



Education Coordinating Council

October 6, 2011

9:30 a.m.

Los Angeles County Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 140
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012

Present: Allison Bajracharya
Lisa Campbell, representing Donald Blevins
Carol Clem
Renatta Cooper
Mónica García
René Gonzalez, representing John Deasy
Helen Kleinberg
Aubrey Manuel
Eric Marts, representing Philip Browning
Fernando Meza, representing Richard Martinez
Judge Michael Nash
Ron Randolph, representing Arturo Delgado
Carol Richardson, representing Leslie Heimov
Fabricio Segovia
Marvin J. Southard
Rick Tebbano, representing Christopher Steinhauser
Virginia Ward-Roberts, representing Karen E. Frison

Guests: Judge Donna Groman, Delinquency Court
Alex Johnson, Second Supervisorial District
Referee Sherri Sobel, Dependency Court

Chair Mónica García brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., welcoming everyone and noting that Arturo Delgado is attending a conference at Georgetown, and Philip Browning—the new interim director for the Department of Children and Family Services—is meeting with board deputies this morning. García thanked DCFS for sponsoring today’s refreshment costs, and congratulated Renatta Cooper on her election as board president for the Pasadena Unified School District. Garcia then asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves.

ECC Accomplishments for 2010–2011

Copies of the ECC’s annual progress report were included in member packets, and Garcia highlighted some of the most important achievements.

- The ECC completed a comprehensive planning process and adopted an updated strategic plan with five priority areas and eight corresponding outcomes.

- The Department of Children and Family Services implemented an innovative and user-friendly electronic Head Start referral system to identify and connect three- and four-year-old children under its supervision to early education programs. In its first month of operation, social workers referred over 450 children to LACOE Head Start. DCFS is now implementing the system countywide, and in just four months has referred over 1,100 children to Head Start programs.
- The Association of Community Human Service Agencies successfully spearheaded a county-wide youth resource fair this summer for over 600 DCFS and Probation youth and their caregivers, modeled after the ECC's first resource fair in 2008.
- The Los Angeles Unified School District's Beyond the Bell staff contacted over 1,750 families of foster youth, successfully enrolling over 500 foster youth in various Beyond the Bell summer programs and services.
- Approximately 170 foster youth who were either college-bound or already enrolled in college received free laptops and participated in computer training camps offered by DCFS's Youth Development Services.
- In partnership with DCFS, the First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian Scholars Summer Academy launched an outstanding five-and-a-half-week college immersion program this summer. Over 30 incoming ninth-grade foster youth were housed on campus and matched with mentors, completed academic courses for college credit, and participated in enrichment activities. These students will continue to meet monthly during the next academic year, and a new cohort of foster youth will be recruited in May 2012.
- With the support of several members of Judge Michael Nash's Truancy Task Force, the Los Angeles chief of police issued a new directive instructing police officers to enforce truancy and curfew laws in a manner that considers the spirit of the law instead of just its strict enforcement. They are directed to not generally cite students during the first hour of classes but instead help get them back to school.

Mental Health Services Act: Prevention and Early Intervention Update

According to Department of Mental Health director Marv Southard, three layers of implementation are underway with prevention and early intervention funds from the Mental Health Services Act.

- The first, Southard said, could be characterized as "the prevention of economic disaster to community agencies." Because of cuts in basic funding—and therefore in matches from EPSDT (the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program) and Medicaid—most California counties were forced to make extreme cuts in core programs. "Instead," Southard said, "Los Angeles County worked with the provider network to use prevention and early intervention MHSA funds to train and put into place evidence-based practices for children, mostly around trauma intervention. This was a crash-course situation for agencies—some did very well, but it took others time to ramp up, periods during which they couldn't bill because they couldn't provide the services yet. Overall, though, the process has been a huge success. We preserved basic programs for children despite the economic downturn, and

we improved evidence-based practices meeting kids' specific needs, particularly in areas like trauma where they had not before been systematically addressed.”

- The second layer is a \$2.5 million school-based health center initiative, being planned with the offices of the five county supervisors. “Divided by five, that’s not a lot of money—only half a million—unless it’s matched with EPSDT and Medicaid,” Southard acknowledged. “But leveraging that means that each district will have about \$3 million. Right now, we’re seeing what the individual supervisors have in mind for where and how those monies should be invested. I think there will be strong programs in each district, but their timing may be affected by external factors.” The center in one district, for example, is tied in to a facility that is still under construction, while elsewhere, the plan is for existing school-based health clinics to be better coordinated.
- Thirdly, more than \$50 million in MHSA funds dedicated to prevention have been set aside for new agencies that have never contracted within the mental health system before. “These are agencies that know how to assist families with child abuse issues,” Southard explained, “but lack the expertise or skills to offer a fully medicalized program—dealing with Medi-Cal billing, et cetera. We’ve been asked to slow down our process so that a number of child abuse prevention agencies that are losing funding for a variety of reasons can get included on the master agreement list and be permitted to respond to the Request for Services.” Because of this delay in the release of the RFS, Southard said, more grants—at about \$100,000 each—should ultimately be available. (The relatively low amount was chosen deliberately to avoid triggering procurement requirements that would demand a major proposal-writing process and much paperwork from these generally smaller agencies.)

Helen Kleinberg hopes the new services will be connected to schools, early childhood programs, and the Department of Children and Family Services, and Southard explained that connections would be determined by the providers who end up being selected for these grants and the structure of the evidence-based practices they choose to offer. “Many successful providers are connected with already existing networks,” he said, “and our goal is to continue that. We have a full-time intern, in fact, working with First 5 LA to look at opportunities for coinvestments with its place-based activities and our prevention grants.”

Jacquelyn McCroskey asked if the Policy Roundtable for Child Care might facilitate a conversation around making sure that these grants are distributed equitably in geographic areas, etc. “We expect hundreds of applications,” Southard responded, “and we’re very open to input on the best and most proper ranking, since we want the implementation to be as successful as possible.” Anyone interested in volunteering to sit on a grant-screening panel was encouraged to contact Southard’s office.

In answer to Mónica Garcia’s question about whether these services are targeted to foster and probation youth, Southard said that the MHSA specifies “high-need youth.” The majority of evidence-based practices involved are aimed either at strengthening families (not necessarily with youth as the target) or at the under-five population, preventing child abuse. Nearly every child in the Los Angeles Unified School District could be considered ‘at risk,’ Garcia maintained, and she hopes opportunities will exist for all children in need to get services.

Southard further noted that a significant number of the prison population now being realigned from state to county supervision are women with children, and a primary motivating factor for those individuals' changing their lives is to reconnect and reunify with their families. "We're hoping we can put in place supports and interventions specifically for that population," Southard said, "creating opportunities for safe family reunification in ways that build continuity for kids. This is the subtext for the whole returning-parolees thing, but it's not spoken of very much."

When asked about the possible effects of the governor's recent transfer of alcohol, drug, and mental health Medi-Cal responsibilities directly to the Department of Health Care Services, Southard said that from the county's perspective, the reassignment cuts out the middleman of another department. "Health Care Services is more efficient, anyway," he commented, "so that part of the realignment is all good."

Judicial Efforts to Support and Enforce Youth Educational Achievement

Judge Michael Nash briefly reviewed the three divisions of the county's juvenile court system:

- Dependency court (20 courts), with about 26,000 children under its jurisdiction
- Delinquency court (28 courts), with about 20,000 youth on probation
- Informal juvenile and traffic court (12 courts), which hears upwards of 150,000 citations a year, many for 'daytime loitering,' or truancy

"Our sixty courts deal with a couple of hundred thousand youth and families every year—it's the largest system I know of," Nash said. "As presiding judge, I have administrative responsibility over all three divisions. Unfortunately, there's no magic wand to fix everything that can go wrong, but I surround myself with people who are smarter, more creative, and more energetic than I am, and you'll hear from a couple of them later this morning."

- A section of the ECC's progress report presents information about the **Truancy Task Force**, which has been gathering information since the beginning of the year on different ways to improve school attendance. "By getting everyone together," Nash said, "we've learned things and created communication between entities that haven't historically talked to one another. With the help of the folks on the Task Force, we're looking at a major overhaul of how we do business in the informal juvenile and traffic court, and will have rewritten the manual by next year. The Task Force meets again next week, when we'll be brainstorming things to recommend for Los Angeles County."
- A **psychotropic medication committee** has been in operation at the court for some time, developing protocols for the approval of those medications for foster and probation youth, and also for monitoring their use. "We've made tremendous progress on this," Nash said. "We still have a long way to go, but I feel comfortable saying that we've done more on this issue in Los Angeles County than in any other court system in the U.S. Our focus now is on making sure that continuity in medication is maintained when kids change placements—which still happens far too frequently. I want to offer kudos to the Probation Department, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the departments of Mental Health, Children and Family Services, and Health Services for their help with that."

As the committee studied the continuity of medication when young people leave juvenile hall, members were disturbed to find that no consistent discharge process was in place throughout the different facilities. “We created a **discharge process from the juvenile halls** that’s been in effect since April,” Nash said, “and it seems to be working well. One key component, besides maintaining the continuity of any medication, is to make sure that youth leave with at least an informal copy of their education records, and that a formal transcript and everything else follows them within a few days.”

- When youth ‘**cross over**’ from the dependency system to the delinquency system—when foster children commit crimes and are put on probation, in other words—Welfare and Institutions Code section 241.1 has mandated communication between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems since 1997. A few years ago, the courts began a pilot project to help upgrade that process and include the education piece missing from the original assessment.

A joint assessment is now required from a multidisciplinary team consisting of representatives from DCFS, Probation, and Mental Health, along with an education advocate—from the Learning Rights Legal Center for the first few years of the team approach, and now from DCFS’s Education Consultant Unit—who gathers information regarding the youth’s education and makes recommendations to the multidisciplinary team and the courts as to what youth need. “This started as a pilot in Pasadena and then expanded to the Eastlake facility,” said Nash, “which means that we have eight more delinquency locations to bring on board. Five will be added by October 17, and we hope by early January to have all delinquency courts using this same process.”

- For the past two and a half years, a court group has been developing guidelines for **attorneys representing youth in the delinquency system**, and is now a week away from distributing a 75-page draft for comment. “There’s a lot of good stuff in that document,” Nash said, “and when it’s rolled out, it should improve the quality of representation in delinquency, including how we meet the educational needs of children.”

Dependency Court Nash introduced **Referee Sherri Sobel**, a referee in dependency court for the past 15 years and chair of that court’s education committee, which has introduced an innovative 317(e) panel of court-appointed advocates for youth having issues with the school system—built on the premise that Welfare and Institutions Code section 317(e) requires courts to take whatever appropriate action is necessary to fully protect the interests of a child. “There’s been a hundred percent success rate with that program,” Nash said, “and it’s spread to the delinquency system. It’s a terrific project.”

Sobel began her advocacy for the educational needs of foster children when she took the bench in Los Angeles, and expressed her appreciation for Nash’s support and that of Terry Friedman, Nash’s predecessor as presiding judge of the juvenile court. “Many people in this room have been here from the beginning,” Sobel said, “even before Miriam Krinsky from the Children’s Law Center said we should have an education summit. Five hundred people attended, and from that event came the ECC—and it’s still growing, proving that the torch can be passed.”

Sobel reported on the dependency court education committee’s activities in several areas.

- The 317(e) panel that Nash mentioned consists of lawyers from outside the system who assist families in getting their children's educational needs met—mostly, though not solely, to do with special education. So far nearly 400 cases have gone through to state court, the Ninth Circuit, and Federal court, “and we've won everywhere,” Sobel said. “We have a great group of more than forty attorneys, and we want to keep on expanding.” Judge Donna Groman from the delinquency court now serves as the panel's co-chair.
- A study center has been established at the Edelman Children's Court through which California State University Los Angeles interns in education or social work serve as tutors for older children, helping with schoolwork while they wait for court appearances.
- A school-to-prison pipeline subcommittee has been formed.
- A 3632 subcommittee was just put together to work on assembling community resources now that school districts have inherited from the state the administration of student mental health services.
- The Children's Law Center has assigned a fellow to work on school expulsions and getting information on them to the courts fast. “Kids with IEPs [Individualized Education Programs],” Sobel said, “especially need to get continuances quickly.”
- The committee is working on transitions for older crossover youth and involving them in Cal State's Court Scholars program.
- “I've always believed that education begins at a child's birth and stops when we don't have them any more,” Sobel said. “We've been working for two years on a zero-to-three protocol to assist parents with child development using a drug-court model. Service providers meet a couple of times a month with parents who are trying to get their kids back quickly. Literacy for parents, and job literacy, are both tremendously important. Having a job helps you provide for your kids and gives you self-esteem, too.” Checklists of developmental milestones are provided by specialists the group works with who are professionals in the field.
- On October 14, Sobel will meet with the Long Beach superintendent of schools and a local group there to talk about truancy issues and young people in preschool programs.
- This afternoon, she will meet with Dr. Astrid Heger and representatives from TIES for Families (Training, Intervention, Education, and Services for Families) at UCLA, an interdisciplinary, university-based program that works in collaboration with the public child welfare and mental health systems. Its program of reflective parenting allows minor mothers with children to meet together to learn parenting skills, become friends, work on education elements such as reading, and address issues like family planning and domestic violence. “All of this is education,” Sobel concluded. “Unless we raise the level of parenting, whatever we do for the kids will be half-assed—pardon my language.”

Delinquency Court Nash then introduced **Judge Donna Groman** from the delinquency court, who started on the dependency court bench in 1990 after already being one of the most experienced lawyers in that system. She then became a juvenile appellate lawyer, and progressed

through referee and commissioner positions until she was elected judge. Now at the Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center, Groman is the lead judge in Los Angeles County's delinquency courts. "I've told her to work on whatever she wants," Nash said. "She's doing a fabulous job."

Groman thanked Nash "for the opportunity to do things I think are important," as she put it, and also expressed appreciation to Sobel for an immersion in education law. "For delinquency youth," Groman said, "education is the key to rehabilitation. Research strongly shows that removing youth from their families and schools and incarcerating them is more harmful than it is beneficial. Without school stability and appropriate assessments and services—along with strong parent participation—kids don't have a chance. We're currently focusing on each of those subjects. And when it is necessary for kids to be removed from their homes and put into probation camps or other placements, a smooth transition back home needs to be ensured or we've lost all the time we've spent."

Moving into the delinquency court from serving as a lawyer and bench officer in the dependency court brought Groman into a very different culture. "In delinquency, it's extremely common for youth not to be going to school—I was amazed," she said. "If we then put them in juvenile hall for thirty days, they're worse off afterward than they were before. We need to look at the root causes of problems, not just sanction these kids."

Judges need to spend time asking questions about the youth's education at the very beginning of the court case, and the delinquency education committee has developed a questionnaire that judges use at that first hearing, asking about what school the student attends, grade level, and, should the youth require special education services, if his or her IEP is current. "Parents often don't understand that you need to get a new IEP every year," Groman said. "We also talk to the parents. They're not represented by counsel in delinquency court, but we really need to engage them in dialogue. I'd love to change the system to provide more support for parents, but unfortunately, there aren't funds for that."

In addition, when a young person comes to court with a non-parent caretaker, judges are obliged to determine the legal relationship between the two, and the details behind the situation. Some caretakers have had children all their lives, but still lack legal documentation. "We need to know who the holder of education rights should be," Groman explained. "If the parents' rights should be limited, who should be appointed? A relative caregiver affidavit may also need to be distributed, so they can get assistance with medical and education issues. All that needs to be done at the first hearing. At disposition or sentencing hearings, we can delve further into the child's needs and the evaluations to be conducted and who conducts them, but the legal status of the relationship needs to be established first. Lisa [Campbell, from the Probation Department] shares my passion for legal guardianships, and the delinquency court can process those and arrange for adoptions. We create legal relationships whenever possible. But if we close cases with kids continuing to live in relationships that have no legal stature, there's a lot we can't do."

The delinquency education committee is also working on other initiatives.

- A panel of community volunteers is being recruited and trained to serve as education rights holders for delinquency youth with no parents, especially those who have crossed over from foster care. "We don't have CASAs [Court-Appointed Special Advocates] in delinquency," Groman said, "but this is an opportunity to create a 'mini CASA' for education rights. We

have twenty-eight volunteers now—one of them is [ECC member] Aubrey Manuel—and we've met with LACOE to work out a process. In the camps and juvenile halls, they know they need an education rights holder to sign students' IEPs, and we want a system where they know who to contact immediately.

“This is different than when schools appoint a surrogate who doesn't know the youth or the family,” Groman went on. “These education rights holders are familiar with the child and stay on to make sure IEPs are carried through. Ultimately, I'd like to expand this panel so that parents themselves can learn how to exercise their education-rights responsibilities, especially since the majority of kids in the delinquency system live at home. We need to strengthen parents' ability to work with the schools—we all know it can be difficult to get services or to even know what to ask for. I want parents to take on those responsibilities, and I'd love the volunteer panel to be their mentors.”

- Public Counsel hosts an education clinic at an office close to the courts every other week to help youth with education issues, and to assist attorneys in completing paperwork for 317(e) advocacy. Groman expressed appreciation to Ariel Wander and her staff.
- In camp-to-community transitions, a very strong relationship now exists between LACOE, Probation, and the Department of Mental Health with regard to students getting their transcripts when they leave camp. A dozen or so school districts are active in helping with transitions—including the Los Angeles Unified School District, whose new policy on the matter was included in member packets—but Groman encouraged the remainder of the 81 districts in the county to provide contact information and a list of available services.

Multidisciplinary teams—involving both camp and after-care probation officers, LACOE, and, in pilot-program areas, LAUSD—meet 45 days prior to release to create a plan for the school the youth will attend, including drug counseling, after-school activities, employment opportunities, and other resources as needed. “We need to know what's already out there,” Groman said. “If the school district already has an employment program, for instance, then the multidisciplinary team doesn't need to wrack its brains to find one.”

- The Los Angeles County Juvenile Re-Entry Council is a merger of the Camp-To-Community Task Force and the Probation Youth Community Transition Project SORT team, and Groman called members' attention to the handout in meeting packets for further information. She thanked Vincent Holmes in the Chief Executive Office for his help with coordinating the council, and invited interested ECC members to participate.
- Groman reported that Dave Mitchell is taking a strong lead with Probation's Placement Bureau, which deals with youth who are sent not to camp but rather to residential treatment facilities as a result of drug or mental health issues. A probation/placement provider summit is scheduled for December 19 and a re-entry process for youth in placement is being piloted at Rancho San Antonio. When youth are ready to return home, a court hearing ensures that a plan exists for schooling and access to community-based services and functional family therapists—scaled-down wraparound services, in other words.

- The Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center ThinkTank has been meeting since 2007 as a collaborative body that includes attorneys, judges, probation officers, Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselors, special education advocates, law enforcement, community service providers, and others. A handout on the ThinkTank appeared in member packets.
- A project has just begun to divert school-based arrests away from the courts. “Eleven- and twelve-year-olds charged with school fights or threatening teachers used to be taken care of within the schools,” Groman said. “But with zero-tolerance policies in place, those situations have been shifted to the courts. We need to find positive behavior supports to strengthen the way that schools deal internally with those offenses, especially with younger kids. Research shows that the first time you send a kid into the juvenile justice system, it opens the gates to his or her further involvement, both as a juvenile and in the adult system.” The project includes the District Attorney’s office, the Public Defender, private panel attorneys, Probation, and schools.
- Just as parent participation in the lives of youth who are on probation and living at home is being encouraged, Groman sees parent involvement as essential when young people are in foster placements and at probation camp. “We need to do a better job providing transportation and teleconferencing,” she said, “and getting parents involved in meetings. Planning for re-entry and reunification starts the minute that kid walks into placement.”

Discussion “As you can hear, there’s a lot of good stuff going on,” Nash said, “and every little bit helps. But I don’t want anyone walking out of here today with the impression that we’re somehow satisfied or smug about what we’ve done, because that is not the case. I like to live and work by the credo that Martin Luther King espoused—as long as there’s disease rampant and people can’t be expected to live past age twenty-eight or so, I can’t be satisfied even though I just got a great checkup from the Mayo Clinic. We’re all interdependent. We can’t be satisfied until we know that everyone we work with gets the best of what we offer. We’ve got forty-six thousand kids under court jurisdiction, and we need more good outcomes. If we could clone Sherri and Donna forty times over, we might get closer. As it is, we’ll keep plugging away together.”

Helen Kleinberg congratulated Nash, Sobel, and Groman for their remarkable achievements. “This is the way the work gets done,” she said, “Going with your passion and not being stopped by the people in charge. It’s an extraordinary model. People actually praise you, you know, at the probation camps. That’s pretty unusual.”

- A former youth offender in the audience encouraged communication among child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice. As a teen, she had no mother and was neglected and hungry when she stole two packages of bacon and eggs to feed herself and her sister, yet because no one investigated their home situation, she was automatically placed into the juvenile justice system when arrested. “In lots of ways, kids who are probation youth first don’t have an equal playing field with foster youth,” she said. “They can never go to a foster home. They’re not emotionally disturbed, but they’re hungry and have to clothe themselves—they have the same issues of poverty and neglect. It’s very simple to ask why they were arrested. They shouldn’t be traumatized by other issues.”

Judge Nash acknowledged that protocols are now in place that handle this situation better than they did some years ago. “Typically, however, we don’t see kids who start out in delin-

quency and then get into dependency. It's usually the other way around," he said. "But we're aware of the issue. Our protocols don't work as well as they should, but it's on our agenda." Probation officers are now better trained in interviewing young people to disclose those issues, Judge Groman said, and the new guidelines for delinquency attorneys should also ensure that discussions go beyond criminal issues into the young person's living circumstances. Another audience member strongly urged further training for probation officers, who seem not open to offering services to youth.

- "In this world of LiveScan background checks being done for schools, employment, and even volunteering," Marv Southard remarked, "it seems as if expunging something in the record doesn't really mean much. It can often pop up as an 'unknown offense,' which can sometimes seem worse than the real offense was. Is there a way to approach past offenses so they can be more thoroughly eradicated? A mistake when you're eighteen or nineteen can affect your life chances forever unless we find some way of doing something."
- A number of mildly mentally retarded (MMR) children in special education are held to an education standard they can't meet, and another audience member suggested further training around that issue. Michael Gray reported that, following a meeting with Referee Sobel, 22 DCFS employees are in the pipeline to be trained on those issues.
- Kleinberg raised concerns as to whether or not young people have a choice in what school they go to after leaving probation camp. "Sometimes they're facing issues like gang territory and other dangers," she said, "and they can be very frightened about it." All youth should be participating in the multidisciplinary teams that create their transition plans, Groman responded, and the goal is that they are comfortable enough to speak up about this issue either prior to or during those meetings.
- Kleinberg also hears from camp probation officers that they sometimes believe 'this kid shouldn't be here'—in other words, that camp is not a proper placement. "How can the system re-examine that if the kid is not faring well?" she asked. The child's attorney or probation officer can approach the court, Groman said, and court orders can be changed. Carol Clem added that a social worker from the Public Defender's office circulates among the camps and can refer cases; she speaks with camp directors regularly and can make those connections.
- Lisa Campbell thanked Trish Ploehn and Judge Nash for their support for permanency within the delinquency system, saying that the adoptions the Probation Department has arranged would not have occurred without them. "These kids aren't faring well anywhere because they don't feel loved," Campbell said, "but they have such hope now because of the media-based recruitment we're doing, and it's all because of you guys."

Executive Director's Report

Trish Ploehn's executive director's report appeared in member packets and is attached to and made part of these minutes. She asked several people to highlight specific efforts.

- Helen Kleinberg chairs the ECC's strategic planning work group, which is focusing on the implementation of several elements of the plan.

- ✓ DCFS and LAUSD are discussing monthly data matches.
- ✓ The early childhood component of the Strengthening Families Program, an internationally recognized parenting and family strengthening curriculum, is being considered to train parents and relative caregivers on education issues. Kathy Malaske-Samu from the Office of Child Care said that county departments and partner organizations are working on the approach.
- ✓ Kleinberg expressed appreciation to the Association of Community Human Service Agencies for taking the lead on the resource fair, and hopes they will do another one next year.
- ✓ The group has discussed the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program and what has been learned from it, with an eye to implementing it countywide.
- ✓ The group is monitoring the 35 recommendations made to improve the Challenger Memorial Youth Center and keeping abreast of education reforms in the rest of the probation camps.

The work group's goal is to continue to meet and report to the larger ECC body.

- Debra Duardo from the Los Angeles Unified School District reported on the youth forum sponsored by the Truancy Task Force, which she characterized as “an amazing opportunity to hear from youth who have experienced ticketing for loitering or truancy.” Participants expressed concerns about the emotional and financial impact of those tickets, about being treated with disrespect and criminalized for trying to make their way to school—sometimes even being cited while on campus or at the entrance—and about their fear of causing their parents to miss a day of work to go to court. They saw little sense in the process, especially since a court appearance causes them to miss still more school. “They did take responsibility,” Duardo stated, “but they were definitely advocating to change the system. They don’t want any more kids put on the pathway to prison, and they want more support to be in school.”

“We’ve instructed the courts to dismiss those tickets when they come through,” Judge Nash said, “and we told folks at the event that was our intent. LAUSD has already changed its ticketing policy and there’s a proposed change to come before the Los Angeles City Council, too. We’re moving in the right direction.”
- Ploehn called members’ attention to the legal-sized document in the meeting packet summarizing actions on self-sufficiency to be taken by twelve county departments, and thanked Carrie Miller for her leadership on this initiative.
- Last year, language was added to all dependency court minute orders allowing the sharing of educational records among the 81 school districts in Los Angeles County, the court system, and the Department of Children and Family Services. “We promised we’d do the same thing for delinquency,” Miller said, “and that language has now been finalized. It now needs only to be added to the courts’ computer system, and we can say that we have solved FERPA [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act] issues for both DCFS and probation youth.”

“Unfortunately,” Nash remarked, “without the electronic transmission of records from school districts to county departments, the language itself accomplishes little, and we’re still not satisfied. However, this is a good first step.”

Member/Staff Updates

Aubrey Manuel announced that Patrick Hirsch, a fellow from the Children’s Law Center who started in August, made a presentation to the Foster Parents of Los Angeles County last Thursday. A board deputy in attendance was very impressed, and a meeting with the supervisor is being arranged.

Public Comment

- Tony Walker from St. Anne’s expressed appreciation to Marv Southard and Robin Kay from the Department of Mental Health for what he termed a “transformation” in that department’s collaboration with the provider community. Walker also invited everyone to St. Anne’s annual meeting on November 9, when the special guest will be the newly appointed Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles, José Gomez, speaking about children’s issues.
- Kathy Malaske-Samu announced an early childhood development symposium on November 10, “Bridging the Gap Between Science and Policy,” sponsored by Casey Family Programs and featuring Dr. Jack Shonkoff from Harvard University. A flyer was included in member packets.
- Jermaine Harris, executive director of Black Family United, a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening black families, announced the availability of *African American Identity*, a guidebook for parents, mentors, and teachers for discussions with African-American youth. The Long Beach Unified School District uses the publication in its curriculum, and Harris suggested ordering it online and photocopying it for young people with whom attendees work. The organization’s web address is <http://www.blackfamilyunited.org>.

Next Meeting

The next ECC meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, February 2, 2012
9:30 a.m.
Location to be determined.

There being no further public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.



Executive Director's Report

October 6, 2011

ECC Strategic Planning Workgroup

The first ECC Strategic Planning Implementation Workgroup meeting took place on August 16, 2011. Members reviewed current progress toward the eight outcomes specified in the newly updated ECC strategic plan, prioritized activities, and identified opportunities to work together to meet our goals. The workgroup will continue to meet bi-monthly in order to monitor the implementation of our strategic plan and provide input and support. The next meeting will take place in November 2011.

Caregiver Placement Agreement and Increasing Parent/Caregiver Involvement in Youth's Education

The ECC is working with DCFS and the California Department of Social Services to revise caregiver placement agreements for foster homes, foster family agencies, and group homes in order to include school enrollment and attendance requirements. Additionally, the ECC is looking for opportunities to promote and increase parent and caregiver involvement in system youth's education. If you know of any existing trainings, activities, or current efforts that may be leveraged to help attain this goal, please send this information and any additional feedback to Helen Chavez at hchavez@ceo.lacounty.gov.

Minute Order Language for Probation Youth

Last year, the ECC successfully added language to dependency court minute orders that allowed for the sharing of education records with DCFS, the Juvenile Court, and attorneys. Building upon this achievement, the ECC is now working with the Probation Department and Delinquency Court to begin including language in minute orders that will allow an exchange of educational information between the courts, schools, and the Probation Department.

Youth Education and Employment Conference

As part of the Countywide Youth Self-Sufficiency Initiative, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation is implementing a special conference for foster and probation youth between the ages of 14 and 18 years on Saturday, October 15, 2011, at the Watts-Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club, located at 1339 East 120th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90059. This free event will offer education and employment workshops, keynote speakers, and access to educational advising and employment opportunities. Please help us spread the word and recruit system youth. A flyer with additional details about the conference is included in today's meeting packets. For more information about the conference, please contact Jennifer Emmsley at JEmmsley@parks.lacounty.gov.

Los Angeles County Early Development Symposium: Bridging the Gap Between Science and Policy

Casey Family Programs, in partnership with DCFS, the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care, First 5 LA, Zero to Three, the ECC, and other community partners, is implementing a symposium featuring the importance of early learning and development and its relation to child welfare, service delivery, and social policy. Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff, founding director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and an internationally renowned expert on early brain development, will be the keynote speaker at the event. The symposium will take place on Thursday, November 10, 2011, at the USC Davidson Conference Center, located at 3415 South Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90007. For more information about this event, please contact Ricardo Hernandez at rhernandez@casey.org.