

# School Attendance Task Force Meeting Summary

Children's Court  
September 11, 2012

## Attendees

*Courts:* Michael Nash

*Law enforcement:* Grant Spencer, Kristen Byrdsong

*Legal:* Jane Newman, Ruth Cusick, Alaina Mooves-Leb, Allison DiNoia

*City of Los Angeles:* Michael de la Rocha

*Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office:* Trish Ploehn

*Los Angeles County Departments:* Jennifer Hottenroth, Lauren Gase, Eloisa Gonzalez,  
Tony Kuo

*Schools:* Laurel Bear, Hector Garcia, Tiffany Brown, Debra Duardo, Jewel Forbes,  
Jennifer Gomeztrejo, Cesar Casarrubias, Arlene Quesenberry

*Community/Advocacy:* Zoë Rawson, Barbara Lott-Holland, Caneel Fraser, Kim McGill,  
Veronica Martinez, Michelle Newell, Angelica Salazar, Edenia Jones, Daniel Kealy,  
Verna Paul

*Education Coordinating Council:* Sharon Watson

## **1. Welcome and Introductions:**

Judge Michael Nash welcomed everyone and asked for self-introductions. He noted that there are a lot of good things going on in the County right now, including Family Reunification Week, School Attendance Month and Judge Teske's upcoming visit with Judge Groman's School-Based Arrest Reform Partnership. Meetings are currently occurring with key stakeholders who are involved in the petition filing process for daytime curfew and other minor violations to develop new protocols, as the burden for handling these petitions has shifted from the court (now that the IJTC has been closed) to the Probation Department. It is a slow process, with the Department currently having to deal with thousands of walk-ins from previous cases in addition to all of the new ones.

Nash is interested in hearing from Probation about how they are doing in handling the citations issued so far and will visit the juvenile day reporting center in Van Nuys next week. Zoe Rawson reported that, from the community/advocacy perspective, it is not clear what the channels are for processing petitions or whom youth advisors should talk with about what's not working. The Youth Justice Coalition offered to let Nash know what's going on from the youth's perspective.

Unfortunately, it is looking like the court may have to cut another \$55 million from its budget by July 2013, in addition to the \$30 million cut from courtrooms this year.

## **2. SATF Workgroup Reports:**

***Data and Information-Sharing:*** Jennifer Hottenroth reported that there was a great turnout for the workgroup's demonstration of San Diego's electronic, web-based, Foster Youth Student Information System (FYSIS) that was hosted by the County's Chief

Information Office (CIO) on August 22. Representatives from the juvenile court, CEO, CIO, DCFS, Probation, LACOE, LAUSD, Mental Health, County Counsel, LAPD, District Attorney and other agencies participated during the morning and afternoon sessions, with the first being a general overview of the system and the second a more in-depth presentation for IT personnel. San Diego reported that FYSIS, developed over the past several years, is working very well in that county. Having also looked at Riverside County's electronic education data-sharing system, the workgroup now has a pretty good understanding of what these systems are capable of doing and what data elements can/should be included.

SATF members agreed that it is important to move forward on developing this kind of system in Los Angeles County, and adopted the resolution developed by the workgroup.

Nash asked about the relationship of this kind of system to what DCFS is currently doing to share information with LAUSD, and suggested that this broader discussion should occur in the Education Coordinating Council. Clearly, the ECC and SATF need to coordinate on how best to proceed, with the ECC most likely looking at the big picture for cross-agency educational data-sharing and the SATF addressing the more specific issue of sharing school attendance information and, hopefully, finding a simpler way to share this data with the court.

***School Attendance Marketing Campaign:*** Debra Duardo announced that the County and City of Los Angeles and the LAUSD all adopted resolutions in August declaring September as School Attendance Month. A very well-attended press conference was held on September 7 at the Boyle Heights Technology Youth Center to highlight the launch of this Month. Leaders from the County, City, Juvenile Court, Public Counsel, LACOE, LAUSD, Pomona USD, Lynwood USD, and Centinela Valley Union High School District participated, as well as parents and over a dozen students. A live feed of the event was posted on the ECC and LAUSD websites, in addition to event flyers and a variety of toolkits. In all, 13 school districts committed to join in on School Attendance Month activities, including the first countywide Student Recovery Day on September 14. There will be another press conference on that Day at Hollywood High School to publicize its goal and the planned activities.

LAUSD, in addition to the individual activities engaged in by all of its schools (such as parent workshops, contests, announcements, attendance incentives), will be focusing on schools with the highest dropout rates in the newly opened Youth Workforce Center catchment areas, and efforts will be made to connect its students to these Centers. Last year, over 1300 chronically absent students or dropouts were successfully returned to school by LAUSD. This year's goal is to recover 3000 since so many more school districts are participating. On School Recovery Day, LAUSD will announce its "I'm In" School Attendance Challenge, which will begin in October 2012 and extend through May. The district will award monthly prizes to students and grand prizes in May to recognize individual students for perfect attendance and schools who achieve the best or most improved attendance.

***Exclusionary School Discipline:*** Zoe Rawson reported that the first meeting of this new workgroup was held at the Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center a couple of weeks ago and the

next meeting is scheduled for October 2 at noon. Although LAUSD participated in the first meeting, additional school districts are being sought and at least one parent representative to broaden the group. LASPD, LAUSD and LBUSD citation data was distributed, all of which highlight the disturbing disproportionality of African-American students who are cited for “defiant or disruptive” conduct and/or who are suspended or expelled from school. 93% of all LASPD citations go to Black and Latino students, and 40% of these go to students aged 14 or younger. An outstanding statewide hearing was held on September 10 at the Public Library, with the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (Russlynn Ali) as the keynote speaker. The hearing--*Why are California Schools Suspending More Students Than They Graduate?*--eloquently addressed the issue of disproportionality as a civil rights issue and offered a youth perspective and two panels of experts who helped attendees more deeply understand this issue and offered potential solutions. Zoe distributed documents on the Model Code on Education and Dignity, developed by the Dignity in Schools Campaign, which presents a human rights framework for schools and includes a set of recommendations to help protect students from discrimination and end school pushout. Public Counsel is offering training on the Model Code to local school districts. It was agreed that schools need to take more responsibility for discipline decisions, as was routinely done before zero tolerance policies were put in place.

***Community/School Connections:*** Ruth Cusick reported that the workgroup has adopted a new approach to highlighting best practices that connect schools and communities. It will develop a short piece that focuses on three key areas of connections (School-Community Access, Community Mapping and Parent Leadership/Engagement) and provide case study examples of local schools that appear to be particularly successful in achieving results in these areas. A draft of this document will be provided for review at the SATF’s November meeting.

***Free Metro Passes for Students:*** The workgroup has met four times and has researched what practices cities such as New York, Boston, Oakland and San Francisco have put into place for their students, as well as what LAUSD is currently doing. New York, for example, has provided students with free passes since 1948 with no income requirements, and Boston provides free access up to 10 pm on weekdays to allow for after-school program participation and jobs. Factors such as distances traveled to school, the number of fare evasion tickets, and the impact of free passes on school attendance are being looked at. MTA currently has a student discount program, and information is being gathered to support the proposition that MTA offer free passes to all students.

### **3. Next Meeting:**

**Tuesday, November 27, 2012\***

12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Children’s Court, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room

**\*Please note this change from the originally scheduled date of November 13.**