



Children's Planning Council Meeting

March 21, 2007

9:30 a.m.

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

Present: Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Bettye Anderson
Lauraine Barber
Lesley Blacher, representing David Janssen
Cheri Todoroff, representing Bruce Chernof
Deborah Davies
Duane Dennis
Nancy Diaz, representing Bryce Yokomizo
David W. Fleming
Chris Floyd
Lisa Garrett, representing Philip Browning
Cynthia Harding, representing Jonathan Fielding
Jan Isenberg, representing Darline Robles
Rafael Lopez, representing David L. Brewer
Penny Markey, representing Margaret Donnellan Todd
Jacquelyn McCroskey
Kaye Michaelson
José Ramos, Jr.
Richelle Rios-Huizar
Bruce Saltzer
Anita Vigil, representing Robert Taylor
Sharon G. Watson
Phillip L. Williams

Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke brought the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and asked that Council members and the audience introduce themselves. Chief executive officer Yolie Flores Aguilar is absent from today's meeting because of the sudden death of her brother, and Burke sent condolences on behalf of the Council.

Approval of the Minutes of January 17, 2007

David Fleming moved that the minutes of January 17, 2007, be approved as mailed. Phillip L. Williams seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke

- Chair Burke offered congratulations to Flores Aguilar on her election to the board of the Los Angeles Unified School District, saying that she would be in a unique position to help the

Children's Planning Council translate its concerns for the children of Los Angeles into action. Burke suggested that a formal letter of congratulation from the Council be drafted.

- A new member will join the Council table at the May meeting—David Brewer, superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District since December 2006. Flores Aguilar met with Brewer last week to inform him of the Children's Planning Council's work, and he is very interested in relationships with Los Angeles County's health and human service agencies, particularly mental health. Burke looks forward to a strong partnership to ensure that all district students make steady progress in the key outcome area of education and workforce readiness. Prior to the May meeting, she will host a briefing with Brewer, the directors of the county's health and human services departments, and the superintendent of county schools.
- Last month, the Board of Supervisor passed a motion to change the county's governance structure so that department heads report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer, rather than to the five-member Board. The arrangement will minimize the conflicting priorities and directions that can sometimes occur. "Answering to five different bosses is not easy," Burke said. "Most large counties give a chief executive officer the overall responsibility for managing the county and authority over the hiring, evaluation, and firing of department heads." In terms of population, Los Angeles is the biggest county in the United States; if it were a nation it would be the sixteenth largest in the world. "It can be difficult to get people to work here," Burke said. "They're concerned that if they're not successful, their career can be derailed. It's time to operate county government more like a business, with department heads treated professionally rather than politically." This will be a change for supervisors, board deputies, and departments alike, and many details are still being considered.

Although Burke supported the option of an elected chief executive for the county the last time it appeared on the ballot, she now believes that increasing the responsibilities of the appointed position is an important step. "Everyone we interviewed [to replace David Janssen, the retiring Chief Administrative Officer] functions in that capacity where they're working now," Burke said. "We had lots of discussions about it." The county is also looking at successful models like San Diego and Santa Clara counties.

A second reading of the motion will occur this week, and the ordinance change should be in full force by May. A charter amendment will then appear on the ballot next year. The Children's Planning Council will schedule an in-depth discussion of the changes in May.

Strategic Plan Progress Report

Chief operating officer Cheryl Mendoza introduced consultant Cecilia Sandoval, expressing appreciation for Sandoval's help in developing the final component of the Children's Planning Council's strategic plan. Involved with the Council at its inception, Sandoval was responsible for much of the work of creating the service planning area councils and the American Indian Children's Council, and joked about the Council's environmental sensibilities in 'recycling' her.

The Children's Planning Council's strategic planning process began in May 2005 with a two-day retreat, after which a work group developed a set of strategic directions that were approved by the Council in November 2005. Much discussion yielded the strategic framework approved in September 2006, and staff were charged with producing an implementation plan. That process

began with an all-staff meeting on January 30, 2007, to discuss day-to-day work realities for both central-office employees and field staff at the SPA/AIC Councils, and the challenges of strategic plan implementation in terms of that work.

Following that meeting, a group tackled the issues in a series of intensive all-day sessions, staying late and dedicating many hours of personal time. Their objective was to produce a plan to achieve the Children's Planning Council's mission over the next three years, through 2009, making its objectives real and addressing internal barriers to implementation. "Staff had excellent, honest, complex conversations," Sandoval said, "about integrating the work that is already going on, questioning what work might be taken off the agenda, and trying to define what the Children's Planning Council's main business is. How can we better work as a whole system to effect change for children in Los Angeles County? What is the relationship of the service planning area councils and the American Indian Children's Council to the parent and youth networks that have been created in those communities? Why are we doing what we're doing?" Some critical questions were discussed, and staff presented their recommendations to a joint meeting of the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee and the Executive Committee last week. The goal of today's presentation is to update Council members on staff progress, obtain feedback, and review the next steps in the process.

An effective strategic plan will lead to better decision-making, enhanced capabilities, improved communication, and increased political support. Chief communications officer Dan Hutson detailed the operational issues in play, which include:

- Clarifying and communicating the organization's **mission**: "The Children's Planning Council creates social change to improve outcomes for children at both the community and systems levels, which requires relationship-building across communities and institutions."
- Reviewing the Council's **structure** to prioritize and align its work and examine organizational roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers
- Addressing **staff development** issues by improving orientation, training, and support; increasing professional development; and ensuring equity in SPA/AIC Council staffing and greater managerial support for field staff
- **Resource development** for long-term sustainability
- **Planning** that addresses workload issues with clear processes, prioritization, and responsibilities
- **Alignment and integration** strategies that will allow the Council to be more intentional and mission-focused
- Clarifying the role of **data** in the organization, identifying data needs, collection methods, and so on
- **Communications** that advances 'who we are' and the value of the Council's work

Chrissie Castro, working group member and staff to the American Indian Children's Council, spoke of the strategic challenges inherent in reconciling the implementation of the strategic plan with limited staff capacity, honoring current work—particularly that of the SPA/AIC Councils—and using partnerships for new work that is mission-focused and promises the greatest positive

impact. She reviewed the strategies and tasks under the three major prongs of the plan, highlighting changes recommended by the staff working group.

➤ **Promote responsive family-strengthening institutions.**

1. Encourage partner institutions to develop programs, strategies, and engagement efforts that support and strengthen families and provide them with the environments and opportunities to care optimally for their children.
 - Define 'family-strengthening institutions' and develop an engagement strategy.
 - Make current relationship-building efforts more intentional; focus on areas of greatest impact.
 - Partner with key county agencies, and use community input to influence county budget prioritization processes and prevention efforts.
2. Promote funding flexibility in government service contracts with community-based providers to allow services and resources to support and strengthen families, build their leadership capacity, and promote relationship-building in the community and place of service.
 - Identify the contracts to target and examples of successful contract flexibility.
 - Develop recommendations to county departments and the Board of Supervisors on how to make greater use of family support values in county contracting.
 - Encourage community/county dialogue on how to involve communities in program development.
 - Help community-based organizations submit proposals that include family-strengthening elements.
3. Strengthen the leadership capacity of parents and youth to hold institutions accountable.
 - Sustain current SPA/AIC Council network groups and continue systems training.
 - Develop Community Building Institute modules to help parents navigate public systems.
 - Broker relationships between parents and institutions through SPA/AIC Council networks.

➤ **Mobilize empowered communities for kids.**

1. Support and sustain existing SPA/AIC Council community-building networks that are working to make changes in neighborhoods on behalf of children and families (*amended*).
 - Develop a clear methodology for community-building, define 'support and sustain,' and profile existing networks.
 - Implement a mini-grants program.
 - Create a master calendar of all program activities to help align the work.
 - Explore opportunities to link shared interests; share best practices among the networks.

2. Launch the Community Building Institute to develop and strengthen the leadership skills of parents and youth to affect indicators of child well-being in their neighborhoods.
 - Revise the CBI plan and set training priorities.
 - Complete a minimum of 20 training sessions annually for SPA/AIC Council staff, members, and networks.
 - Create a resource database of outside training and curricula available for Children's Planning Council use.
 - Create a structure that links to other partners and experienced providers.
3. Create a vehicle for SPA/AIC Councils to influence Children's Planning Council policies affecting children, youth, and families.
 - Strengthen parent networks to influence local policy and foster the effective integration and participation of parents, residents, and youth into decision-making bodies.
 - Integrate these networks into the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee's agenda and increase its capacity to take up policy issues.
 - Strengthen the Children's Planning Council's capacity to do policy research and analysis in support of the SPA/AIC Councils.
 - Link this to the CBI training agenda.
4. Link Children's Planning Council efforts to other community organizing groups (*new*).
 - Create a matrix of Children's Planning Council organization efforts.
 - Develop strategies for identifying potential partners and linking their efforts with Children's Planning Council mobilization efforts.

➤ **Pursue bold policies to improve children's lives.**

1. Forge and deepen relationships with key legislators and decision-makers.
 - Identify key legislators and decision-makers.
 - Map current relationships.
 - Develop a plan for introducing them to the Children's Planning Council.
2. Engage local institutional and community-based partners in the development of the Children's Planning Council's policy agenda.
 - Identify key relevant institutions, meet with their leaders, and identify common interests.
 - Secure partnership agreements.
3. Develop a short- and long-term strategic policy agenda for improving the lives of children and families that is both community- and data-driven. Consider current Children's Planning Council efforts, including family economic success, juvenile justice issues, and the emerging prevention agenda.
 - Create policy ad hoc committees.
 - Conduct research on policy recommendations.
 - Work with the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee and the Executive Committee to prioritize.

4. Influence the legislative agenda of the County of Los Angeles and cities within the county, as well as the policy agendas of local school districts (*amended*).
 - Establish criteria for issues selection.
 - Survey areas of influence and the policy agendas of cities that are related to children and families.
 - Clarify the role of local networks and SPA/AIC Council staff.
 - Establish a policy on the use of staff time and resources for advocacy activities.

Hutson stressed the Children's Planning Council's need to focus on what it does best and what it is uniquely suited to do. The working group spent much time in conversation about moving forward while at the same time integrating work that is already being done. Six new ad hoc work groups are being proposed (a detailed listing was included in member packets) to address issues included in the strategic plan:

- Targeting and engaging key institutions
- Funding flexibility
- Policy partners
- Communications
- Staffing
- Technology

These will meet to accomplish their tasks, then disband, and Hutson encouraged Council members to participate. Existing bodies will also address strategic plan issues:

- Governance (Executive Committee)
- Partnerships (Executive Committee and Strengthening Community Capacity Committee, jointly)
- SPA/AIC Council development (Strengthening Community Capacity Committee)
- Data staffing and direction (Data Partnership)
- Fund development (The Children's Planning Council Foundation, Inc.)

Following today's meeting, alignment and integration issues will be discussed with SPA/AIC Council staff, and the implementation plan will be presented to the SPA/AIC Councils for feedback and help with decisions. The ad hoc work groups will then be formed, benchmarks and measures for evaluation will be established, and a final plan will be delivered to the Children's Planning Council in May. Once it is approved, a 'community-friendly' version will be developed for wide distribution.

Jacquelyn McCroskey praised the efforts of everyone working on the plan. "It's developmentally appropriate," she said, "for a fifteen-year-old to be harnessing its energies and focusing on what it really wants to be when it grows up. Everything makes sense and aligns well." Bruce Saltzer strongly supports the plan's core areas, but is concerned that it is overly ambitious. "Prioritization is all-important," he said. "Strategy four under 'bold policies' alone is a huge undertaking." As he's mentioned before, he would like a way for the SPA/AIC Councils to regularly report their work to the Children's Planning Council as a whole and use member resources for any problem-solving they may need. Saltzer likes the idea of benchmarks, but did not see it under the operational issues to be addressed. "If we try to do too much, we won't do anything concrete," he cautioned. Sandoval agreed, explaining that the process over the next few weeks would be to prioritize what should be phased in first to the SPA/AIC Council workplans and elsewhere.

Saltzer also questioned the absence of the juvenile justice work group from the list of ad hoc groups to be created, and Anita Vigil assured him that, because the task of examining the juvenile justice system had been assigned by the Board of Supervisors, the committee had been functioning for the last 18 months. A small group is meeting tomorrow to talk about implementing recommendations from the 2006 report. Many other activities are going on that are not reflected on today's document, Sandoval said, since it deals only with the implementation of the work framed by the strategic plan's outcomes.

No objections were voiced to moving forward with the implementation plan as presented, and Sandoval asked recognition for the contributions of the working group:

- Yolie Flores Aguilar
- Celestina Castillo
- Chrissie Castro
- Monica Houston
- Gabriela Hurtado
- Dan Hutson
- Beth Kraemer
- Mark Masaoka
- Cheryl Mendoza
- Sofia Moreno
- Cynthia Perez-Robledo
- Laura Valles
- Chrysta Wilson

Executive Committee Report: Chris Floyd

At the January meeting, the Children's Planning Council had a lengthy dialogue about the need to develop thoughtful guidelines about entering into partnerships with other stakeholders. The Council asked the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee to make recommendations on this process to the Executive Committee, which would propose a policy at today's meeting.

A very thoughtful discussion occurred at the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee, Deborah Davies reported, with participants outlining the issue's multi-layered complications, especially around finances, and its far-reaching implications for the Children's Planning Council and the SPA/AIC Councils. Because of the importance of the policy, Colleen Mooney said, the committee voted to retain facilitator John Ott for a three-hour joint meeting of the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee and as many members of the Executive Committee as can attend, to define a recommended position. That meeting will take place on April 20, and will be reported on at the Council's May meeting.

Chris Floyd moved that the Executive Committee's report be received and filed; Phillip Williams seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Proposal to Oppose AB 81: Nick Ippolito, Fourth District Deputy

At the request of Children's Planning Council member Elisa Nicholas, Nick Ippolito, children's deputy for Supervisor Don Knabe, presented two documents (included in member packets) requesting the Council's support for opposing AB 81, a change to the Safe Haven Law that allows for the anonymous surrender of newborn infants. The Council has been a key partner in the implementation and promotion of this law, which has saved 53 lives over the past seven years, six in 2007 alone. AB 81 would alter the Safe Haven Law to extend the time allowed to surrender from 72 hours to 30 days.

Case histories of women arrested for abandoning their babies are "eerily similar," Ippolito said. In almost all cases, they concealed their pregnancies—not seeking prenatal care, and giving birth

alone—out of a desperate and overwhelming fear that their parents, family, or boyfriend would discover they were pregnant. Many hoped the baby would be found and cared for, but were terrified that the child's birth would be traced to them. A study has shown that 83 percent of the time, the babies were discarded or killed within 72 hours of birth.

Though well-intended, AB 81 presents no evidence that the high risk factors for these women continue beyond the 72-hour timeframe, and extending that window puts babies in danger of being kept in unsafe conditions without proper medical care, possibly to be abused or neglected. The bill is not entirely without merit, since the outreach dollars are significant and getting the word out about safe surrender is critical. Ippolito urged the Children's Planning Council to join the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney, the California State Association of Counties, First 5 LA, the county's child abuse councils, and the state Child Welfare Directors Association in opposing the bill unless amended.

An audience member asked about a mother's options under the original measure if she decides to surrender a child after 72 hours, and Ippolito replied that relinquishment and adoption are well publicized and always available through the Department of Children and Family Services. The Safe Haven Law is specifically tailored for women who conceal their pregnancies and don't know what else to do, while parents who are overwhelmed by the needs of an infant face a different set of issues. The relinquishment of a child to DCFS is not anonymous, however, and some paperwork is required.

Bruce Saltzer moved that the Children's Planning Council formally oppose the passage of AB 81 unless the bill is amended to preserve the Safe Haven Law's 72-hour timeframe. Lauraine Barber seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Family Economic Success Community Engagement Plan: Chrysta Wilson

Chrysta Wilson, the Children's Planning Council's manager of community planning and engagement, provides support to the SPA/AIC Councils and to the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee. In the spring of 2006, a 27-agency, multi-sector collaborative planning body was convened to develop a plan to address family economic success in Los Angeles County, and members identified three key strategies: asset-building and leveraging assets, workforce economic development, and access to public benefits. "These areas are pretty standard," Wilson said, "but we weren't yet talking with people who work directly with families, to translate community voices into policy. How do families themselves define poverty? What are they experiencing that could help make our plan more robust?"

From August through December last year, staff grappled with designing a focus-group approach to community action research—led by the community, rather than 'extracted' from it—and formed a partnership with Claremont Graduate University, which has an extensive background in narrative, community-led, participatory research. Since January, focus groups have been held in communities across the county, using a storytelling approach to find out from residents what family economic success means to them and what barriers exist to their families achieving it. "This is primary data we're collecting," Wilson said, "and we're getting some very rich answers." Community leaders who have taken ownership of the project are now requesting a geographic information systems (GIS) asset map to clarify local program and policy issues—an

unintended outcome, Wilson said, but a clear indication that the Children's Planning Council is helping communities act on their own behalf.

Once the focus groups are completed within the next three weeks, Claremont researchers will synthesize the data collected and meet with community leaders and staff to discuss the findings. A presentation will then be made to the family economic success planning body and to the Children's Planning Council to help develop the overall plan to raise economic security for Los Angeles County families.

EITC Campaign: Marco Ramirez

Marco Ramirez, coordinator of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign, said that, since 1975, the EITC has been the most successful anti-poverty strategy in the United States. However, Los Angeles County fails to rank in the top 80 areas in terms of families claiming the credit. One purpose of the EITC campaign is to take advantage of its diversity of partners to better engage grassroots organizations in spreading knowledge about the credit and in expanding free income-tax assistance programs. Some areas have no such services, and the campaign is working with the SPA 1 Council, Washington Mutual, and United Way to launch a free tax preparation day on March 24 in Lancaster. It is hoping to present a similar event in East Los Angeles, working with SPA Council staff and the Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation.

The call load to the county's 211 information system regarding the EITC has risen by 20 percent from last year, and communications officer Dan Hutson has increased the campaign's access to mainstream media with radio appearances, newspaper articles, and participation in tonight's IRS-sponsored Univision program with California's first lady, Maria Shriver. "We're involved with partners we've never worked with before," Ramirez said, "and we're researching models that have been successful elsewhere to bring them here."

Recruiting volunteers for tax-preparation services is sometimes difficult, since experienced individuals are often busy during tax season. The campaign's goal is a year-round army of tax preparers trained and ready to go, "but we can't do it on our own," Ramirez said. "We need to enlist your help." He encouraged meeting attendees to refer people to 211, to the EITC brochure, and to the campaign's website, <http://www.eitc-la.com>, which has a search engine to locate free tax assistance by entering a ZIP Code.

Implementing EITC outreach into what agencies are already doing is key. "It needs to be part of basic case management, not just a seasonal topic," Ramirez said. "We need to change people's thinking to encourage a culture of savings, action, and engagement." The Department of Public Social Services has been very successful in providing Saturday services at its GAIN (Greater Avenues to Independence) offices for CalWORKs participants, and is rolling out a similar campaign to its Medi-Cal food stamp clients within the next two weeks. The Department of Child Support Services has also included information about the EITC in mailers to custodial parents. Bruce Saltzer requested a simple document suitable for forwarding to partner agencies, which Ramirez promised to e-mail.

Community Building Institute: Beth Kraemer

Chief program officer Beth Kraemer explained revisions to the Community Building Institute that were spurred by the strategic planning process. “Basically, we asked ourselves if the Children’s Planning Council is in the curriculum development business,” she said, “or if it’s more appropriate to work with others to customize training for stakeholder groups in the areas of community-building and leadership development. In developing a model to deliver on our promise, we’ve missed some essential steps. So we don’t put the cart before the horse, we’ve paused in our work.” Fundamental modeling issues must be addressed to build the Council’s capacity to sustain the effort over the long term, Kraemer said, “but the promise remains. We intend to coordinate the capacity-building and training identified in our original plan for our institutional partners, our staff, and the parent and youth networks aligned with the SPA/AIC Councils.” One issue is staffing, since Laura Valles—former director of community planning and engagement—is no longer with the Council, and Kraemer believes that the new person in that position should have input on the reconfiguration.

Phillip Williams asked about successful models elsewhere, and Kraemer replied that most entities are independent nonprofit organizations that do nothing but training and curriculum development. “Is that’s what’s best for us?” she asked. “Does that model fit what we should be doing?” Staff have done good work both in identifying materials that can be customized for the Children’s Planning Council and in linking to existing trainings, particularly in leadership development for parents and youth.

A target date for recommencing the Community Building Institute will depend on hiring Valles’s replacement and will likely begin with institutional partners and staff, which are a first priority. Trainings for parents and youth in the SPA/AIC Councils will continue, but no new curricula will be introduced. Lisa Garrett encouraged capitalizing on the momentum gained for the concept when county department directors were consulted. “There was a big push, but then we haven’t heard much about it,” she said. “Everyone’s on board.”

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, May 16, 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 11:07 a.m.