

Children's Planning Council Meeting

September 19, 2007

9:30 a.m.

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

Present: Chair Yvonne B. Burke
Victoria Lewis Adams, representing Steve Cooley
Bettye Anderson
Charles Avila
Lauraine Barber
Angela Carter, representing Trish Ploehn
Teresa A. DeCrescenzo
Duane Dennis
Nancy Díaz, representing Philip Browning
Amy Enomoto-Perez
Jeff Farber
Dorothy Fleisher
David W. Fleming
Chris Floyd
Felicia Lynn Ford
Cynthia Harding, representing Jonathan Fielding
Larry Lue
Jacquelyn McCroskey
Elton Naswood
Danny Ramos
Lisa Cleri Reale
Richelle Rios-Huizar
Marvin J. Southard
Beatriz Olvera Stotzer
Cheri Todoroff, representing Bruce Chernof
Mary Helen Vasquez
Anita Vigil, representing Robert Taylor
Sharon G. Watson
Phillip L. Williams
Mika Yamamoto, representing Russ Guiney

Chair Yvonne B. 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 July 18, 2007

David W. Fleming moved that the minutes of July 18, 2007, be approved as mailed. Marv Southard seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke

- Chair Burke asked Jacquelyn McCroskey and Sharon Watson for an update on the 11 Juvenile Justice recommendations presented to the Children's Planning Council at its July meeting. McCroskey briefly reviewed the history of the recommendations, noting that Supervisor Don Knabe has already made a formal motion regarding one, and the other 10 are still in discussion. In its Board-requested report dated August 31 (included in member packets), the Chief Executive Office concurred with the majority of the items, with the exception of separating the juvenile and adult functions of the Probation Department into different clusters under the county's new internal governance structure.

The CEO believes that further research and discussion is necessary for the drafting and adoption of legal representation standards for youth in the juvenile justice system, and Children's Planning Council representatives have met with panel attorneys and scheduled a meeting with the district attorney. (If Council members or partners have further ideas about rewording this recommendation, please contact McCroskey or Watson.) The CEO also liked the idea of the recommended research institute, but felt that significant resources and planning will be necessary to bring it to fruition. Community partnerships are particularly important for research that translates into action, and the health arena's history of pulling diverse expertise under one umbrella may be a useful model.

Although the CEO concurred with the remaining recommendations, its report essentially states that steps toward each are already being taken—an assertion that McCroskey fears is in reality less evident than might be hoped. She displayed a recent letter from the Probation Department to a relative caregiver, requesting the standard cost reimbursement claimed from the parents of youngsters who are housed in juvenile halls or probation camps. The letter is effectively a bill for \$5,000, couched in confusing language and making no reference to any process for payment nor of any resources available to families owing these funds, such as a financial evaluation counselor, a hearing in juvenile court, or the right to an attorney. Most disturbing of all, the letter is dated July 24, yet demands financial documentation by July 22.

McCroskey hopes that county government will be willing over the long term to rely on the unique contribution of the Children's Planning Council in gathering and using data, and in galvanizing community voices to examine practices such as this letter. "If the department is interested in how to get more responsiveness than fear," she said, "the Council could provide useful input." Both Chair Burke and the Probation Department's Anita Vigil requested copies of the letter. Vigil had not seen that particular request, but remembered similar correspondence from her time as a field director seven years ago. Then, the standard letter laid out the costs of the child's incarceration, calculating the parents' share and including a telephone number to make arrangements for payment. During the telephone call, the restitution unit would ascertain the ability of the parents to pay; if they could not, they were not obligated to. Vigil suggested that the restitution unit's manager make a presentation to the Council on the current process, saying that there was no excuse for such a confusing and alarming letter. "We accept responsibility for it," Vigil said, "and will address the issue."

Following Supervisor Knabe's June 19 motion on establishing charter schools in the juvenile halls and camps, Sharon Watson reported that a key stakeholders' group for that effort has been meeting every two weeks. It is chaired by Chief Probation Officer Robert Taylor and includes representatives from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the county libraries, the Probation Commission, the Children's Planning Council, the Education Coordinating Council, and the Youth Law Center. Meetings are also being arranged between Chief Taylor and several people with track records of working with high-risk youth: Steve Barr of Green Dot charter schools and Paul Cummins of the New Visions Foundation, which just opened the New Village Charter School at St. Anne's. Watson acknowledged that the process would likely take some months, and encouraged Children's Planning Council members and community partners to contact Lilian Coral, the Council's Policy Manager, if they are interested in helping.

Jeff Farber volunteered to participate, also suggesting the expansion of the recommendation to successful community models other than charter schools, such as a community day school at Helpline Youth Counseling that functions in partnership with Probation, DCFS, and LACOE. Especially because charter schools don't exist in every community, ensuring that the system can continue to serve children when they return to their communities after being incarcerated is important. Mary Helen Vasquez is interested in tying education goals to job skills, noting that youth participating in the Conservation Corps work on their high school diplomas or GEDs while also getting job training, with opportunities to build their résumés and practice interviewing techniques.

Because of the delay in receiving the CEO's report, some momentum on the Juvenile Justice recommendations has been lost, but Council members continue to meet with Board offices to keep the reform effort alive. Chair Burke acknowledged the frustrations McCroskey expressed about the slow pace of reform, but reminded everyone of the Department of Justice surveillance under which the county's juvenile halls are currently functioning. If timetables are not met—for providing sufficient special education teachers, for example—a consent decree is threatened. LACOE has recently hired large numbers of special education teachers, and shifting to a charter school model that may or may not offer these resources would be problematic for the juvenile halls at this time. The probation camps, however, which are not yet under Department of Justice orders, might be able to make the transition.

Burke also raised the topic of family visits to incarcerated youth, saying that the county is trying to facilitate those visits by offering transportation, particularly to camp sites in remote areas. Drug tests and metal-detector screenings that parents must undergo before entering can generate resentment, but drugs are getting into the camps in some way, through employees, parents, or visitors, and the Department of Justice is looking closely at that issue. CPC Parent Representative, Mary Helen Vasquez, believes that if parents are approached in a respectful manner and told the reasons the screenings are necessary, they will see the bigger picture and be more willing to cooperate. Safety issues also come into play, Vigil explained, with flip-flops being banned and tennis shoes provided as safe footwear. Family resource centers at each juvenile hall, at first operating only on Sundays but now open three days a week, are designed to help parents navigate the juvenile justice system, and offer services in three languages. The centers are now also being established at probation camps.

Another issue is that of reimbursement for medical care provided in the juvenile halls, Burke said, since getting system youngsters enrolled in Medi-Cal can be a cumbersome process, and issues need to be resolved with Federal legislation. Teresa DeCrescenzo—whose agency serves gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning adolescents—mentioned a call she recently received from a camp director asking, “How in the world did I get a transgender girl assigned to my boys’ camp?” The courts may make such an order, DeCrescenzo said, but it isn’t right. “Somebody’s going to get hurt.”

Coordinating reforms in the dependency and delinquency systems is important, Burke said, and a continuing policy discussion should take place. Much enthusiasm exists for the Council’s recommendations, and the Board is trying to balance them with the legal situation. McCroskey acknowledged the effort’s complexity, but believes that certain partnerships fall squarely within the Children’s Planning Council’s role, such as helping government agencies grasp why parents need to understand the reasons behind security protocols at the camps and halls. Yolie Flores Aguilar echoed McCroskey’s frustration with the ongoing “deep insensitivity” of county government culture, embodied by the Chief Executive Office response claiming that all the requested reforms are already being implemented. Flores Aguilar is concerned that the Council’s report will be left on a shelf, and suggested a review committee to look at the Department of Justice’s concerns and how they match up to the 11 recommendations. Chair Burke agreed, emphasizing the need for real coordination and partnership rather than misunderstanding.

- As the Council honors its commitment to address the issue of gangs, it must also consider reforms to the juvenile justice system that will help alleviate the high levels of recidivism among youth. Burke has met with the city of Los Angeles’s new gang czar and has assured her office’s cooperation on this region-wide issue. The Board of Supervisors recently passed a motion to fund gang intervention and related services in the amount of \$2 million to community-based organizations; those contracts also build in a community mobilization piece. Jeff Farber sees that as a testament to the Probation Department’s presence at the Children’s Planning Council table.

Foundation Board Report: Phillip L. Williams

- At the last meeting of The Children’s Planning Council Foundation, Inc., Sam Chan announced his resignation from the Foundation Board for family reasons, although he will still serve on the Children’s Planning Council as Dr. Southard’s alternate for the Department of Mental Health. Phillip Williams praised Chan’s energy, talents, and broad knowledge of county systems, and thanked him for his 12 years of service on the Foundation Board.
- On Yolie Flores Aguilar’s acceptance of the position of President and Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation Board (effective July 27), Cheryl Mendoza stepped into the job of Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Children’s Planning Council. The Foundation Board has given Mendoza full authority to conduct the organization’s work in partnership with the Executive Committee and Council members. Flores Aguilar will assist her through the end of 2007, after which time her principal duties will be reduced to fundraising for the Foundation, the fiduciary and fundraising arm of the Council that serves as the legal employer of all Council and SPA/AIC Council staff. Williams stressed the fact that governance matters are

the sole purview of the Children's Planning Council's Executive Committee, which has the power and responsibility to run the Council and all its operations.

- Foundation Board member Sara Jiménez-McSweyn thanked Southard for allowing Chan to be a pivotal part of Council conversations over the last few years. She and Foundation Board member Roger Sharma will be assuming Chan's role on the Executive Committee and are excited about the opportunity, especially as Jiménez-McSweyn served on the Executive Committee some years ago as the representative from SPA 4.

As part of the Foundation Board's personnel committee, Jiménez-McSweyn sees the current level of staff talent as a result of the hard work Flores Aguilar has done to strengthen the Children's Planning Council's infrastructure, and she invited all employees to play a meaningful role in the future of the Council's work. She pledged to attend monthly Executive Committee meetings and to work closely with its co-chairs and with Mendoza to facilitate clarity and transparency as the Council's agenda proceeds. "The Executive Committee is important," Jiménez-McSweyn said, "but our connectedness is pivotal."

Executive Committee Report: Chris Floyd and Lisa Cleri Reale

Lisa Cleri Reale praised the smoothness of the staff transition so far, and on behalf of the Executive Committee and Foundation Board guaranteed that "all processes will be transparent, we'll be honest, and we'll provide leadership."

Governance Because of unresolved governance issues, the search committee to identify candidates for a permanent Chief Executive Officer for the Council has not yet met, as it was felt that a solid organizational structure must be in place before recruitment begins. "We've outgrown ourselves," Cleri Reale said; a reorganization process is needed not because the Council's situation is bad, but because its structure must be rebuilt for the future. She reviewed the implementation requirements for the Council's strategic plan, which are to:

- Address governance issues and make needed changes
- Address the staff organizational structure
- Provide technical assistance and support to SPA/AIC Council staff
- Develop performance measures and tracking systems
- Develop an evaluation plan

Governance discussions have been ongoing since August with Executive Committee and Foundation Board members as well as with other interested parties, and a proposal has been made to convene a small group of individuals whose task over the next four months would be to:

- Conduct a forward-looking assessment of the Council's best possible future
- Develop recommendations to the Executive Committee and Foundation Board
- Address at least four principal strategic areas:
 - ✓ The environment in which the Council now operates
 - ✓ The Council's direction

- ✓ How the Council's current relationships and structure align with its core mission and values
- ✓ The structures needed to do the work and realign the Council to its core mission and values

The group, which would be supported by a consultant and one or two Council staff, would consist of 12 to 15 individuals appointed by the Executive Committee. They must:

- Be willing to engage in conversation on behalf of the whole
- Be willing to examine challenges around trust, authority, power, and structure
- Be recognized as independent in their thinking and fair in their assessments
- Value the importance of the authentic inclusion of community and bringing the voices of parents, residents, and youth to the Children's Planning Council
- Be prepared to identify and suggest changes to governance issues raised in the strategic plan

Cleri Reale emphasized the fact that the working group would be small in number and would not necessarily be inclusive of all constituencies. The process, however, is critical. Even as long ago as 2005's retreat, Council members realized that if the work was to be community driven, the organization's governance had already been outlived. "This is because of our success," said David Fleming, "not because anyone did anything wrong. We've grown so big and gone so far in sixteen years that we need to re-examine our structure." Fleming also commented on the role of The Children's Planning Council Foundation, which exists solely to raise and manage the funds for the Council's work. If the nonprofit Foundation did not exist, all private donations would go into the county's treasury and be subject to all the disbursement rules the county observes. "That doesn't fit what we're trying to do," Fleming said. "The Foundation is the exchequer, nothing more. All decisions and policies are decided by the Council, not the Foundation. It's not trying to take over or run things—it's just helping the Council do what it does."

Beatriz Olvera Stotzer moved to approve the formation of the governance working group as proposed. Phillip Williams seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Budget Despite the excitement of the last 45 days at the Children's Planning Council, Chris Floyd said that "the system has continued without a bump," and on September 13, the Foundation Board approved the 2007–2008 budget developed by Flores Aguilar and Mendoza. (Copies were included in member packets.)

Chris Floyd moved that the Children's Planning Council adopt the proposed 2007–2008 budget; David Fleming seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Working Group Updates: Beatriz Olvera Stotzer

- Because of recent activities, the proposed county, city, and school summit has been put on hold. Much progress has been made to coordinate school readiness work among the parties, including meetings between Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Admiral David Brewer, but the Council needs to gain clarity about the level at which it needs to work.

- The Family Economic Success task force finished its work in June, hoping that the Board of Supervisors would consider a budget request for its plan during September's supplemental budget deliberations. Unfortunately, task force members were not able to gain input from Board deputies in time to meet that deadline. In addition, the county's budget constraints this year indicated that delaying any funding requests might be advisable.

Consequently, recommendations will be submitted to the Board later this year, and those with funding implications will be held for implementation next year, if they are approved. The Family Economic Success executive team—including Lari Sheehan from the Chief Executive Office and task force co-chair Phil Ansell from the Department of Public Social Services—will ensure that all necessary changes to the plan have been made based on feedback from stakeholders, and CEO Bill Fujioka will also be asked for his input. Board deputy briefings should take place in November, and the plan will then be presented to the supervisors. If Council members have questions or concerns about the draft plan mailed to them, Olvera Stotzer encouraged them to contact staff.

One of the task force's recommendations was to find a permanent home for the Earned Income Tax Credit campaign at United Way of Greater Los Angeles. The Board allocation for the EITC campaign has already been included in the county budget, but discussions with Board deputies must still take place about making that physical move. Handing off that work will be a core change for Council staffing, Flores Aguilar said, and a contract will need to be approved by the Board that gives the Council oversight of the EITC campaign, meeting performance measures and making regular reports to the Board.

County budget concerns are more about the future than the present, Chair Burke said. Last year saw record increases in county revenues, but the recent sharp drop in real estate sales will mean fewer property tax reassessments and therefore lower levels of property tax, the county's main source of income. Deficits in health funding are also expected.

Acting Chief Executive Officer's Report: Dr. Cheryl Mendoza

- Mendoza thanked the Foundation Board for its vote of confidence in naming her the Council's acting chief executive officer. Her association with the Council began 15 years ago when she was part of the 30-member consultant team that traveled into communities, under the direction of Cecilia Sandoval, to pitch the idea of the SPA/AIC Councils and to increase awareness of the Children's Planning Council. Now that she has come full circle, Mendoza is delighted with her strong relationship with the Foundation Board and the Executive Committee, and expressed appreciation to Lisa Cleri Reale, Chris Floyd, Phil Williams, and Sara Jiménez-McSweyn for their unwavering support. She also is grateful to Miriam Long, Chair Burke's deputy, for her insights into county government, and to Flores Aguilar. "Yolie's made it easy for me to transition to my new role," Mendoza said. She is committed to working in partnership with all Children's Planning Council members, seeking their opinions and advice and doing her best to include everyone.
- The management team is diligently moving ahead with the strategic plan implementation approved in May, taking on additional duties to ensure that no disruption in work occurs and coordinating their work with the governance effort to create a system of sound checks and

balances. Mendoza is building her relationship with the Interagency Operations Group, a group of high-level managers from county health and human service agencies and elsewhere, and is promising Council support for the county's demonstration impact project and its prevention initiative. Staff is continuing to develop the 2008 Children's ScoreCard and meet with consultants to strengthen the Council's data evaluation and research capabilities.

- Some key new hires will help address strategic plan issues:
 - Financial Manager Kirby Smith comes with experience in both the nonprofit financial management world and commercial banking, and formerly served as the Chief Financial Officer for Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS).
 - Policy Analyst Anthony Marsh will be working with Policy Manager Lilian Coral.
 - For the community organizing and parent training that lies at the heart of the Council's staff work, Mendoza announced several new employees:
 - ✓ Angela Beltran and Vilma Cruz in SPA 4
 - ✓ Leya Hale at the American Indian Children's Council
 - ✓ Martha Contreras, Martha Donado, Maria Rosales and Teresa Lund with the Wellspring initiative at Children's Planning Council headquarters

Chair Burke promised Mendoza everyone's support and cooperation, and expressed the best wishes of all the Board of Supervisors on her new position.

Policy Work Development: Lilian Coral

Goal three of the Council's strategic plan addresses the development of bold initiatives, and over the next year Coral will focus on creating a policy agenda nurtured by community input. The policy work group is implementing Executive Committee recommendations for both short-term and long-term policy agenda items, and, with the SPA/AIC Councils, is crafting a policy-development process at the local level. Volunteers are also working with the family economic support task force, in the juvenile justice area, and with the educational reform work group.

Family economic success policy issues include the development of a coordinated campaign, founding the research center, and institutionalizing certain practices. Coral also plans to establish a review of state legislation important to children and families, and to work with local legislators to gain a voice in their priorities and ensure that their activities support what communities are asking for. She encouraged anyone with questions to contact her.

Announcements

- On November 17, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles is sponsoring a HomeWalk to benefit homeless organizations. It hopes to involve 5,000 walkers in this 5K event at Exposition Park, with the \$25 entrance fee going to help the 88,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County, 15,000 of whom are children. More information is available on the United Way website, <http://www.unitedwayla.org>.
- The planning process for the prevention and early intervention component of the Mental Health Services Act will begin on September 20 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. at St. Anne's.

Although the meeting will be primarily aimed at orienting stakeholder delegates—including the Children's Planning Council—to the planning process, it is open to the public.

- The National Alliance of Mentally Ill (NAMI) will sponsor a fundraising walk on October 6 starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica. For more information or to sign up to participate, please visit <http://www.namiwalkslac.org>.

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, November 28, 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 10:50 a.m.