

# School Attendance Task Force Meeting Notes

Children's Court

April 30, 2015

## Attendees

Judge Michael Levanas, Juvenile Court	Judge Donna Groman, Juvenile Court
Ruth Cusick, Public Counsel	Lauren Gase, Public Health Dept
Kristen Byrdsong, LA City Attorney	Jewel Forbes, LACOE
Jennifer Gomeztrejo, LACOE	Vicente Bravo, LACOE
Zoe Rawson, Community Rights Campaign	Tom Steele, LACOE
Rodolfo Aguirre, Public Defender	Zhaira Gastelum, LAUSD
Marisol Sanders, Alhambra Unified	Jesus Corral, Probation
Denise McCain-McFarland, Our Children	Taylor Schosley, Public Health
Melissa Schoonmaker, LACOE	Jessica Cruz, Mental Health
Angelica Salazar, Children's Defense Fund	Steve Sturms, DCFS
Felicia Hall, LAPD	Sean Dwyer, Asian Pacific
Krishna Nunnally, Asian Pacific	Vincent Holmes, CEO

## Welcome and Introductions

Judge Michael Levanas welcomed Task Force members and thanked them for participating. Members were then asked to introduce themselves.

## Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth

Jennifer Gomeztrejo and Melissa Schoonmaker noted the impact homelessness and instability have on the attendance of youth countywide. Currently, there are over 67,000 homeless youth in the County. To provide youth and youth practitioners with resource information for homeless youth, LACOE partnered with the Our Children LA organization to develop a resource guide. Along with the printed resource guide, there is a mobile app and website also being developed that youth will be able to download or access via their smart phones. A PDF version of the guide will be updated periodically and made available.

Denise McCain, Our Children LA, noted that the resource guide contains information for first responders, those who directly touch and provide services/assistance to youth. Resources in the guide are for youth 25 years old and younger. The guide will be in all municipal and city libraries.

Ms. McCain also noted that the website will launch in June and the mobile app will follow shortly. The Mobile app is called W.I.N. (What I Need) and was designed to meet the needs of youthful users. The launch of both mediums will include posters and stickers. Those seeking additional information can contact Denise McCain-Tharnstrom at [dmccain@ourchildrenla.org](mailto:dmccain@ourchildrenla.org).

### **Joint Transition Planning MOU – AB 2276**

Jesus Corral noted Probation's ongoing efforts to implement AB 2276 which calls the removal of barriers that impact the ability of youth to transition back into school after incarceration. The law has three main provisions:

- Require county offices of education and county probation departments to have a joint transition policy that includes collaboration with school districts to assist students being released from juvenile court schools.
- Encourage local school districts to enter into memoranda of understanding and create joint policies regarding the immediate transfer of educational records and enrollment of pupils transferring from juvenile court schools.
- Would require the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene a statewide group to develop a model and study programs and policies relating to the transfer of educational records and enrollment of pupils who are being transferred from juvenile court schools and report its findings by January 1, 2016.

Mr. Corral noted that work on memoranda of understanding (MOU) has already begun. Probation hopes to have an MOU between the department and LAUSD in place soon. That would account for 50% of the department's incarcerated youth. Probation is also meeting with Compton School District as well. Mr. Corral also noted that Probation had noted its interest in being a part of the statewide committee.

Ruth Cusick asked if LACOE could give a presentation to the SATF about their ability to transition youth back into local schools after incarceration.

### **Los Angeles Police Department Juvenile Citation Policy/Diversion Efforts**

Lt. Felicia Hall noted that there are twenty-one stations within the Los Angeles Police Department with varying types of diversion programs. She would return to the next SATF meeting with information regarding the various diversion efforts as well as the department's policy regarding juvenile citations.

It was suggested that other jurisdictions also be invited to attend the SATF meeting and present on their diversion and citation processes.

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

Judge Groman informed the SATF about the ongoing efforts of the *Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court Initiative*. There has been additional interest from the Attorney General's Office as well as the Department of Justice. Judge Groman leads the effort locally and has held a meeting

in April to discuss how Los Angeles might increase its efforts to increase attendance and limit court exposure. The subcommittee has agreed to assist by gathering data, additional resources and determine where policy pressure might be helpful. To that end, the following has occurred:

- Lauren Gase noted that she is awaiting the Healthy Kids Survey Data to review school discipline information. Ms. Gase expects the data to come shortly. School districts with the most severe push-out issues will be engaged first.
- PBIS supports are also being compiled.
- The Public Defender's Office has also been asked to gather school-based arrest information.

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

Lauren Gase noted that she would be reaching out to Keppel School District to determine how they were implementing their free transportation program for foster youth. That information might prove useful as we continue to build arguments for free youth bus passes countywide.

It was also noted that Alhambra School District is planning to provide free TAP cards for its foster youth.

Angelica Salazar also informed the committee of a bill (AB 891) which would require educational agencies to provide free transportation to pupils who receive free or reduced-price meals. Ms. Salazar stated she would keep the committee updated on the progress of the legislation.

### **Announcements**

Steve Sturm noted that SITS (Student Information Tracking System) will be available to judges shortly. They system will provide them with current education information for foster care youth. Mr. Sturm also noted that 38 school districts should be a part of SITS by the end of the year.

### **Next Meeting**

The date for the next meeting is Thursday, June 11, 2015

### **Conclusion and Adjournment**

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