

# School Attendance Task Force Meeting Notes

Children's Court

October 2, 2014

## Attendees

Judge Michael Nash, Juvenile Court	Ruth Cusick, Public Counsel
Zoe Rawson, Comm. Rights Campaign	Lauren Gase, Public Health Department
Hellen Carter, Probation Department	Jennifer Gomez-Trejo, LACOE
Sonjia White, Public Defender	Lesley Kasoff, Superior Court
Laurel Bear, Alhambra Unified School	Esther Yang, Superior Court
Muriel Cormier, DMH	Lydia Bodin, District Attorney
Katie Butler, Public Health Department	Edilberto Flores, Youth Justice Coalition
Kim McGill, Youth Justice Coalition	Barbara Lott-Holland, Bus Riders Union
Kristen Byrdsong, City Attorney Office	Juan Pena, Youth Justice Coalition
Gail McFarland-Sosa, Probation Department	Zhaira Gastelum, LAUSD
Bella Saavedra, Cal Conf. for Justice and Equality	William Horton, Probation
Vincent Holmes, CEO	

## Welcome and Introductions

Judge Michael Nash welcomed Task Force members and allowed participants to introduce themselves.

Judge Nash announced his retirement from the Superior Court effective December 31, 2014, and thanked the SATF members for their work to improve academic outcomes for youth by reviewing attendance policies throughout the County. He noted the importance of the SATF and its influence on numerous local policies that have changed the attendance landscape for youth in the County. He also noted that he hopes to still be involved with this issue in some capacity in the future.

Judge Nash introduced Judge Michael Levanas who will be the next Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court beginning January 1, 2015. Members were asked to provide Judge Levanas with their reasons for participating in the SATF.

### **County Juvenile Citation Project (Update)**

Hellen Carter noted that the transition of the electronic juvenile traffic system (JETRS) to Probation is nearly complete. As has been previously noted, this will provide Probation with increased access and flexibility in handling new and old juvenile citations. Currently, Probation can place and remove DMV holds but are unable to identify all the citations that may be impacting a youth's license. The transfer of JETRS will allow them to identify all citations. Ruth Cusick also noted that work continues on the template that will be used to process old citations.

Dr. Carter also noted that Probation is handling habitual truancy citations. Probation is partnering with the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office to process these cases. She further stated that juvenile DUI cases are being cited to Probation as well. These cases are normally diverted allowing the youth to seek substance abuse treatment through a treatment facility. The youth's license is also held during this process.

Judge Nash requested that Probation develop a written policy regarding its handling of juvenile DUI citations that can be shared with youth and families. Kim McGill also noted the importance of getting youth into treatment when a substance abuse issue is identified.

Dr. Carter informed participants that Probation had met with representatives from the MTA and that all juvenile citations will be processed by the Probation Department. Zoe Rawson asked if citations issued by LAPD were in compliance with the policies adopted by LAPD. Dr. Carter stated she would review. Judge Nash suggested that other police agencies be contacted to determine if they were issuing citations to youth who were late for school.

Vince Bravo noted that there is a meeting with school police chiefs that is sponsored by LACOE. It might be worthwhile to get on their next agenda. Dr. Carter stated she would provide citation data for the 10 police agencies issuing daytime truancy/curfew citations.

### **Alhambra School Attendance Efforts (Update)**

Dr. Laurel Bear updated the Task Force on the ongoing efforts of the Alhambra School District to combat attendance issues through its Gateway Program. The Gateway Program continues to thrive and reductions in truancy are still being realized. Coinciding with the development of Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), the Alhambra School District continues to address attendance issues by:

- Ramping up staff developments/trainings aimed at improving relationships between parents and schools.
- Continuing the partnership with several graduate schools who provide interns for counseling and intervention services.
- The hiring of intervention advisors to case manage youth having attendance or behavioral issues.
- Ensuring that all Alhambra Police Officers have mental health training.

- Increasing the attention given to foster and homeless youth.

Dr. Bear stressed the importance of integrating their service efforts to holistically service youth.

### **Public Health School Attendance Advisory Group**

Lauren Gase updated the Task Force on the work of the School Attendance Advisory Group (Group). Over the course of several months, representatives from various public entities met and discussed efforts aimed at addressing school attendance. The Group:

- Charted out truancy reduction efforts in the County.
- Identified the highest priority efforts where there was consensus on moving forward.

Lauren stated the final report will be presented to the Task Force.

### **Pomona School District Attendance Project (Update)**

Williams Horton updated the SATF on the efforts in the Pomona School District to combat attendance issues. The Pomona Truancy Task Force was created to impact attendance issues within the school district and is comprised of representative from the Probation Department, School District, District Attorney's Office, and law enforcement. Since its inception a year ago, the Pomona School District has seen:

- A reduction in school dropouts.
- A decrease in school expulsions to zero.
- A more consistent use of in-school suspensions
- Higher attendance rates

The school district has been divided into clusters with dedicated cluster staffing responsible for identifying and addressing issues with youth such as attendance or behavior. This effort is considered part of the district's pre-SARB interventions.

SARBs have been expanded to include review hearings. These hearings are held to ensure the agreements entered into by youth and families are being adhered to. These hearings help reinforce the agreement made at the SARB and are an additional action taken in hopes of decreasing the need for court involvement.

Mr. Horton also noted that the District Attorney's Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT) Program is in place at all elementary schools and there have been no referrals of elementary-age youth to SARBs since ACT began.

The Pomona Truancy Task Force has also conducted three truancy sweeps. Youth caught in the sweep are triaged to determine school enrollment status and any challenges to school enrollment or school attendance. Mr. Horton noted that youth who are determined to be on their way to

school are not picked up in the truancy sweeps. The truancy sweeps are scheduled to occur monthly.

Since youth picked up in the truancy sweeps are issued citations, it was suggested that community interventions be used in place of a citation for first offenders.

### **Exclusionary School Discipline Work Group Report**

Zoe Rawson noted that members of the Exclusionary School Discipline Group facilitated a presentation at the Hershel Swinger Partnership Conference at CSULA. The presentation on school climate included examples of best practices used by schools to impact behavioral issues and highlighted several school policy changes related to suspensions and expulsions. Ms. Rawson stated the presentation was well attended.

### **Free Student Transit Passes Work Group Report**

Kim McGill noted ongoing meetings with Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' office. His office is aware of the campaign to obtain free public transportation for youth and has worked to keep fare prices for youth unchanged. Ms. McGill noted that the Work Group will continue its efforts with the two new Supervisors once they take office in December as well.

### **Next Meeting**

The date for the next meeting is:

**Thursday, December 4, 2014**

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

Location: Children's Court – Judge's Lounge

### **Conclusion and Adjournment**

Judge Nash adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.