



Los Angeles County
Children's Planning Council
Improving Children's Lives

Children's Planning Council Meeting

July 18, 2007

9:30 a.m.

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

Present:

- Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
- Victoria Lewis Adams, representing Steve Cooley
- Bettye Anderson
- Charles Avila
- Lauraine Barber
- Paul Chung
- Deborah Davies
- Amy Enomoto-Perez
- Dorothy Fleisher
- David W. Fleming
- Chris Floyd
- Felicia Lynn Ford
- Cynthia Harding, representing Jonathan Fielding
- Jan Isenberg, representing Darline Robles
- Rafael Lopez
- Larry Lue
- Jacquelyn McCroskey
- Elton Naswood
- Danny Ramos
- José Ramos, Jr.
- Marsha Ramos
- Lisa Cleri Reale
- Richelle Rios-Huizar
- Nina Sorkin
- Marvin J. Southard
- Beatriz Olvera Stotzer
- Cheri Todoroff, representing Bruce Chernof
- Mary Helen Vasquez
- Anita Vigil, representing Robert Taylor
- Phillip L. Williams
- Daniel Wu
- Mika Yamamoto, representing Russ Guiney

Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and asked that Council members and the audience introduce themselves.

Approval of the Minutes of May 16, 2007

Beatriz Olvera Stotzer moved that the minutes of May 16, 2007, be approved as mailed. David Fleming seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke

Chair Burke welcomed Children's Planning Council members attending their first meeting—Parent Representatives Felicia Lynn Ford and Mary Helen Vasquez, Youth Representative Daniel Wu, and University Researcher Paul Chung. She hoped that African-American Community Representative Clarence Shaw and Youth Representative Jon Perry Amos would be able to attend in September. A brief biography of all new members was included in member packets.

Before introducing Phillip Williams, Chair Burke expressed how fortunate the Children's Planning Council is that its Chief Executive Officer, Yolie Flores Aguilar, is now a member of the Los Angeles Unified School District school board, with opportunities to ensure that the myriad issues affecting children and families are articulated in that forum.

Foundation Board Report: Phillip L. Williams

Effective July 23, Yolie Flores Aguilar will become the Chief Executive Officer of the board of The Children's Planning Council Foundation, Inc. The decision to effect this change, made in consultation with Chair Burke and the Executive Committee, was based on the growing leadership and fiscal needs of the Foundation Board, which require more active attention than its volunteer members have been able to give. Flores Aguilar's principal role will be to help raise additional funds for the Children's Planning Council and to continue to connect and establish stronger relationships with leaders across the county who care about the well-being of children.

Dr. Cheryl Mendoza has been named Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Planning Council, and will assume that position on July 23. Flores Aguilar will provide Mendoza support through the end of the year, while the recruitment process to identify a new Chief Executive Officer for the Council is undertaken.

In 2005, the Children's Planning Council developed and adopted an emergency succession plan and a sustainability plan that have both been reviewed and updated each year. The plans' purpose is to help the Council manage a leadership transition such as this as smoothly and seamlessly as possible. Lisa Cleri Reale, co-chair of the Executive Committee, outlined the steps of the transition process called for in these plans.

- 1. The Foundation Board names an acting Chief Executive Officer (Cheryl Mendoza).**
- 2. A Transition Committee is appointed.**
 - Three Foundation Board members (Phil Williams, David Grannis, Sam Chan)
 - Executive Committee co-chairs (Lisa Cleri Reale, Chris Floyd)
 - Strengthening Community Capacity Committee co-chairs (Jeff Farber, Colleen Mooney)
 - Two long-standing Children's Planning Council members, appointed at the discretion of the Transition Committee chair

The chair of the Transition Committee must be a member of the Foundation Board (not its president) who is both willing to dedicate the time needed and familiar with similar transitions and with the Council's personnel, culture, and evaluation process. Sam Chan has agreed to chair the Transition Committee; both he and Phil Williams also served on the search committee that identified Flores Aguilar as Executive Director, her initial position, nearly eight years ago.

3. A Search Committee is appointed.

- Two Foundation Board members (Phil Williams, Sam Chan)
- Executive Committee co-chairs
- Strengthening Community Capacity Committee co-chairs
- Two key members of the Children's Planning Council, appointed at the discretion of the Search Committee chair

4. A transition/legal advisor is consulted during the screening process and is available to assist with legal questions (David Fleming).

5. Certain stakeholders play key roles.

- The **Foundation Board** makes the final hiring decision.
- Select members of the **Children's Planning Council** sit on the Transition and Search committees.
- The Council's **Chief Executive Officer** works with the transition consultant.
- On behalf of the **SPA/AIC Councils**, the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee co-chairs sit on the Transition and Search committees, and a small delegation of representatives meets with finalists and provides feedback to the transition consultant. (This feedback is advisory in nature, helping to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is not a vote for or against any candidate.)
- Through the current Children's Planning Council chair and his or her children's deputy, the **Board of Supervisors** is kept proactively informed of the hiring process.
- **Staff** meet as a group with finalists to provide feedback before the Foundation Board makes a hiring decision. (This feedback is advisory in nature, helping to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is not a vote for or against any candidate.)
- The Children's Planning Council will retain consulting assistance to facilitate the transition process and conduct the executive search. A **consultant** is selected by the Foundation Board.

6. A communications plan is developed and various stakeholders contacted and informed.

- Children's Planning Council staff
- All members of the Children's Planning Council, the Foundation Board, and Council committees
- The Board of Supervisors, through their deputies
- Key funders
- The New Directions Task Force (NDF)
- The Inter-Agency Operations Group (IOG)
- Groups to which the Chief Executive Officer is the main Children's Planning Council representative (the Chief Executive Officer keeps a list of these organizations and key contact people as an appendix to the emergency succession plan)

7. The Foundation Board is the legal employer and final decision-maker on the hiring of the Chief Executive Officer.

Cleri Reale encouraged Council members to add any missing names to the list of stakeholders receiving information through the communications plan, and noted that Chief Communications Officer Dan Hutson has already drafted an announcement and press release. Chair Burke recommended that a mechanism for the selection of the delegation of SPA/AIC Council members be established and approved prior to the process's reaching that point. Council members will be sent a roster of the Transition Committee, as well as another copy of the succession plan. Amy Enomoto-Perez asked if Cleri Reale's report could be also e-mailed.

Anita Vigil characterized the succession plan as a testimony to the legacy left by Flores Aguilar. "This is a bittersweet time," Vigil said, "but we're glad we get to keep her and expand her help for the well-being of kids. We thank you, Yolie, from the bottom of our hearts."

Juvenile Justice Recommendations: Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey

In April 2006, the Children's Planning Council released a report on the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles County, and in the spring of this year, the Board of Supervisors gave the Council 30 days to formulate some specific, "hard-hitting" recommendations for improving that system. An executive summary of the Council's June follow-up report was included in member packets.

The Board's request was an opportunity to consider major concerns within a very short time-frame, Jacquelyn McCroskey said, and as many as possible of the many individuals and groups who care deeply about these issues were consulted. One consistent theme the study found was the lack of a true 'system' within juvenile justice, which consists not only of agencies with specific responsibilities (such as the Probation Department, law enforcement, and the courts), but also of the relationships between those entities. Although the Department of Justice's examination of the juvenile halls spotlights Probation, the departments of Mental Health, Public Social Services, and Children and Family Services—as well as families, schools, and faith-based and community-based organizations, plus other county agencies—are also involved. Probation is working on those relationships, and the Advancement Project has also recently played a role in calling attention to the children most involved in violent and criminal activity and gangs.

The task of improving the juvenile justice system is overwhelming, and making sure that all players speak the same language is important. Many entities, for example, provide prevention and early intervention services, or support youth when they return to their communities following incarceration, but those entities are not organized and do not necessarily talk to one another. A second theme of the study involves building those relationships and creating lasting networks that will continue to function after the one-time contract relationships, the pilot projects, and the programs that work well in one community but cannot be replicated elsewhere are concluded.

The Council's 11 recommendations to the Board, summarized below, draw the attention of partners within the juvenile justice system to strategic actions.

- 1. Establish charter schools and other innovative education programs and policies in juvenile halls and camps to expand educational options for youth. Pilot-test different approaches, compare results, and establish education as an underlying focus of all interactions with youth.**

The Board of Supervisors is so interested in this approach that it has already approved a relevant motion, and Probation Chief Robert Taylor is working with the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Education Coordinating Council, and others. Experimentation is important, McCroskey said, since "we don't really know how best to handle schooling for these kids. We need more work on options both during the school day and after school, and also for what happens when kids move from a school district to a camp or juvenile hall, and back again." The recommendation focuses on charter schools because of their flexibility, but they are not the only alternative. Information-sharing is a big challenge, and work is being done to improve communication between the county's 81 school districts and government agencies and other partners who serve these youth.

- 2. Direct the Probation Department to provide comprehensive bio-psycho-social assessments for youth at their entrance to juvenile halls and camps, and at regular intervals thereafter. Ensure that each youth is assigned a case manager to create and oversee the resulting service plan.**
- 3. Separate the juvenile and adult functions of the Probation Department and include juvenile justice in the child and families' well-being cluster of the new Los Angeles County governance scheme (keeping adult probation in the public safety cluster).**

Most states separate probation's juvenile and adult functions, since they serve two very different 'customers,' but no commonality exists in administrative structures across the nation.

- 4. Actively engage youth, families, and community stakeholders in community action research to identify problems, test new programs, and track effectiveness.**

County departments are beginning to focus on evidence-based practices, but although youth and families are often among the first to use such tools, rigorous scientific standards yield little evidence for ways to manage complex systems.

- 5. Analyze the use of Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) and other funds in supporting effective community-based prevention and intervention services, especially those serving high-need communities.**

Funding streams such as the Title IV-E waiver and the Mental Health Services Act have encouraged relationships between the Probation Department and other departments, but community-based organizations must also be brought into the fold.

- 6. Instruct the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department to report to the Board on the progress of the dual-status protocols being piloted in the Pasadena juvenile court, and implement them elsewhere.**

Unlike some states, California mandates the separation of dependency (DCFS) and delinquency (Probation) youth, despite the fact that high numbers of youth "cross over" between those systems. The Pasadena pilot tracks the background and families of crossover youth, hoping to identify common connections.

7. Draft and adopt standards of legal representation for youth.

At present, three ways exist for youth in the juvenile justice system to get legal representation: through the public defender's office, through the alternate public defender's office (only if the case is adjudicated in certain courts), and through panel attorneys, as with the majority of cases. However, no clarity exists regarding the standards of such representation, and attorneys need to be supported by other professionals that can offer services to youth and their families, as in a Loyola Law School pilot in Inglewood that currently serves about 30 youth.

8. Launch a comprehensive, action-oriented planning and implementation effort to transform the juvenile justice system, addressing the balance between community-based prevention and intervention and law enforcement strategies with guidelines for a longer-term engagement process.

This will be a consultant-assisted process, McCroskey said, and will take time; other recommendations will jump-start reform.

9. Create a Research, Evaluation, and Policy Institute to support improvements in the juvenile justice system.

10. Standardize performance-based contracting procedures and streamline grant processes across departments.

At present, community-based organizations with contracts from three different county agencies, say, are faced with three different sets of performance-based measures; likewise, all county agencies spend time to develop their own measures rather than working together.

11. Cross-train staff from county departments and community-based organizations, adding parents and youth whenever possible.

The companion report to these recommendations is expected from the Chief Executive Office by the end of August. Once that is received, a large-scale discussion by the Board of Supervisors is planned to allow input from different Board offices and from stakeholders. The genesis of many of these recommendations occurred at the Probation Department's 2005 community conference, and that department is already pursuing many implementation activities. Anita Vigil asked that a Probation update be placed on the next Children's Planning Council meeting agenda.

Chair Burke mentioned the ongoing discussions at the Board level with regard to coordinating with consultants and evaluations relating to the juvenile justice, delinquency, and prevention systems. The county's incoming Chief Executive Officer, Bill Fujioka, has a tremendous background in these issues, having previously worked both at the city of Los Angeles and within Los Angeles County government, in Probation and also in the hospital system. The new

governance's cluster arrangement is just beginning to function, and Fujioka will want to familiarize himself with it prior to making any changes.

Since the Los Angeles County Office of Education is responsible for the education of incarcerated youth, Amy Enomoto-Perez asked about how charter schools might address issues in a different way. Chair Burke explained that charter-school involvement is planned for the probation camps, where the juvenile halls' Department of Justice consent decree does not apply, and where approximately 22 percent of camp residents need special education services. In the juvenile halls, DOJ findings have required LACOE to hire more special-education teachers, and it has been a challenge to find those individuals. According to Enomoto-Perez, all school districts are trying to recruit special-education teachers, but colleges and universities are not producing candidates.

Marv Southard praised the recommendations, saying that creating community structures to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system in the first place is the greatest challenge. Mary Helen Vasquez urged sensitivity toward parents who need assistance navigating the system. "They want to help their kids," she said, "but you can't assume they know where to go or what services to seek. They need support or they will be totally lost." Every parent comes with different resources, abilities, and skills; the process should be smooth for all of them. Felicia Lynn Ford also raised the issue of special-needs children, who traditionally make up less than 1 percent of charter-school enrollments, and advised those parents' participation in discussions.

Bettye Anderson sees an overall failure to communicate the laws and guidelines that need to be understood by all parties within the system. At an organization in which she is involved, a representative from Sacramento distributed 13 different booklets on family services, grandparents' rights, court rulings, special education, and so on. "People don't know where to go to get special services," Anderson said. "We need to bring in allies to be a resource for parents."

Chief Executive Officer's Report: Yolie Flores Aguilar

In introducing Flores Aguilar, David Fleming recalled his involvement on the blue ribbon committee that recommended the Board's formation of the Children's Planning Council 17 years ago. "We're blessed to have had Yolie running the organization," Fleming said, and many Council members encouraged her to run for the LAUSD school board. "We're frustrated by the fact that in a school district with 700,000 students, half the kids who enter high school don't graduate," he said. "Their future is dim, and this has been happening year after year." As current chair of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Fleming considered the two run-off races for school board seats (from which Flores Aguilar's initial victory spared her) "the most important races in the state of California." The Chamber contributed 10 times the amount to candidates than it ever had before, to make sure that a majority existed on the school board to do something for children. "I sat next to the mayor at Yolie's swearing-in," Fleming continued, "and heard her remarks. She really cares about putting kids first. She will be totally dedicated, not to the interests of special groups, unions, or administrators, but to the interests of kids." He suggested that Flores Aguilar make her remarks available to Children's Planning Council members. "I'm terribly proud of her and what she has done and will do for the kids of this county," he concluded. Phillip Williams agreed, saying that Flores Aguilar has put together a

fine agenda of how to improve LAUSD schools, and he is delighted that she will have this “challenging but fascinating” experience, as he phrased it.

Prior to making her report, Flores Aguilar expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Council for nearly eight years, and for five years before that as a Council member, “doing work I love and putting the interests of kids first,” she said, “as part of an army of all of you who do that already. This is another opportunity, and I want to find alignment in that process to connect to the work here. It’s a tall order, but I feel very supported by all of you. I’m thrilled not to be leaving, but to be wearing a different hat that I hope will elevate the work even further.”

- Flores Aguilar welcomed Lilian Coral, the Council’s new Policy Manager, who has an impressive background with the Service Employees International Union working in a way “that honored systems, communities, and the people whom government policies affect most,” Flores Aguilar said. “She has a level of understanding and respect that was exactly what we were searching for, and we look forward to her beginning the work of the strategic plan.”
- First 5 LA has renewed its partnership with the Children’s Planning Council, allocating \$4.2 million over the next four years to advance its agenda for children. A similar partnership, begun in 2002 and allocating \$6 million over four years, led to deeper work with the SPA/AIC Councils, building the capacity of parents, residents, and young people to advocate on their own behalf. The scope of work for the current plan is now being developed, and Cheryl Mendoza will begin including Council members in those conversations in a few days.
- A two-day retreat on August 2 and 3, facilitated by consultants from the Interaction Institute for Social Change from Cambridge, Massachusetts, will finalize plans for the Community Building Institute. The consultants “share our values around community-building,” staff member Janet Sparks said, “and we’re bringing them up to speed about L.A. They’re not telling us what to do, but they are facilitating our best thinking.” Besides building relationships, modeling a collaborative approach to planning, and yielding a shared understanding of the CBI’s next steps, the retreat will also help decide whether or not to continue involving Interaction Institute consultants. Between 30 and 35 individuals will be invited to participate, including parents, youth, staff, county partners, and community-based organizations. The retreat’s planning group includes Sam Chan, Rafael Lopez, and staff members Chrysta Wilson, Flores Aguilar, and Sparks. A report on the retreat will be made at the Council’s September meeting.
- Flores Aguilar brought members’ attention to the flyer in their packets about *Abriendo Puertas* (Opening Doors), historically known within the Council as the Wellspring project because of its funding by the Wellspring Foundation. It is a leadership development curriculum created by Council consultant Sandra Gutierrez for Latino immigrant parents of children from birth to age five. Pilots are planned in SPAs 1 and 5, and facilitators will be trained within the next few weeks. In response to data collected by the 2004 Children’s ScoreCard and through the 2005 community forums, the curriculum will focus both on leadership skills and on parenting concerns, interests, and supports for understanding how systems work. The SPA/AIC Councils will serve as a continuing vehicle once parents are trained, helping them become leaders in their own neighborhoods. The funder hopes to take the curriculum to a national level, and its use as a model for other ethnic groups is being

discussed with Stewart Kwoh, the Urban League, and others. Lisa Cleri Reale also suggested involving Families in Schools, and Flores Aguilar said that its head, Maria Casillas, was already on the list for CBI training, to which *Abriendo Puertas* is connected.

- Also in member packets was an invitation from Supervisor Antonovich to the annual "All for the Love of Kids" event, which he wished to extend to all Council members.

Executive Committee Report: Chris Floyd and Lisa Cleri Reale

Chris Floyd congratulated Flores Aguilar on her new position with the Foundation Board, and expressed his appreciation to Miriam Long, Chair Burke's children's deputy, for introducing him to the Children's Planning Council so he might be part of its work.

- The 'partnership conversation' facilitated by consultant John Ott in April raised some important issues with respect to governance and the strategic planning process. At the Executive Committee's June 11 meeting, members agreed that another facilitated conversation could help equalize the understanding members have of those issues; that meeting has been scheduled for July 27 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Once a full understanding has been reached, the committee will identify who else needs to be part of the conversation and, with Ott's guidance, determine the design of a meeting to generate concrete recommendations for improving the Council's governance structures. An update will be presented in September.
- Lisa Cleri Reale presented a 'sneak preview' of the Children's Planning Council's 2007–2008 budget, which was initially prepared as a bare-bones plan with reductions in revenues from the previous year. When First 5 LA announced its grant on July 12—Cleri Reale encouraged everyone to read the First 5 letter included in member packets, which explains its rationale for renewing the partnership—Cheryl Mendoza prepared a revised version. It will be presented to the Executive Committee and the Foundation Board in August, and will come to the Children's Planning Council for formal approval in September.

The revised budget boosts the bare-bones revenue projection of just over \$5 million to \$7 million for the year. Half that increase comes from the First 5 allocation, and the other \$1 million is being requested from the Board of Supervisors. With regard to expenditures, the budget calls for \$5.5 million (81 percent) to be spent on programs, \$370,000 (5 percent) on new technology for fiscal infrastructure (grants management, accounting, and payroll processing), with the balance going to operational support. This last category is in line with good nonprofit management practice, which mandates operational expenses under 15 percent.

Flores Aguilar stressed the fact that First 5's new allocation is, over a similar four-year period, \$2 million less than its 2002 grant, and that a portion of it is leveraged and must be matched—\$1 million through the request to the Board and the balance from the private sector. Cuts in support to the SPA/AIC Councils are not anticipated, and support may in fact be elevated slightly in response to community needs. First 5 has made it clear, however, that matching funds must be in cash, not in kind. "They know we have enormous in-kind investments," Flores Aguilar said. "Counting volunteer time and resources with other partners would probably double the cash investment we have now."

Family Economic Success Plan

Over the last 15 years, the Children's Planning Council has worked to achieve Los Angeles County's vision for children through the attainment of the five outcome areas of child well-being: good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, social and emotional well-being, and education and workforce readiness. While significant strides have been made, progress has been thwarted by the growing level of poverty among children and families, which has a tremendous impact on all other areas. For the first time since its original publication in 1994, the Children's ScoreCard in 2006 reported significant increases in poverty. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of children living in families with incomes at 100 percent of the Federal poverty rate increased by 16 percent, and the number of children living in families with incomes at 200 percent of poverty increased by 12 percent. (For a family of four, 200 percent of poverty represents an annual income of \$38,314. Providing for the basic needs of a family generally requires income levels at 300 percent of poverty.)

In 2004, close to half the children in the county were living in low-income families, and one out of four were living in severe poverty. "Poverty is the elephant in the middle of the room, as [former Council member] Loretta Jones used to say," Flores Aguilar told attendees. "We must do something about it."

To begin addressing this concern, the county's strategic plan called for the Chief Executive Office (then the Chief Administrative Office) and the Children's Planning Council to convene a public/private task force and develop a family economic success plan with specific strategies related to workforce development, family supports, and community investments. That 32-member task force, co-chaired by Phil Ansell of the Department of Public Social Services and Council member Beatriz Olvera Stotzer, had representation from 27 agencies and organizations and four SPA/AIC Councils, and met between February 2006 and June 2007. It used the family economic success framework developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as its starting point, informing it with local data and research and enriching it with community input from the 2005 community forums and community engagement process led by the SPA/AIC Councils and Claremont Graduate University. "The county serves the poorest of the poor," Olvera Stotzer said, "and it was both invigorating and very hard work to look at these deep issues. Phil Ansell and the other remarkable individuals on the task force helped us think out the impact of the challenges of the county system, which can be hard to understand."

Listening to the voices of families was a primary inspiration for the task force's work, Olvera Stotzer continued. Parents report that they work multiple jobs for low wages, sacrificing time with their children and attention to their children's education. They live with other families in overcrowded housing, often in unsafe neighborhoods; they go without needed medical and dental care and use unlicensed child care providers. Organizations that try to help by offering financial education, developing innovative policies, and advocating for a better use of resources lack coordination, support, and technical assistance for their work.

"Family economic success" is defined as having sufficient money and assets to meet a family's basic needs of food, shelter, transportation, and the other necessities of life, including health insurance and child care. A number of problems confront families struggling to achieve this goal:

- Lack of financial education, knowledge, and skills

- Lack of access to good jobs
- Lack of access to business development opportunities and to capital to pursue their own economic goals
- Predatory lending practices
- Lack of appropriate outreach and workforce supports in low- to moderate-income communities

In Los Angeles County, where immigrants make up over half the workforce yet earn 20 percent less than the average worker, these challenges are compounded by a lack of culturally and linguistically relevant information on small-business development, mortgages, credit card fees, bank practices, and so on. Families are often additionally burdened with mental health issues as they worry about their financial situation.

Although work on these problems abounds, the task force found a generally unintegrated system, along with service delivery approaches that rely on 'case management' rather than building on and encouraging family independence and self-determination. An overall lack of coordination exists in research and development, training and technical assistance for providers, and policy development and advocacy grounded in the concerns and experiences of low- to moderate-income families and residents. There is also a need for a permanent home and sustainable funding for the countywide Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign partnership, since too many families remain unaware of the tax advantages of claiming this Federal credit.

The proposed family economic success plan for Los Angeles County provides a collaborative framework for implementing strategies with specific, concrete objectives and actions to improve the economic well-being of families. It also recognizes family strengths and the importance of self-determination, taking a holistic approach that promotes access to education, skills training, good jobs, business development capital, and services and supports essential for families to achieve financial success.

Families are hard-working, resourceful, entrepreneurial, and proud, but everything in their lives affects their ability to be self-sustaining economically. Tessa Hicks from Claremont Graduate University cited the pitfalls of too narrow a view, using job training as an example. If training programs are not offered nearby, Los Angeles' cumbersome and inefficient public transportation system can deter residents from attending. When programs are brought to local community centers or schools, it's often not safe to walk through impoverished or gang-ridden neighborhoods. Even if escorts or mentors finally get residents there, what about child care? What happens when children get sick? Are programs offered in multiple languages? Community input raises questions that range into multiple arenas, and a limited focus is not helpful in discussing workforce development or asset-building and -leveraging. Flores Aguilar expressed appreciation to the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee for pushing the task force not to develop a final plan without first running it by families. The process took nine months longer, but it confirmed that the plan's initial framework needed additional elements. The task force's thinking shifted, as did its recommendations, to become much more concrete.

Toni Saenz Yaffe, consultant to the task force, reviewed the specific recommended strategies, highlighting the role of county government and referring to the summary plan included in member packets. Some strategies are proposed for countywide implementation, and others will

be tested within the small number of communities that are part of the county's H healthier Communities, Stronger Families, Thriving Children (HST) initiative.

- **Asset-building and -leveraging**—access to capital, financial education, business development opportunities, and mainstream banking products and services necessary to become self-sufficient and overcome poverty
 - ✓ Develop **financial practices standards** and amend governmental codes to apply these standards when determining where to deposit funds and do business (countywide, by March 2008)
 - ✓ **Fair financial practices and services promotional campaign** (countywide, by December 2008)
 - ✓ **Family Independence Initiative** implementation (community-specific, by March 2008)
 - ✓ **Low- to moderate-income immigrant financial services campaign** (countywide, by December 2008)
- **Workforce and self-employment development**—access to good jobs, including self-employment, and to the skills-training, education, and supports (child care, transportation, health care, etc.) necessary to get, keep, and advance in those jobs
 - ✓ **Workforce development partnerships** (community-specific, by February 2009)
 - ✓ **Small-business grants collaboratives and educational pilots** (community-specific, by December 2008)
 - ✓ **Work-related neighborhood supports** that increase child care services and test alternative transportation fare structures (community-specific, by June 2008), and create a public/private cooperative to empower community residents (community-specific, by March 2008)
- **Tax credits and public benefits**—access to a wide range of tax credits and public benefits that better enable families to provide for their food, shelter, health care, and child care needs
 - ✓ A **permanent home** at United Way of Greater Los Angeles **and sustainable funding** from the county's New Directions Task Force **for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign partnership** (countywide, 2008)
 - ✓ **Public benefits informational campaign** (countywide, by March 2008)
- Establish the **Los Angeles Center for Family Economic Success** within the United Way of Greater Los Angeles to promote the coordination, development, and effective implementation of strategies and policies that support the three overarching family economic success strategies listed above (countywide, by December 2007)

In 2005, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites logged 29,000 new claimants of the earned income tax credit, providing \$54 million in tax refunds to those filers and saving them \$1 million in tax-preparation fees. The EITC campaign needs a permanent home, and United Way

has offered facilities both for that and for the overall coordinating body of the Center for Family Economic Success. United Way is a good fit for this role both because of its access to the business community in Los Angeles and because of its recently narrowed focus, one area of which is financial stability.

With regard to financial practices standards, Flores Aguilar explained the concept of "depository power" brought to the task force's work by Olvera Stotzer. Large organizations can have annual budgets in the millions of dollars (LAUSD's, for example, is over \$12 billion), and that money is placed in various financial institutions and instruments until needed. Making good financial practices a criterion for investment could go a long way to 'dis-incentivizing' predatory lenders. Paul Chung asked if the task force had any sense whether the county's current financial partners were in violation of good practices, and Olvera Stotzer said that many firms' fees seem to be ad hoc in nature, with their true costs, as well as any potential impact on users' credit-worthiness, not being communicated clearly. Some bank subsidiaries run paycheck advance facilities that are not regulated through any Federal system and can charge as much as 400 percent interest on their loans. It is possible that Los Angeles County does business with some of these institutions, and the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office has already been charged with that research. The county has many requirements for its investments, Chair Burke said, and GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) contracts may exist with check-cashing facilities because they own the ATMs where clients access their cash benefits. The Consumer Affairs department spends considerable effort on filing actions against predatory companies.

Phillip Williams suggested enlisting the media to shed light on the effort of exposing these institutions, and Yaffe concurred, seeing the media as a primary way to communicate with consumers. Danny Ramos commented that over the last few years, public sector retirement boards such as LACERA, spurred by employee concerns, have raised their consciousness in terms of workers' money, informing corporations that investments will be pulled if certain practices are continued. The concept is spreading across the country, and unions are taking an active part. The marketing power of communities could be similarly utilized, Ramos suggested, with residents refusing to patronize banks that charge exorbitant fees or manage predatory subsidiaries. Los Angeles is one of the largest "unbanked" areas in the nation, Yaffe said, and financial institutions need to be educated about being responsive to the needs of their customers.

Celestina Castillo from SPA 4 recommended research about why people use payday advance places, saying that sometimes they are the best of a community's existing options. "Banks won't offer small loans of a few hundred bucks," she said, "and if you have to pay thirty bucks to get one, that's what you pay." Eliminating those vendors is not the answer, but competition with lower interest rates might be worthwhile to business owners. Olvera Stotzer objects to consumers being told that their only options are high-fee banks, cash advances at 400 percent interest, or loan extensions that raise an interest rate to 80 percent without proper disclosure. Anita Vigil also mentioned the widespread practice of offering credit cards to teenagers at inflated rates of interest. "The middle class is subject to these practices, too," she noted. Again, Williams said, the media could highlight these issues and show examples.

Felicia Lynn Ford sees the task force's proposal as more of a campaign than a plan, what with having to rally so much support, involve so many partners, and gather so much data on consumer needs. Marsha Ramos believes the effort is both innovative and ambitious, and offered to partner

in her role as member of a League of California Cities committee that is rolling out a public benefit education campaign on healthy families through a contract with the WellPoint Foundation, and planning a conference for elected officials, municipal managers, and financial services people in September. Yaffe welcomed the offer, saying that similar partners are “exactly what we’re looking for. This can’t be done by any one sector by itself.”

Foundation Board member (and former Council member) Sara Jiménez McSweyn asked about the specific timeline for the family economic success proposal, and how families would remain engaged. Yaffe explained that once the Children’s Planning Council approves the task force’s plan, the Board of Supervisors will be asked to adopt it and approve the recommendations, then request the Chief Executive Office to return in September to identify funding needs and make progress reports on implementation every six months. All the planned campaigns will need to be informed by community input from consumers, and families have expressed great interest in continuing to be involved. One recommendation for the Center for Family Economic Success is that the Children’s Planning Council continue to play its role of engaging families—as it does so successfully—so their voices may be heard about the center’s structure, policies, and supports.

Lisa Cleri Reale moved that the Los Angeles County Family Economic Success plan be adopted. Rafael Lopez seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Proposed County, City, and LAUSD Summit: Rafael Lopez

At the Council’s May meeting, a lively discussion took place about taking the strategic plan to action, and Beatriz Olvera Stotzer proposed convening a school readiness/school success summit—involving LAUSD, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, Los Angeles county government, the city of Los Angeles, the League of California Cities, and others—to develop policies that can have an impact on individual communities. Since then, a group has met to think about framing the issue: Council members Olvera Stotzer, Sharon Watson, Jacquelyn McCroskey, and Lopez (director of the city of Los Angeles’s Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families); Chief Executive Officer Flores Aguilar; Ray Cortines from the Los Angeles mayor’s office; and Monica Garcia from the LAUSD school board. A tentative summit date is being considered in February, and Lopez asked Council members to be on the lookout for e-mails telling them how to become involved.

“We’d like to rally the leaders of institutions around a measurable objective,” Lopez said. “There are 88 cities in Los Angeles County, which is the largest county in the nation. The charge is grand, but pulling together the right people at the table is exactly what we need to do now.” (LAUSD is a primary participant simply because of its size, but planners don’t wish to exclude other districts, either.) The group will meet again in a week or so to choose the summit topic, which will go far to sparking interest in the event. Initial discussions generated a lot of enthusiasm around the proposal that “Every child will graduate from high school,” but Lopez said no final decision had been made.

Community Building Mini Grants: Monica Delgado

The Council’s community-building mini-grants program has been launched and applications are available through the SPA/AIC Councils in both English and Spanish. Each council has formed its own application review committee and will help applicants develop ideas, complete the

paperwork, and implement their plans. An evaluation plan for the program will include pre- and post questionnaires, key informant interviews, and a final-report form with multiple-choice and narrative sections. Mini-grant guidelines were included in member packets.

Children's Planning Council Communications Plan: Dan Hutson

Chief Communications Officer Dan Hutson briefly reviewed the objectives of the 2007–2008 communications plan, included in member packets:

- Strengthen the Children's Planning Council's brand identity and increase awareness among key external audiences.
- Promote clear, consistent communication between key stakeholders within the organization.
- Provide communications support to programmatic efforts.
- Build the organizational capacity to implement this plan.

A small group of Council members will review the complete plan and provide feedback, and it will be presented to the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee, the Executive Committee, and the Foundation Board before being brought to the full Council for approval.

Announcements

- At her last meeting as Chief Executive Officer of the Children's Planning Council, Flores Aguilar asked attendees to acknowledge Council staff. "They're what makes the Council work," she said, reiterating that she is honored to continue her service to the Council in a different way.
- Marv Southard announced that state guidelines for the Mental Health Services Act's prevention and early intervention component were posted on the Internet yesterday and should be finalized by the Council's September meeting. He asked that a discussion item on this topic be added to the meeting agenda.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children's Planning Council is scheduled for:

Wednesday, September 19, 2007
9:30 a.m.
Room 140, Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles

There being no public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.