



Education Coordinating Council

February 3, 2011

9:30 a.m.

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Bank of America Room
350 South Bixel Street, Los Angeles, California

Present: Donald Blevins
Carol Clem
Renatta Cooper
Maryam Fatemi, representing Antonia Jimenez
Mónica García
René Gonzalez, representing Ramón C. Cortines
Leslie Heimov
Helen Kleinberg
Miriam Long
Aubrey Manuel
Machelle Massey
Bryan Mershon, representing Marv Southard
Judge Michael Nash
Ron Randolph, representing Jon Gundry
Bruce Saltzer
Fabricio Segovia

Guest: Alex Johnson, Second Supervisorial District

Chair Mónica García brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., welcoming everyone and noting that Marv Southard is chairing California Social Work Education Center board and committee meetings in Oakland today. She also congratulated John Deasy, who attended the last ECC meeting, on being appointed the incoming superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

García thanked Donald Blevins and the Probation Department for their generosity in providing refreshments for today's meeting, and expressed appreciation to David Rattray, senior vice president of education and workforce development at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, for arranging the venue.

The ECC is beginning the new year with some important changes in leadership, García announced. On January 1, ECC director Carrie Miller assumed a new position within the Chief Executive Office, serving as the Acting Assistant Director of the Service Integration Branch (SIB) and overseeing the self-sufficiency and gang-prevention initiatives as well as SIB's

data/information-sharing and research and evaluation activities. Because of her many significant accomplishments on behalf of the ECC over the past six years, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors honored Miller this past Tuesday, and García extended the Council's appreciation as well for all Miller has done to make the ECC the well-respected, ground-breaking, and successful organization it is today. Educationally, foster and probation youth are much better off than they were when the council was established, and Miller is to be applauded for all she has done to achieve this.

García then welcomed Trish Ploehn, former director of the Department of Children and Family Services, to her new role as the ECC's executive director. The ECC should benefit enormously from Ploehn's deep knowledge of system youth and the departments and organizations that serve them, and Ploehn's leadership in furthering the ECC's mission to improve educational outcomes should help bring success for these youth. "It's great to have a friend on the inside," García said, "to help us do our work."

Ploehn expressed her pleasure at bringing her 30-plus years of experience in child welfare to the council. "I sat on the ECC for four years, and I know its wonderful work," she said. "But as much as has already been done, we have that much more to do." Especially given the current difficult economic climate, Ploehn wants the ECC to focus on four areas in the near future:

- **Data- and information-sharing**—The ECC is an ideal place to gather and disseminate information about educational priorities for youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
- **School-based services/academic credit recovery**—The dismal 50 percent high school graduation rate in Los Angeles County overall is routinely even lower for foster and probation youth, as academic credits are often lost when placements change. "We move these kids far too often," Ploehn said, "and we need to take a proactive stand on the whole issue of credit recovery."
- **Early education**—Young children in the child welfare system, as well as those children of youth in the juvenile justice system, need immediate connections to early education services, and parents need support to achieve optimal value from those services.
- **Advocacy**—The ECC is one of only a few organizations standing up for the importance of education to foster and probation youth, said Ploehn, "and we need to be persistent and consistent. Further, it is imperative that we include the voices of youth themselves" in identifying problems and helping with solutions.

"The ECC is an outstanding place to look at initiatives for improving the lives of children and ensure that education is threaded through them all," Ploehn concluded. "Education is a pivot point that can assist youth in their transitions back to their families, into adulthood, or out of the juvenile justice system and into the community. I'm thrilled to be here."

Educational Services at the Challenger Memorial Youth Center

Chair Garcia introduced David Sapp, a staff attorney from the American Civil Liberties Union, to provide an overview of the historic legal settlement—stemming from a lawsuit brought by the Public Counsel Law Center, the Disability Rights Legal Center, and the ACLU—that is serving as a catalyst for major educational reform at the Probation Department’s Challenger Memorial Youth Center.

One plaintiff in the lawsuit, Sapp stated, received his high school diploma from the Los Angeles County Office of Education system—used throughout the probation camp network—based on credits earned during three stints in custody at Challenger (a total of 31 months). When the young man graduated, however, he was illiterate. Documentation indicated that staff knew he couldn’t read, yet he had been passed along from grade to grade, at times being taken out of class to perform yardwork and painting duties. A second plaintiff with significant mental health and emotional issues was sent to a solitary cell in the Special Housing Unit for two months and not allowed to go to school. Despite his being a special education student and thus eligible for enhanced services, worksheets were simply shoved underneath his cell door.

“These were not isolated incidents,” Sapp said. “We have reports for years about deficiencies at Challenger from the county’s Probation Commission and from the Learning Rights Law Center, which documented problems in 2006. This lawsuit turned out to be a remarkable case, and I have to say we’ve had a phenomenal response from Probation and LACOE with regard to solving these problems. We’ve worked closely with their staff and attorneys to drive through reforms that have been needed for years, and a settlement will be presented to the court tomorrow for approval.”

A jointly retained team of seven experts in juvenile rehabilitation and education made site visits and developed recommendations for a template of comprehensive reforms at Challenger, and detailed plans were developed with attorneys for LACOE, Probation, and the plaintiffs guided by these experts. Some highlights of the plan include leadership development, sustainability, vocational training, and improvements in literacy—bringing reading specialists on staff, instituting campwide reading programs, and stocking dorms with books.

Assuming the settlement is approved by the court as expected, three of the experts will each work between 10 and 15 days a month with line staff to implement reforms and make sure they are sustained over time, and the courts will retain jurisdiction for three to four years. It is hoped that the programs and processes put into place can serve as a model. “If we can do it at Challenger,” Sapp concluded, “we can do it at every facility in the country. It’s not about the organizations involved—it’s about the young men who are supposed to be getting services. This is their last stop, and our last opportunity to get them engaged with school and job preparation. We owe it to them to provide every chance to succeed when they are released.”

In a camp environment like Challenger, said Chief Probation Officer Donald Blevins (who joined the department in April 2010, when the lawsuit was well underway), “treatment doesn’t start until good education programs are in place. When I went up to visit the place myself, I went into four classrooms. In two, good education was taking place. The other two were in chaos—in one, the kids were talking among themselves while the substitute teacher was completely disengaged, and in another, kids were wearing headphones and listening to rap music. As these kids’

guardians, we need to get them to school and make sure they're getting the right educational programs and treatment. And the on-site leadership at any facility makes all the difference in the world. The biggest progress we saw happen was when the on-site principal became engaged in making changes."

But Probation was definitely part of the problem, Blevins admitted, and he wants his staff to remove any impediments to LACOE's piece of the partnership. "When nurses showed up late to give kids their medication, for instance," he explained, "staff would get the kids to class late. These can be difficult kids to work with, and teachers have a hard time with control. We now station probation officers in classrooms to maintain security and order so the teachers can do their jobs, and we've improved the camera and security systems to record what goes on. LACOE and Probation staff are communicating better—we're meeting and talking about the kids in multidisciplinary teams at every camp. We have an action plan, and staff are signing directives saying they understand the importance of education. Things aren't perfect, but they have much improved. Most of these kids are way behind in their education because they haven't been in school. This is a golden opportunity for us to change that behavior and get them back on the right track."

A key component, continued LACOE's Ron Randolph, was Blevins's hiring of a director of school services with a background in education, who can represent Probation in collaboratively solving the problems raised in the settlement agreement. When the seven experts visited Challenger in April 2010, their report indicated some of the worst deficiencies in an education delivery system that they had ever seen. Following that report, LACOE moved quickly to see if students were getting to class and engaging in their education, and what administrative, staffing, or policy problems stood in their way. It also worked with the certificated union to expedite administrative transfers of staff members not contributing positively to the education of Challenger students.

The year prior to the lawsuit's being filed, the education program at the Probation camps had received a six-year accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Given reports from the suit's independent experts, though, LACOE has "shelved the WASC report," as Randolph put it, and begun the changes called for by the settlement agreement. When the expert team visited again last November, they were surprised at the number of improvements already visible.

- For the most part (90 percent), students are arriving to class on time, with teachers ready and waiting to teach to the California standards posted in each classroom.
- Suspensions and referrals out of class—previously done almost continually—have diminished considerably and are now done only on a for-cause basis.
- Educational transcripts and other data are being more rapidly transmitted when youth enter camps and juvenile halls.
- In the dorms, probation staff serve as 'implementers,' encouraging students to complete their homework.

- An energetic principal has made a big difference to the educational culture, and LACOE is now in the process of recruiting a long-term replacement for that position (the current individual agreed to serve only one year).
- The cooperation and collaboration between LACOE and Probation is much enhanced, with both staffs accepting education as their joint responsibility. A Committee for Education Reform is focused on dynamic change within those departments, viewing students as candidates for rehabilitation rather than simple incarceration.

These changes will be sustained, Randolph said, in part because the departments are using the Department of Justice model for auditing; policies are in place, and the audit team has the administrative backup and the data to document changes.

In the ensuing discussion, Judge Michael Nash thanked Public Counsel, the Disability Rights Legal Center, and the ACLU for bringing the suit, as he had long been aware that the quality of services at the camps, educational and otherwise, was extremely deficient. In 2004, the courts implemented a process that attempted oversight of the camp experience through regular progress reports, but LACOE proved reluctant for some time to provide educational information for those reports, and Nash had to threaten to hold the agency in contempt to deal with what he called its “distorted interpretation of Federal law” in that regard. “I’m not here to cast further aspersions,” Nash hastened to say. “There’s a lot of responsibility to go around, and much of it inures to the courts and to the lawyers. The progress report system didn’t provide sufficient oversight, but the courts have not been proactive in requiring more comprehensive information, and the attorneys involved have not been vociferous advocates, either.” Nash mentioned this because of his support of pending legislation that would open dependency courts, and his belief that delinquency courts should be opened to the public gaze as well. “We need to shine a light on what happens in those courtrooms,” he said, “so we can all see the level and quality of services being provided to our youth. It would make all of us more accountable. I strongly urge you all to contact your legislators and solicit their support to pass any legislation that would open up our courts.”

Renatta Cooper was stunned that LACOE had received a six-year WASC accreditation. “That’s the longest they give,” she said. “Many schools with far fewer problems get only a two-year pass. I think the ECC needs to lodge a formal complaint to WASC. If they had done their due-diligence, all kinds of red flags would have gone up. Everybody has to do their job for optimal education outcomes for students, and that includes WASC. That organization has tremendous responsibility and authority, and this was a misuse of their power.” Trish Ploehn agreed to work with Ron Randolph to explore possible ways to address this kind of complaint.

Bruce Saltzer asked about LACOE’s ability, outside of any settlement agreement, to remove staff who are not performing properly, and Randolph replied that such capabilities were site-specific. The teachers union has apparently been very cooperative about recognizing the need for staff changes, and under the collective bargaining agreement in force, administrative transfers can be made with sufficient justification as long as they meet certain restrictions. “I believe we will have that cooperation [with the union],” Randolph said, “if we can demonstrate clearly that there is a need and that the request is not arbitrary, discriminatory, or capricious.”

Helen Kleinberg congratulated everyone on the outcome of the lawsuit, saying that it had been a long time coming and she was sorry the situation had come to that. “I’m very concerned, though,” she added, “that mental health is not being mentioned, and no partnership there has been outlined. And probation officers standing at the door to make sure kids behave? The curriculum should be interesting enough to engage them—it shouldn’t be a police state in the classroom. Nothing about this seems very child-focused, especially in terms of mental health. The way in which probation places kids, so that the kids with the most problems end up in one camp, is another thing I didn’t hear about.”

Blevins reported that the Board of Supervisors added \$7.9 million to the budget late last year for mental health workers, and over 70 have been hired systemwide. Some of those have been assigned to Challenger and coverage is better, with mental health clinicians on site seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Bryan Mershon from the Department of Mental Health agreed that the Board’s hiring policy was very aggressive, and that more staff and funding was available for prevention and early intervention. Many students need mental health services to succeed in the classroom, Kleinberg maintained. “They can’t be kept separate.”

However positive a step forward more staff may be, David Sapp cautioned, no access to mental health services at Challenger was available to the three plaintiffs in the lawsuit, and mental health was not part of the settlement agreement. “Mental health will be a different lawsuit,” he said, “and I hope there will be no need for that. Given how seriously departmental leadership is taking this, I’m very hopeful that we can build a full array of services. This suit was not about LACOE and not about Probation. It was about the young people. The ECC represents so many stakeholders in the system, and if something isn’t working, we need feedback from everyone in the lives of these kids. I know of one instance where it took three months to get a TILP [Transitional Independent Living Plan] for a kid—it took a court order, we had to subpoena people. The system is broken from top to bottom, mostly in the interactions between different systems. There’s no malicious intent—systems are complex and difficult, with many things shrouded and secretive for reasons of privacy and confidentiality. Please call people and make a noise, because what’s happening at specific sites is often very difficult to know.”

Sapp encouraged attendees to keep their eyes open for potential recipients of another piece of the settlement agreement: tutoring and aftercare services available to youth detained at Challenger between January 12, 2008, and November 5, 2010. “These are compensatory services that will be made available,” he said. “Once there is formal approval of the settlement from the court, there will be a flurry of notices.”

An audience member commented that a Probation Commission investigation in the 1980s discovered the importance of school-site leadership and camp directors working together, suggesting that staff communication is a systemic issue. Whatever is learned at Challenger should definitely be applied to other facilities.

Strategic planning at the Los Angeles Unified School District always includes steps to “collaborate, negotiate, legislate, and litigate,” Chair García said. “The state needs to accept its responsibility of support to help kids learn, but that’s not the reality right now. Violations are everywhere, and this lawsuit challenged a piece of that. Over the past ten or twenty years, resources

have been reduced and reduced, and we're able to do less and less. Neglect becomes something you have to go to court for. I think every school district in this state would say that what they're doing is educational malpractice. The house is burning and no water is coming. Everybody knows it's wrong. How can we bring about the changes we need to see? This is the way forward—professionals focused on results.”

Mershon suggested that the Department of Mental Health report at the next ECC meeting on mental health services at Challenger.

Reducing Long-Term Foster Care: California Partners for Permanency (CP4P) Project

Last year, a Request for Proposals was released for a new Federal Presidential initiative seeking to reduce the disproportionate amount of time that African-American and Native American youth spend in foster care. Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services was asked by the state to participate with other counties in the California Partners for Permanency (CP4P) Project, a partnership of state, local, and nonprofit agencies formed to examine permanency barriers for African-American and Native American children, youth, and families, and to introduce an integrated, effective casework practice model for customized replication statewide.

The initiative does not concern itself with youth who would have reunified with their families without any additional intervention, nor is it about improving transitions for youth ageing out of the system. It is also not about the activities that jurisdictions would have been undertaking in any case as part of their program improvement plans. The initiative *does* concentrate on:

- Reducing lengths of stay in care
- Applying a 'laser focus' to achieving permanency for the population of youth who get stuck in long-term foster care and age out
- Assisting children's agencies to expand the scope of evidence-based interventions that effectively reduce time in care and achieve permanency for this target population

The five-year initiative includes a ten-month planning process, two years of early implementation in Los Angeles and three other counties, and another two years of replication in ten more counties. Los Angeles County is receiving \$580,000 in Federal funds for the planning year, with \$1 million to come for each implementation year. The two DCFS offices spearheading the initiative—Pomona and Torrance—were chosen because of the overrepresentation of children of color in the populations they serve; the Pomona office in particular, Maryam Fatemi said, has been working on disproportionality for a long time and has a good foundation to build on.

“For kids stuck in the system,” said Fatemi, “education is important. If kids are doing well with their education, that reduces their re-placements and increases the likelihood that they will achieve permanency more quickly. The ECC has made recommendations about stabilizing placements, and we are working to implement them.” The initiative's technical assistance component is looking at core practice models in various counties to see if they present a hospitable environment for the effort, and the partnership will want to interview stakeholders in education. “We look to the ECC members in particular to help with that process,” Fatemi said. A cross-site planning team will arrive in Los Angeles this spring.

Building on existing promising practices, a refinement team will make recommendations on how to integrate those elements into a single casework practice model that includes:

- Family finding and engagement
- Team decision-making and permanency teaming
- Integrated mental and behavioral health assessments and treatment
- Innovative family, caregiver, and child/youth engagement strategies
- Post-permanency supports

The desired outcomes of the initiative are to:

- Reduce long-term foster care, specifically among African-American and Native American children, youth, and families
 - Reduce the number of foster-care entries
 - Increase the timeliness of permanent placements
 - Remove identified barriers to permanency
 - Reduce the number of placements of children in foster care
 - Reduce the number of foster-care children ageing out of the system
 - Increase the rate of father and paternal-family involvement in permanency planning
 - Remove negative incentives to adoption (allow services to follow the child after permanent placement)
- Improve child well-being specifically among African-American and Native American children, youth, and families
 - Create an integrated system of services that includes substance abuse treatment for indicated parents
 - Improve behavioral health for children by creating an integrated system of services that recognizes the impact of loss, grief, and trauma
 - Improve educational opportunities and success for children and youth in foster care
 - Reduce the number of children in foster care who exit into the criminal justice system

Bryan Mershon noted that the Federal government actually awarded two Presidential initiative grants in California, with the second being administered by the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. He offered to arrange for a presentation on that project to the ECC.

Reducing Long-Term Foster Care: Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program

Maura Harrington, chief operating officer and director of consulting at the Center for Nonprofit Management, is leading the evaluation of the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program, and presented some preliminary findings showing how permanency and educational outcomes may be interrelated.

The program—a collaboration between the First Supervisorial District, the ECC, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Chief Executive Office—began in 2008 to improve educational outcomes for foster children. DCFS social workers were outstationed in school district offices, initially in the Montebello and Pomona districts, then expanding into the Hacienda

La Puente district, to work with individual high-school-aged foster youth to increase graduation rates, improve academic performance and student retention, and identify educational advocates. Program components included assessments, core team meetings, educational case planning, referrals, the free sharing of educational records, and intensive follow-up.

Harrington's evaluation, performed in the second year of the program, looks at both quantitative and qualitative elements, and compares participants' results with those of a group of DCFS student not involved with the program. The analysis also includes interviews and focus groups with youth and staff about what was working and what could be improved.

Preliminary results found:

- The longer a student participated in the program, the better educational success that student had.
- For the 24 students who continued from year one through year two of the program, a sustained increase in grade point average was seen over three academic years.
- More than 1,000 academic credits were recovered in a single school year, program-wide.
- Program youth had higher graduation rates, higher rates of college enrollment and employment, and higher reunification rates. They also had fewer placements and better school behavior, with fewer absences and suspensions. They were in school more and getting into trouble less.

On the qualitative side, staff indicated that agencies cooperating in the program had a clear understanding of their roles, leading to a stronger partnership. Students found the social workers responsive and able to get them help right away. Students' involvement, interest, and motivation in school improved, and their participation in school activities increased. They understood how to navigate school better and enjoyed it more. Many students' home lives and relationships with parents and caregivers were also enhanced. Because they were doing better in school, friction decreased, the overall stress levels in their lives lessened, and their relationships improved.

"This is a great example of starting where the client is," Chair García commented on the program. "Personalization is very hard to do in the system. Overcrowding in schools is a challenge in general, and foster and probation youth are needy. They need a loud voice to help them deal with things."

The program is a costly one, Maryam Fatemi acknowledged; Supervisor Molina's office allocated a half-million dollars per year, but that funding is not sustainable. The next two school districts to replicate the program are experimenting with case-carrying social workers (not dedicated, program-only ones) being outstationed in schools to see if the same kind of success is reached. As caseloads focus on older teens, the educational emphasis tends to trickle down to younger children in the same family. Parents begin to better understand their rights and responsibilities and what to ask for, and are able to navigate the system more consistently.

"School district personnel are very compassionate about our kids," said program staff Angel Rodriguez. "They're interested in helping and they're asking us to identify the kids so they can provide assistance." Rodriguez believes that the most cost-effective model is to use the social workers that are in school districts already, and García wondered if the regular funds that school

districts receive for social workers might be repurposed to help these youth more effectively. Helen Kleinberg urged the inclusion of youth on probation in the program.

Special education assessment is part of the Molina program, but—with only 14 DCFS educational advocate positions responsible for covering the entire county—getting consistent screening for every one of 25,000 foster children remains a goal rather than a reality, Leslie Heimov said. Especially with budget cuts, an audience member commented, on-campus counselors are responsible for too many students and foster and probation youth in particular often have no advocates and little communication with teachers. In a way that is mindful of confidentiality, can an effective way be found to place someone on campus who can help caregivers and advocates communicate with the teachers of youngsters who have special needs, reside in group homes, and so on? When a student discovers he or she is failing at the end of the semester, that's too late, and a way to consult with teachers before then is needed. Credit recovery is also a challenge, especially since advocates for these youth are not generally the holders of their education rights.

García concluded the discussion by acknowledging that additional staff won't be hired in schools any time soon, and getting those who help students to talk to each other is vital. "Removing barriers is the ECC's calling," she said. "You can decide on each campus how to do it, but we need to encourage direct communication. This population especially is challenged by stigma, but *all* kids need something, and all teachers should be talking to the folks who can help."

Looking Ahead: Preparing for a New Strategic Plan for the ECC

Chair García called members' attention to the list in their packets of the ECC's major accomplishments during its first five years. Now that the council has achieved—or at least significantly addressed—most of the recommended actions in its original Blueprint, some directions and goals for the next five years need to be established.

To kickstart the development of this new plan of action, García asked ECC members to talk with their staff members and key stakeholders over the next two months about the strategies or actions they think are currently most needed to raise the educational achievement of system youth. Trish Ploehn urged members in particular to include youth in these discussions—where are they running into issues or problems or barriers? What are their ideas for solutions?

Members were requested to send ideas for themes, topics, or areas of work to Ploehn by the beginning of April to create a starting point for a discussion at the May meeting on major components of a new ECC strategic plan. Ploehn's e-mail address is tploehn@ceo.lacounty.gov.

Director's Report

Trish Ploehn reviewed highlights of her written director's report, attached to and made part of these minutes.

- Judge Michael Nash's **Truancy Task Force** began meeting in December to discuss the major countywide problem of reducing 'daytime loitering,' also known as truancy. Its next meeting is scheduled for noon on Monday, February 7, in the judges' lounge on the second floor of the Children's Court; all are welcome. Nash thanked ECC consultant Sharon Watson

for her assistance with the task force, which is studying the various truancy-reduction efforts going on in the county, including those that are school- or community-based and those involving law enforcement. “This is a long-term project,” Nash said. “We hope to identify some low-hanging fruit, if you will, pull it off the tree, and start to make a difference. There isn’t one magic solution. We’ll report more as we begin to make progress.”

- Also in December, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established **youth self-sufficiency** as an additional countywide goal, particularly for the approximately 1,800 youth who continue to age out of foster care and the juvenile justice system at age 18 each year. Although Ploehn acknowledged that no human being is entirely self-sufficient, connections are especially important to young people in the system. They need to be prepared—with or without adult support—to be successful.
- The Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) has agreed to host the second **resource fair** for foster and probation youth on June 28, 2011, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. at The California Endowment. In consideration of the 750-person maximum allowed by the facility, Bruce Saltzer said that three shifts were being planned to involve as many youth and caregivers as possible, focusing on them rather than caseworkers this time around. A particular emphasis will be on helping youth get copies of vital documents such as Social Security cards, California IDs, and so on. Saltzer hopes that ACHSA will be able to host the resource fair regularly. To be put on the mailing list for resource fair information, please contact Saltzer at bsaltzer@achsa.net.

Member/Staff Updates

Chair García reminded everyone that absentee ballots for the March 8 election will be out next week, and another important election is scheduled for June. “We need to make sure that civic participation from our populations increases,” she said.

Public Comment

- Kristi Lopez from Assemblymember Anthony Portantino’s office announced AB 181, legislation co-authored by Portantino and Darrell Steinberg and sponsored by the California Youth Connection that enumerates 13 specific mental health rights for foster youth—to receive services, to interview providers, to retain a therapist if moved to a different county, and so on. Fact sheets were available on the back resources table.
- Portantino’s fourth annual foster youth town hall is scheduled for May 7, 2011, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at All Saints Church in Pasadena. All are welcome to attend.
- A tour of Verbum Dei school in Watts will take place on February 8 at 11:00 a.m. The campus serves primarily low-income African-American and Latino students—much the same demographic as many foster youth—and currently has 150 student slots available. Verbum Dei has a record of graduating 100 percent of its students into colleges and universities, and offers an extensive work/study program in various professional environments. Scholarships are provided to cover tuition costs and fees for all students requiring this assistance.

- A conference on increasing effective mental health in communities—Education and Employment: Cornerstones of Mental Health—will take place on February 15 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Southwest College.
- Eugenia Wilson encouraged those helping youth transition back to foster homes or family homes to work with community-based organizations to secure the services those youth need.

Next Meeting

The next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, May 26, 2011

9:30 a.m.

Location to be announced

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.



Executive Director's Report

February 3, 2011

Truancy Task Force

The ECC hosted the second meeting of Judge Nash's newly convened Truancy Task Force (TTF) on December 1, 2010, bringing together key players from the juvenile court, law enforcement, legal community, county departments, schools and community organizations to adopt effective, countywide strategies to reduce/prevent truancy. Currently, of the approximately 180,000 citations issued to youth each year, 30–35 % are for 'daytime loitering,' or truancy, and the Informal Juvenile and Traffic Courts handle about 30,000 truancy cases annually. A main goal of the TTF is to look at approaches that keep truant youth out of the court system and that, in the meantime, provide useful tools for dependency and delinquency court judges. Task force members began their work by reviewing local law enforcement approaches to truancy and will next review school-based strategies, followed by community-based solutions. For more information about the truancy task force, please contact ECC consultant Sharon Watson at sharonla12@aol.com.

Self-Sufficiency

In response to a motion introduced by Mayor Michael Antonovich on December 7, 2010, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established "Youth Self-Sufficiency" as an additional countywide goal. Although the county has made significant strides towards achieving improved outcomes for children, youth and families served by Probation and the Department of Children and Family Services, approximately 1,800 youth continue to age out of care at age 18 each year. The motion asserts that, in order to become truly self-sufficient and productive adults, youth must attain support and success in the outcome areas of permanency/housing, social and emotional well-being, education and career/workforce readiness. The county's Chief Executive Office has been working closely with county departments, advocates and stakeholders to develop strategies and an integrated plan to respond to this motion, due back to the Board of Supervisors by February 7, 2011.

School Superintendents' Meeting

The ECC hosted its semi-annual education dialogue with school superintendents on November 1, 2010, as part of its ongoing effort to provide opportunities for school districts, county departments and the juvenile court to share perspectives about successful ways to address the educational needs of foster and probation youth. At this meeting, the group discussed how to more effectively provide efficient transitions to appropriate school placements for youth exiting juvenile justice institutions, possible milestones for the education target area of the countywide self-sufficiency initiative for system youth, the juvenile court's efforts to develop new discharge protocols to monitor psychotropic medication used by youth exiting camps, school-based truancy/dropout prevention efforts and educational data-sharing.

SACWIS

With new Federal government leadership, the interpretation of what compliance with the State-wide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) means has changed significantly, leading to the State recently developing a PowerPoint presentation entitled “SACWIS: Not the Barrier You Thought.” In light of this development, the ECC is discussing with State officials ideas for electronically sharing educational data, and CDSS has asked the ECC to prepare an Advanced Planning Document that proposes linking the California Department of Education and DCFS data systems electronically. CDSS is also interested in having further conversations about electronically linking other data systems within Los Angeles County. The ECC is working with the County’s Commission for Children and Families, Chief Information Office, and the Children’s Action Network on developing a plan for connecting several of these systems and minimizing the amount of data entry duplication that currently exists.

2011 ACHSA Resource Fair

The Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA) has agreed to host the second resource fair for DCFS and probation youth, their caregivers and caseworkers, at the California Endowment on June 28, 2011. This event will be modeled after the ECC’s very successful Resource Fair, held in 2008, that provided 80+ exhibitors offering everything from arts and literacy programs to legal services, housing, jobs, mental health, child care and—perhaps most importantly—on-site applications for vital documents.

Education Opportunities

The Inner City Education Foundation (ICEF), which consists of 15 elementary, middle and high schools throughout South Los Angeles, has offered to give priority to students from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems for immediate entry into their school system, at no cost. These schools have produced some outstanding outcomes, including a 97% graduation rate and significantly high percentages of youth who go on to attend and graduate from college. ICEF schools have some immediate openings for the new semester which starts on February 7, 2011, and would very much like to consider Probation and DCFS youth for admission. Should county department staff or ECC constituents know of youth who might be appropriate for this opportunity, please contact Caprice Young, ICEF CEO, or Debra Price, ICEF lead for new students, at 323-293-9092. You may also contact the ECC directly if you have questions or would like more details.