest differences in determining and accepting credits are in elective courses, but Robles would like to establish a matrix of all course descriptions so that correct credits can be awarded.

Robles moved that the seven ECC-member school districts participate in a planning process to develop uniform procedures for awarding partial course credits. Helen Kleinberg and Bruce Saltzer amended the motion to increase its scope, as the definitions and comparability of full course credits are also problematic, and **the amended motion—that the seven ECC-member school districts participate in a planning process to develop uniform procedures for the transfer and acceptance of course credits—was unanimously approved.**

Robles offered to convene the process this summer, with the procedures to be adopted by all school districts within the county at the superintendents' meeting scheduled in November.

Juvenile Justice System Reform and Board Actions to Strengthen Education Programs at Juvenile Halls and Camps

In 2005, the Board of Supervisors asked the Children's Planning Council (CPC) for a report that would "shine a light" on Los Angeles County's juvenile justice system. USC professor Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, a CPC member who started her career as a probation officer, volunteered to do the research, and the report was released in spring 2006. On May 8 of this year, following a presentation of the CPC report, the Board of Supervisors gave the Children's Planning Council 30 days to develop specific, "hard-hitting" recommendations to fix the system. The eleven recommendations presented to the Board on June 12 were based on as many stakeholder discussions as were possible during the short turnaround time, including David Janssen, Darline Robles, Judge Nash, Bob Taylor, Trish Ploehn, and Board deputies. The report stresses that the juvenile justice system is not just about the Probation Department, but also about law enforcement, judges, attorneys, advocates, community-based organizations, and a host of other players encompassing a broad set of issues. Yolie Flores Aguilar distributed copies of the recommendations and the accompanying Board motions.

Recommendation 1, of particular interest to the ECC, reads, "Establish charter schools and other innovative education programs and policies in juvenile halls and camps to expand educational options for youth. Pilot-test different approaches and compare the results achieved by different providers using a variety of instructional methods and philosophies. Use this opportunity to establish education as the basis and underlying focus for all programming and interaction with youth, particularly in the camps." On the heels of this idea, Supervisor Don Knabe introduced a motion, approved by the Board on June 19, that the Chief Probation Officer collaborate with the Los Angeles County superintendent of schools, the Los Angeles County board of education, the Probation Commission, the county librarian, the director of the Department of Mental Health, the

Children's Planning Council, the Education Coordinating Council, and the Chief Executive Office to develop a comprehensive plan to dramatically reform education programs in the county's juvenile halls and probation camps, including an exploration of the feasibility of charter schools and other innovative models of education. Supervisor Michael Antonovich's amendment to expand and enhance vocational programs within the Probation Department was also approved by the Board.

This group's first meeting took place last Monday, and Robert Taylor anticipates adding more partners to the effort, since a systematic approach is needed to resolving root causes. "A probation minor has many needs," he said, "and they didn't occur on the doorstep of juvenile hall."

Rafael Lopez asked about progress being made toward the report's third recommendation, which calls for separating the Probation Department's juvenile and adult functions and moving juvenile justice to the children and families' well-being cluster of the county's new administrative governance structure, keeping adult probation in the public safety cluster. (The county's recent reorganization puts a Chief Executive Officer, rather than the five-member Board of Supervisors, in charge of hiring and firing department heads, and county agencies have been grouped in clusters under deputy chief executive officers.) The children and families' well-being cluster now includes DCFS, child support services, the Department of Public Social Services, and others, while the public safety cluster includes the Probation Department, the district attorney, the sheriff, the public defender, and so on. Historically, as Helen Kleinberg mentioned, when children's programs are included with adult programs, they are often overshadowed by adult needs; hence the recommendation to shift the juvenile functions to a more appropriate cluster.

Taylor doesn't believe any discussions are taking place regarding the separation of Probation's adult and juvenile functions; in some jurisdictions where that has been tried, efforts are now being made to bring them back together. "People don't mature at the magic age of 18," he said. "Research now shows that they don't really mature until they're about 25. Dividing the house in two wouldn't provide a viable solution" to some very complicated issues. The question hinges not simply on the separation of functions by age, Lopez said, but on making sure that administrative structures meet the needs of children. Taylor doesn't see the Probation Department solely in a law enforcement or custodial role, but more as developing treatments to change individual behavior. "We're not just locking people up, we're improving lives," he said. "We'll still have people attending Children's Planning Council meetings and everything else. We won't just stay in our clusters. I've talked to Bryce [Yokomizo] and Doyle [Campbell] and they concur." (They are the deputy CEOs for the children and families' well-being cluster, and the public safety cluster, respectively.)

Gail Tierney from Supervisor Knabe's office reported that the Fourth District has requested the addition of two new clusters, including one that would focus on education. That office believes this change will solve the concerns raised.

Given the short stays of most youth in juvenile hall, Kleinberg asked what should be done about their education while there. LACOE is open to any outside agency wanting to partner, Darline Robles said, noting that it has chosen to be an accredited high school, unlike many court schools in the state, which presents some limitations. If that decision is revisited and schools in juvenile

halls are not accredited, then different methods might be possible. (Some camps, for instance, have sports or art models as their focus.) “I don’t mean to sound defensive,” Robles said, “but wonderful things are going on. We can always learn from others, but education does occur every day [youth] are there.”

Taylor added that when minors come to juvenile hall, they should receive a comprehensive assessment of their physical and mental health, plus their educational needs. “About ten percent of these kids have previously undiagnosed epilepsy,” he said, “which has a correlation with learning abilities. We need to take a more comprehensive approach to this. Not all these kids proceed within the juvenile justice system—a large percentage of them go back out into the community. We should identify their needs, develop a plan, and work with community partners to help them with that plan,” including parents in the process.

The Board of Supervisors intends to look at all the juvenile justice recommendations, and has asked the Chief Executive Office to report on the feasibility of their implementation. That report is due next month, and the Board will then discuss the entire package.

Report of Ad Hoc Group on Blueprint Recommendation 3

Bruce Saltzer reminded attendees that the ECC’s April meeting focused on Blueprint Recommendation 3, which calls for more foster and probation youth to be enrolled with other students in summer and after-school skill-building and enrichment programs that provide opportunities to connect to nurturing adults (a topic incorporated into the county’s strategic plan approved by the Board of Supervisors in June). At that meeting, ECC member agencies and community organizations presented different examples of thriving collaborative models in Los Angeles County, and the ensuing discussion prompted a motion to form an ad hoc work group to look at the recommendation systematically, identifying available resources, their accessibility, and their countywide awareness profile, then bringing back further suggestions to the ECC as a whole.

In follow-up conversations, Leslie Heimov said that a common theme emerged: before looking at available resources and rates of participation, the ECC should first convene its members and partner agencies to identify what it can do to remove institutional barriers and create linkages among various systems to facilitate the enrollment of foster and probation youth in these programs. It also needed to ask youth and caregivers to help identify the barriers and linkages they experience. As a consequence, four focus groups were conducted, whose consensus was that a lot of programs exist, but connections are few. The barriers, communication, critical roles, and suggestions generated by the focus groups were used to facilitate the ad hoc work group’s discussion on July 19.

Stacey Savelle, member of the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, reported that the work group’s first meeting included 20 participants from 16 departments, agencies, and commissions—“not just the usual suspects,” Savelle said, but a diverse group representing community partners who normally don’t work together. The group discussed the challenges and barriers experienced by their agencies and clients:

- Transportation
- Communication

- The individualization of services to fit a youth's particular interests
- Administrative hurdles
- Cost
- The safety of youth going to and from activities
- Training
- Lack of infrastructure

Along with the overarching concept of linking existing resources and networks, rather than creating a new bureaucracy, some broad solutions and possible roles for the ECC emerged:

- Youth involvement and linking with universities and community colleges
- Centralizing information and communicating it in a number of gateway languages, in a wide variety of ways, to reach youth and caregivers
- Training (particularly cross-training)
- Fostering collaborations and partnerships
- Including other partners such as mentors, law enforcement, faith-based entities, and volunteer organizations

Additional youth focus groups are planned to get feedback on this discussion, and youth are being encouraged to participate on the work group as well. Its next meeting, scheduled for August 30, will focus on exploring and prioritizing the solutions and roles discussed for the ECC and developing recommendations for action.

One of the least tangible factors discussed, Heimov said, was the commitment of youth and caregivers to participating in extracurricular activities. (The commitment is often there, Saltzer noted, but the question of resources—especially transportation—can arise if caregivers aren't given the tools to overcome those barriers.) Research shows that when youth participate in extracurricular activities in which they are interested, they become more motivated in school and in other areas, and in time develop a more positive outlook on life. "We understand why it's so important," Heimov said, "but if the people these kids live with don't value or understand it, that [lack of] commitment will be the downfall of anything we do." She described, for example, what she termed the "common experience" of caregivers punishing children for behavioral problems by denying them permission to go to their art class, for instance. "It's the same as denying visitation with parents or siblings," she said. "We've learned that's not a good idea."

From the audience, Pat Colbert, a vice president with Los Angeles County Resource Families Coordinating Council and also active with the Foster Parent Association, vigorously defended the training that caregivers receive about the importance of participation in extracurricular activities, and asked for statistics on instances of caregivers using that participation as leverage. "I haven't heard that. If you've gotten that information," she told Heimov, "then that caregiver needs to be called on the carpet and brought back to training."

Announcements

- The Department of Mental Health will be launching the planning process for the prevention and early intervention component of the Mental Health Services Act within the next few

weeks. According to state guidelines, 51 percent of this new funding is mandated for individuals from birth to age 25, and priority populations include youth coming from stressed families, those in the juvenile justice system, and traumatized youth. Education is one of the sectors to be involved in the planning process, and Bill Arroyo anticipates calling on ECC members and partners to join town halls, focus groups, and other dialogues, the dates of which will be posted on the DMH website.

- Yolie Flores Aguilar asked that a future ECC meeting invite the New Directions Task Force (top county managers in health and human services) or the Interagency Operations Group (county and non-county managers) to talk about the county's prevention initiative, Hhealthier Communities, Stronger Families, Thriving Children, or HST. In four neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, HST is emphasizing family economic success, family support, and community engagement, beginning to address the question of what gets children into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in the first place, and what's happening to communities and families within and beyond those systems. Flores Aguilar feels that some pieces of the ECC work are embedded in these neighborhoods, particularly in Florence/Firestone, and Sharon Watson agreed that a presentation on the initiative was a good idea.

Public Comment

- Ron Randolph, special assistant to Darline Robles, announced that LACOE has convened a task force to review the juvenile justice report and develop internal recommendations. An executive summary will be provided to the ECC.
- DCFS and the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) have jointly developed mentoring guidelines in response to the Board of Supervisors' directive that every foster child have a mentor. Developed with input from thousands of people, those guidelines are now available in the *Hand to Hand* nine-minute video and summary document.
- From the audience, parent advocate Brenda Parks reiterated the hardships involved when parents try to get course credits transferred for schoolwork that youth have done while incarcerated. Language issues can compound the problem, and parents are often not listened to. "They need our help to get this done," Parks said. She also praised the call in the juvenile justice report to involve parents and youth in cross-training. "They need to be a part of this from the beginning."
- In the course of researching her masters thesis, former probation and foster youth Roberta Javier has interviewed several 'MacLaren Hall survivors'—adults from age 25 to 57 who were once placed at MacLaren Children's Center. All experienced tremendous trauma during their time there, and issues still remain unresolved about lost records and MacLaren's history. "This generation didn't have the help that you're providing now," Javier told meeting attendees. "This was before best practices." She distributed copies of a passionate letter from the survivors asking to be included in discussions about any child-oriented use of the now-closed facility, which she requested that ECC members read.

Next Meeting

ECC meetings have been moved to Wednesday afternoons because the centrally located California Endowment space is not available on Thursday mornings. However, finding a day that is convenient for all ECC members has been difficult. Standing commitments consume most mornings, and calendars are planned far in advance. January's Monday afternoon meeting yielded the best turnout so far, and Watson plans on polling members next week to see what other days might work.

Unless notice is otherwise given, the next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, October 24, 2007
3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
The California Endowment, Redwood Room
1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles

It will focus on the work being done to implement the Blueprint's early childhood education recommendations, presenting demographic, placement, and educational information on young children in DCFS and on the children of DCFS and Probation youth. Data match results for the Pomona, Long Beach, and Lancaster school districts will also be presented.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.