

School Attendance Task Force Meeting Notes

Children's Court
December 10, 2015

Attendees:

Natasha Khamashta, Public Defender's Office	Megan Stanton-Trehan, Alliance for Children's Rights
Edwin Rodriguez, LAPD Hollenbeck PAL	Lauren Gase, Public Health
Eymi Roa, LAPD Hollenbeck PAL	Gabrielle Green, Public Health
Celia Politeo, District Attorney's Office	Taylor Schooley, Public Health
William Cochrane, DCFS	Kim McGill, Youth Justice Coalition
Tamara Hunter, DCFS	Judge Donna Groman, Juvenile Court
Stefanie Gluckman, Chief Executive Office	Sunshine Daye, CCEJ
Karen Patterson, Children's Law Center	Ruth Cusick, Public Counsel
Patrick Hirsch, Children's Law Center	Eugenia Wilson, Living Advantage Inc.
Leslye Kasoff, Superior Court	Melissa Schoonmaker, LACOE
Mike Alba, Mental Health	Angela Daughtry, Court Appointed Special Advocates
Kristen Byrdsong, City Attorney's Office	Yesenia Collier, FosterEd

Welcome and Introductions:

Lauren Gase welcomed Task Force members and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Introduction of the New ECC Director:

Judge Donna Groman introduced Stefanie Gluckman, the new director of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC), and urged Ms. Gluckman and others new to the ECC's School Attendance Task Force to visit <http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org/SATF.html> to review the Task Force's past projects and reports:

- *The Current State of Truancy Reduction Programs and Opportunities for Enhancement in Los Angeles County* ([Gase et al. 2014](#))
- *The Potential Costs and Benefits of Providing Free Public Transportation Passes to Students in Los Angeles County* ([Gase et al. 2013](#))
- *A Guide to School-Community Best Practices* ([2013](#))
- *A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance in Los Angeles County* ([2012](#))

Ms. Gluckman greeted the group and introduced her background in Economics, Law, Health and Education Policy, and information / data sharing and shared her excitement in joining the ECC during a time of new opportunity (e.g., the [Blue Ribbon Commission](#) and newly appointed [Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection](#)) to advance work supporting children and families in Los Angeles County.

To get in touch with Ms. Gluckman, please email sgluckman@ceo.lacounty.gov.

Judge Groman discussed the importance of working towards data sharing in Los Angeles County, explaining that there has been progress with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) working with school districts, but that sharing information with the Probation Department has lagged behind.

William Cochrane explained that there are currently 4 school districts fully on board with the joint-operated electronic Student Information Tracking System (SITS): Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD), Pomona Unified, Compton Unified, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Mr. Cochrane added that Pasadena Unified School District and Palmdale School District are currently working towards joining the data sharing system.

Update on the Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Initiative and Convening:

Judge Groman shared about the previous week's Southern California convening of the California Supreme Court Justice's Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Initiative. Judge Groman discussed the convening's report-outs by Los Angeles County representatives: the City Attorney's Office Truancy Teen Court, LAUSD's school police diversion efforts, the Department of Public Health's environmental scan of arrest / citation diversion efforts in Los Angeles and Centinela Youth Services' Juvenile Arrest Diversion Program.

SATF members who were also present at the convening mentioned the powerful opening remarks by Sade Daniels, writer and advocate with Bay Area Youth Centers, and Dr. Ramona Bishop, Superintendent of Vallejo City Unified School District.

The possibility of organizing a screening of the documentary *Paper Tigers*, an exploration of the way Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed responses impact the students and school community at Lincoln High School in Walla Walla, Washington.

Judge Groman also discussed the upcoming inaugural meeting of a Restorative Justice Council, urging those interested in joining to contact her directly by emailing dgroman@lacourt.org.

Work Group Action Plan / Progress Reports:

Lauren Gase reviewed the recent SATF strategic planning process and introduced the three work group focus areas that arose from said process. Ms. Gase asked that SATF members who were not yet part of a work group connect with the group's designated lead to get involved.

Evidence-Based Practices for Schools & LCAP Priorities Work Group:

Patrick Hirsch explained that the initial timeline for the Evidence-Based Practices for Schools & Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) Priorities work group was ambitious, and that the current thought is to focus on the next LCAP cycle to ensure there is time to meaningfully involve school districts and incorporate their perspectives.

The current goal is to produce recommendations for improving attendance among foster and probation youth. The group will have its first meeting in the upcoming months to solidify its focus and next steps.

Judge Groman discussed including School Board members in the Task Force and work groups, asking SATF members to reach out to any contacts they might have in local School Boards.

Mr. Hirsch shared that the group conducted a scan of evidence related to attendance improvement programs and has begun outreach to districts involved in identified research projects.

Exclusionary Discipline Work Group:

Judge Groman stated that the Exclusionary School Discipline work group will continue meeting in January 2016. The group has begun to work towards identifying ways to best support paths from alternative schools back to comprehensive schools.

Kim McGill recommended that the group think about addressing the quality of existing alternative schools in addition to preventing exclusionary push-out and supporting successful reintegration in comprehensive schools.

Natasha Khamashta raised the importance of involving Probation and referenced the existing School Advocacy Committee focused on re-entry from juvenile hall and probation camps.

Juvenile Arrests & Incarcerations Work Group:

Lauren Gase shared the Juvenile Arrests & Incarcerations work group's progress and updated work plan focused on identifying and spreading best practices and models for diverting youth from the juvenile justice system.

The group has conducted an environmental scan and key informant interviews with pre-arrest / citation or pre-probation referral diversion programs throughout Los Angeles County. Ms. Gase presented the key findings of the scan and asked the present SATF members to provide feedback if aware of additional diversion programs not already included in the scan focused specifically on diverting youth at the point of arrest or citation.

In addition, the group has begun to work towards two additional strategies: developing an evaluation framework and guide for juvenile diversion programs and organizing a convening for

arrest / citation diversion program coordinators and agencies interested in developing arrest / citation diversion processes in Los Angeles County.

Ms. Gase also shared that Public Health has signed a data sharing agreement with Centinela Youth Services and is hoping to find ways to support diversion programs in conducting comprehensive assessment of impact.

John Furay discussed Long Beach Police Department's citation diversion program and suggested that the work group put together a protocol for law enforcement agencies that might be interested in starting such a diversion program (e.g., outlining the steps needed in order to establish processes with the department, city, and organizations for referral; piloting the process; and rolling out a full program).

Kim McGill raised concern about case backlog for youth who are processed through diversion in Van Nuys and urged that amnesty be considered for old tickets. Mr. Furay responded that there are existing processes for amnesty but that Probation has limited staff to deal with such cases. Judge Groman added that Judge Levanas has been working on this issue and Ms. McGill re-emphasized the importance of addressing juvenile citations in a timely manner that does not keep youth from important opportunities such as receiving a license.

Ms. McGill and Ms. Khamashta referenced diversion efforts by LAUSD work source centers, Youth Justice Coalition, and Loyola Marymount.

Announcements and General Updates:

Stefanie Gluckman asked if there has been any evaluation to date of the SATF's work.

Kim McGill discussed the group's efforts with the Metropolitan Transit Authority regarding free and reduced transit passes as an example of ways the SATF has both achieved success and also experienced limited results. Ms. McGill called for support from the powerful voices around the table to continue to address this issue.

Ms. Gase referenced the group's comprehensive synthesis of data that showed over 10,000 citations per year and disproportionate impact on youth by race/ethnicity.

Mr. Furay added that his office sees between 50 and 70 fare evasion cases per day, and urged the group to consider electronic systems to minimize the burden of these citations.

The group discussed the important issue of budget priorities.

Melissa Schoonmaker shared that she has been in conversation with California State Senator Connie Leyva's office regarding homeless youth. Senator Leyva sits on Senate's Education and Transportation / Housing Committees.

Lesley Kasoff shared concerns about the issue of whether or not the roll out of efforts that are being called “Restorative Justice” are being implemented effectively based on examples from her own work. Ms. Kasoff asked that the group consider what can be done to fix what is broken about the current process to serve youth who often experience highest needs as well as highest risks.

Sunshine Daye discussed the need for resources and referrals and empowerment for coordinators.

Ruth Cusick mentioned the passage of the [School Climate Bill of Rights](#) and the importance of [Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports](#) for schools that do not yet have the capacity for fidelity to the Restorative Justice model. Ms. Cusick explained that there is a need for those with expertise and experience in this area to share meaningfully with the districts, both what is and what is not working well.

Lauren Gase asked if there was a role for the SATF’s Exclusionary School Discipline work group in addressing this area of concern. Judge Groman explained that the work group is currently trying to maintain a focus on foster and probation youth.

Karen Patterson discussed the need for paradigm shifts, from punitive to restorative school culture.

Melissa Schoonmaker referenced the recent passage of the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#).

Lauren Gase shared that Public Health has access to data from the California Healthy Kids Survey and California School Climate Survey, and is able to provide support related to metrics appropriate for demonstrating impact of efforts focused on positive school climate or school discipline.

Ms. Kasoff and Judge Groman discussed ideas for potential solutions, including piloting evidence-based practices with smaller school districts, conducting a road show similar to efforts around re-entry. Ms. Khamashta raised the question of whether it would be feasible to provide a video or other training for teachers to raise awareness about restorative practices. Ms. Kasoff shared that a video for the SHADES program is currently in development.

Next Meeting:

The date for the next School Attendance Task Force has not yet been determined.

Conclusion and Adjournment:

Judge Groman adjourned the meeting and thanked members for their participation at 2:00PM.