



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

Children's Planning Council Meeting

November 28, 2007

9:30 a.m.

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

Present:

- Chair Yvonne B. Burke
- John Perry Amos
- Bettye Anderson
- Lauraine Barber
- Priscilla Charles-Carter
- Paul Chung
- Rabbi Bernard Cohen
- Deborah Davies
- Duane Dennis
- Nancy Díaz, representing Philip Browning
- Jeff Farber
- Dorothy Fleisher
- Chris Floyd
- Felicia Lynn Ford
- Teri Gillams, representing Trish Ploehn
- Steven Golightly
- Cynthia Harding, representing Jonathan Fielding
- Rafael Lopez
- Penny Markey, representing Margaret Donnellan Todd
- Jacquelyn McCroskey
- Elton Naswood
- Elisa Nicholas
- Michi Okano
- Marsha Ramos
- Lisa Cleri Reale
- Richelle Rios-Huizar
- Ignacio Rojas, representing Darline Robles
- Bruce Saltzer
- Nina Sorkin
- Beatriz Olvera Stotzer
- Cheri Todoroff, representing Bruce Chernof
- Mary Helen Vasquez
- Anita Vigil, representing Robert Taylor
- Sharon G. Watson
- Phillip L. Williams

Chair Yvonne B. Burke brought the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and asked that Council members and the audience introduce themselves. Steven Golightly introduced staff from the

Child Support Services Department who serve as departmental representatives to the SPA/AIC Councils, attending their first Children's Planning Council meeting.

Approval of the Minutes of September 19, 2007

Phillip L. Williams moved that the minutes of September 19, 2007, be approved as mailed. Sharon Watson seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke

This is Supervisor Burke's last meeting as chair of the Children's Planning Council, an organization that began as an idea of LA 2000, a planning group created by former mayor Tom Bradley in the mid-1980s to envision what Los Angeles might look like in the year 2000. Many LA 2000 recommendations have fallen by the wayside, but the Children's Planning Council has been a tremendous success, and Burke conveyed the gratification she has felt in chairing it numerous times. As she has chosen not to run again when her supervisory term expires in 2008, she looks forward to being involved with everyone in some other way. Phillip Williams thanked Burke and the rest of the Board of Supervisors for establishing the Council as a public/private partnership. "We owe you a debt of gratitude," he told her.

Foundation Board Report: Phillip L. Williams

- The Foundation Board, the fiscal arm of the Children's Planning Council, is supporting the work of the Executive Committee's governance subgroup through the ex officio participation of members Roger Sharma and Sara Jiménez-McSweyn.
- Yolie Flores Aguilar is currently preparing a fundraising plan in collaboration with Executive Committee co-chairs Chris Floyd and Lisa Cleri Reale. When ready, it will be shared with the Foundation Board and reviewed by the Council's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Cheryl Mendoza, as well as the Executive Committee, before being submitted to the full Children's Planning Council for approval.

Executive Committee Report: Lisa Cleri Reale

The governance subgroup, a list of whose members was included in Council member packets, should have recommendations ready in March. It has already met for a total of 10 hours, and will decide next week on a possible half-day meeting in January. Cleri Reale characterized the group as passionate and committed, asking the right questions and talking frankly about the Council's past, present, and future. Bruce Saltzer, a subgroup member, appreciates the honesty with which people are tackling the issue of reinventing the Children's Planning Council to be constructive, productive, and accountable. In his view, the two most important aspects of the group's efforts are retaining the Council's action orientation and focusing on outcomes.

The group is trying to do a lot in a short time, Sharon Watson said, and she invited anyone with suggestions or thoughts to contact any of the subgroup members to broaden its sense of things. Members are reachable through Council headquarters, and any input will remain confidential. Though the process is time-consuming, Duane Dennis finds it exciting and intriguing, and appreciates getting a historical perspective to inform the future. He also welcomed comments from others, and Sara Jiménez-McSweyn particularly thanked staff members Kirby Smith and

Ernesto De Guzman for providing valuable information at the group's last meeting. "We always say that the organization started out as two women in the basement," Jiménez-McSweyn said, "and we need to acknowledge the contributions of staff and the role they play." Field staff from the SPA/AIC Councils are especially encouraged to provide input. "This is an open process," Cleri Reale said. "If you feel what you have to say is valuable, then it is, and we want to hear it."

Probation Department's Juvenile Justice Report Update: Vince Iaria and Dave Schwartz

Probation Chief Robert Taylor is attending a gathering of urban probation chiefs in San Antonio today, and Vince Iaria thanked Chair Burke and the Board of Supervisors on Taylor's behalf for approving the Probation Department's redesign around evidence-based practices. The Children's Planning Council has been a major catalyst as well, and today's presentation reports Probation's progress on six of the eleven recommendations made by the Council earlier this year.

Dave Schwartz is the evidence-based practices consultant who has spent the last 18 months managing the six-member team bringing that approach to the department. Over the next nine months, the team will conduct a multi-track strategic planning process around evidence-based practices involving both internal and external stakeholders. Work began in September and should culminate in the approval of a strategic plan by the Board of Supervisors in May 2008.

In January, a second round of evidence-based practices trainings will build the internal capacity of the Probation Department to train its staff, as well as partners from other county departments and community- and faith-based organizations, in the process of realignment. The purpose of the trainings is to make sure that the services being provided to probation youth are evidence-based and deal with their criminogenic needs—aspects of their lives that dispose them to crime—so as to reduce recidivism. Major criminogenic need factors include:

- Anti-social or pro-criminal attitudes, values, beliefs, and cognitive-emotional states
- Pro-criminal associates and isolation from anti-criminal associates
- Temperamental and personality factors such as impulsivity, aggressive energy, below-average verbal intelligence, weak problem-solving and self-regulation skills, and a taste for risk
- A history of antisocial behavior that has been evident from a young age or in a variety of settings
- Family factors such as low levels of affection, poor parental supervision and discipline, or outright neglect and abuse
- Low levels of personal educational, vocational, or financial achievement
- Substance abuse, which can be both a response to and a cause of other life dynamics

Three or four of these factors are usually present in medium- to high-risk youth, and the evidence-based practices approach is meant to address them all.

Approximately 100 youth age 13 to 18 reside in each of the department's 18 camps, with another 100 at the Dorothy Kirby Center. About 2,000 more youth are in the juvenile halls and 4,000 are in residential settings, for a total of about 20,000 youth in the juvenile probation system.

- **Recommendation 1: Comprehensive education reform in the juvenile halls and camps**

A June 19 Board motion established an interagency committee—including Probation, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Chief Executive Office, other county departments, the Children's Planning Council, the Education Coordinating Council, and the Youth Law Center—to develop a comprehensive action plan to serve as one of the six tracks of Probation's evidence-based practices strategic plan. The committee has heard presentations from eight agencies, and Probation staff are working with the Children's Planning Council's ad hoc education committee to develop recommendations. A draft report should be ready by January that the committee and other groups will review the following month. In March, strategies and an action plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

Juvenile court presiding judge Michael Nash believes that the system must take advantage of the 'time-out' that youth experience in the juvenile halls and camps to obtain a complete picture of all their needs and design a unified case plan. Interventions should begin while youth are incarcerated and continue with family-based services when they return to their communities. The department's vision of comprehensive education reform includes:

- ✓ A comprehensive assessment of criminogenic, educational, health, and mental health needs
- ✓ A choice among four alternative educational pathways—graduation and passing the state high school exit exam; attaining a GED; vocational education that can include a formal apprenticeship or employment after camp; and preparation for college
- ✓ Timely access to individualized education plan (IEP) assessments and services
- ✓ Access to high-quality classrooms, materials, computer equipment, and other learning technologies that will mesh with the more visual and kinetic learning styles of most probation youth
- ✓ Access to high-quality vocational education programs such as masonry, carpentry, printing, and culinary skills
- ✓ Access to in-class and after-school tutors and mentors
- ✓ An updated case plan for aftercare and the transition to community-based services, which should be arranged prior to a youth's release

In the department's preliminary explorations of the charter school concept, it has studied approaches in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties, visited the New Village Charter School at St. Anne's, and had discussions with the California Charter School Association. The main issue is financial: a charter school for 200 students at Camp Scott/Scudder could cost \$2.9 million annually, comparable to a good private school. Federal funding is available only if Probation utilizes an existing charter school. If it starts its own, it must find seed money for at least the first year, and contracts for procurement and educational services must be negotiated. Obtaining a charter is also complex, since they are issued at multiple levels—local school districts, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the state itself.

- **Recommendation 2: Assessment of juveniles entering halls and camps**

The assessment unit is a key part of the camp redesign, since low-risk youth belong in their communities, not in the camp system. The unit will use:

- ✓ The Los Angeles Risk & Resiliency Checkup (LAARC)
- ✓ The MAYSI-2 (Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument–Second Version) mental health screening tool, followed by a comprehensive mental health assessment from the Department of Mental Health if warranted
- ✓ The Teen Addiction Severity Index (TASI) tool to assess substance abuse levels
- ✓ Psychoeducational assessments to identify learning disabilities and special education needs
- ✓ The SNAP-IV (Swanson, Nolan and Pelham Teacher + Parent Rating Scale–Fourth Version) for ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and other disruptive behavioral disorders
- ✓ The DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness) assessment for behavioral styles and patterns
- ✓ Some kind of aptitude assessment for vocational education

Within the next 90 days, a new instrument will also be used to assess each youth's risk level, and in the spring of 2008, the Probation Case Management System (PCMS) will replace nine legacy systems to integrate all these assessments into a unified case plan. Electronic data exchange is now possible between the Los Angeles County Office of Education (the agency responsible for the education of most incarcerated youth) and the Los Angeles Unified School District, and it is hoped that other school districts will soon follow suit, so that no enrollment down-time exists when youth return to their communities.

- **Recommendation 4: Youth, family, and community stakeholders**

The Children's Planning Council recommendation calls for youth councils, parent councils, parenting education, and more early childhood education and family support programs. Probation has been supporting the SPA/AIC Councils in their community capacity-building efforts, and is also participating in the countywide prevention HST initiative (Healthier Families, Stronger Communities, Thriving Children), implementing parent engagement workshops across the school clusters designated by the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA), and hosting quarterly meetings of service providers. The department is reaching out to community- and faith-based organizations to help them build their capacity to provide both residential and community-based services in a way that aligns with the evidence-based practices approach. As an example, Chief Taylor recently held a conference with African-American ministers to address the disproportionate representation of black youth in the probation system and get their help on identifying mentors and adoptive families. Probation staff is also working with community safety groups in the Florence/Firestone area to prevent vandalism through parent advocacy education.

- **Recommendation 8: Transformation of the juvenile justice system**

Even prior to the Children's Planning Council recommendation calling for a comprehensive, action-oriented planning and implementation effort to transform the system, Probation hosted

a Community Corrections Collaborative Conference in November 2006 to focus on the need for evidence-based practices collaboration. A second conference is scheduled on March 17, 2008, to review and revise the draft strategic plan for implementing and sustaining the evidence-based practices approach, and conversations with other juvenile justice stakeholders will follow. The evidence-based practices strategic plan's six tracks—which will ideally become part of a broader reform of the entire juvenile justice system—are:

- ✓ Camp redesign strategies
- ✓ Probation outcomes and performance indicators
- ✓ Financial planning to blend and leverage funding for evidence-based practices
- ✓ Emergent-adult strategies for young people age 18 to 25—10 percent of the population who commit one-third of all violent crime—including a state-funded pilot program to reverse their “fast track to prison,” as Iaria put it
- ✓ External capacity-building strategies for community- and faith-based organizations
- ✓ Internal capacity-building strategies that include staff recruitment and retention, internships, succession planning, and workshops on organizational and cultural change

Of these six work groups, the Department of Children and Family Services sits on two, and Probation is also partnering in the DCFS prong of the HST prevention initiative, Anita Vigil said, using an empowerment evaluation model to ensure consistency.

- **Recommendation 10: Performance-based contracting**

Probation has adopted 16 juvenile and adult probation outcomes—including recidivism, public safety, completion of probation, educational achievement, and employment—to drive both programs and contracts, and will adopt performance indicators to measure those outcomes by the end of 2007. Staff in the program evaluation office are being trained in the correctional program checklist, a self-assessment for community-based organizations that will help accredit them for evidence-based practices service provision.

Even with the short time that youth are now in care, from three to six months, evidence suggests that educational achievement scores do improve in the camps and halls. Once the redesign is in place, fewer low-risk youth will be incarcerated and longer stays for medium- and high-risk youth—from six to eleven months—will become the norm, implementing treatment in “dosages that make a difference,” as Schwartz phrased it.

- **Recommendation 11: Cross-training of county department and community-based organization staff**

The consultant group hired by the Probation Department, the Resources Company, is training Probation staff who will in turn train internal and external staff. The second phase of the evidence-based practices trainings covers:

- ✓ Staff skills such as core correctional practices, motivational interviewing, and effective case management

- ✓ Interventions such as Thinking for a Change (T4C), Girls Moving On, aggression replacement training, and Pathways to Self Discovery and Change, a substance abuse treatment program

Outreach efforts are underway to community-based organizations, and trainings for their staff (along with Probation and Mental Health employees) will likely begin next year.

In the discussion that followed, Bettye Anderson commented on the lack of foster parents, foster family agencies, and relative caregivers in Probation's efforts. "They need to be at the table," she said. "They enroll these kids in school, and this information is at no level clear to them." She suggested that Schwartz and Iaria repeat this presentation to various groups, and Chair Burke asked Teri Gillams from the Department of Children and Family Services to coordinate that.

Phillip Williams asked about the continuity of people dealing with a given youth, and Iaria acknowledged that as a major concern, particularly when youth are transitioning from camp to community. Research shows that correct interventions are effective, Schwartz added, but that the therapeutic alliance between youth and workers delivering services is equally vital. "That's why it's important to get mentoring programs in the community," he said, "so these kids have someone who cares about them. It may not be their parents or relatives. It may be mentors or ministers who serve as a family surrogate."

As youth transition, probation officers and community service providers alike need to understand what they have experienced in camp and what treatment efforts should continue, and the consistency of evidence-based practices in the halls and camps, in field work, and with community partners will improve that situation. The Probation Case Management System, too, will eliminate the need for sheaves of paper to follow youngsters before they are able to receive services, Vigil said. Instead, probation officers will pull up a computer screen to find detailed treatment plans, information from DCFS, school records, and so on.

Deborah Davies strongly urged that parents be given immediate access to the extensive assessment information that will be available after their children enter camp or juvenile hall, and Elisa Nicholas recommended exchanging information with community health providers as well. "There aren't many health resources in the community for these kids," she said. "Places that want to serve them should have data about them." According to Iaria, an electronic medical record is being developed that would allow the transfer of records and assessment results. Because of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) constraints, access would be limited to agencies participating on the multidisciplinary team treating the child, which only points up the importance of those teams' working with youth and families to put together case plans.

Steven Golightly brought up the national research showing the strong correlation between the probation system and child support. "My department's primary function is collecting money for kids," he said, "and data now documents that noncustodial parents who contribute financially to their children are more likely to be involved emotionally. We need to be at the table to get the word out to our customers." Schwartz suggested adding the Child Support Services Department to Probation's financial planning work group.

From the audience, Probation Commissioner Jo Kaplan expressed frustration with the chasm between the department's articulated commitment to working with families and the reality, where she sees no families being brought into the mix. "What's run through this department for a long time," she said, "is the prejudice that these kids wouldn't be there if their families weren't the way they are. The department is not set up for families to be part of the system. A lot of kin would get more involved if it were easier for them. Parents are frustrated," Kaplan continued. "I sit in informal juvenile court as a referee, and I hear parents begging for help for their eleven- and twelve-year-olds. My experience is that there's no departmental leadership in this area. We see it in the buzzwords, but the reality doesn't exist. We have to reach out to whatever family exists for these kids, to help them."

"There's no question that we have to deal with families," Iaria agreed. "We know that. FFT and MST [functional family therapy and multisystemic therapy] both need strong family work. It's a major part of our strategic planning effort. We know we have to change the culture and the people." The external capacity-building strategies will help, Schwartz said, as will recruiting staff who believe in evidence-based practices, including those from the social work professions. Training is also key; last June, janitors and night supervisors attended a one-day course on evidence-based practices, on the principle that anyone who comes in contact with incarcerated youth should do no harm. "It's the beginning of what Commissioner Kaplan is describing," Vigil said, "the culture that needs to be changed. We're training everyone, and it's taking root."

Jeff Farber's agency is one of the community-based organizations participating in the evidence-based practices trainings, and he admitted that implementing services while going through a culture change can be clumsy at times. He worries, though, that evidence-based practice is simply the flavor of the month. "Is part of the strategic plan to cement this," he asked, "with a long-term philosophy to make it stick?" Schwartz characterized evidence-based practices—an approach used by the medical community—as a business approach, with the strategic plan being a three-year road map for implementation and sustainability. Evidence-based practices are great, Nicholas warned, but evidence changes. "We know a lot more now about treating asthma, say, than we did twenty years ago," she said. "Things will be different in a few years, and we don't want to be stuck with old evidence." Schwartz and Iaria concurred, highlighting the importance of quality assurance and the department's research unit.

"By the time a child gets to probation, parents are so frustrated," Nicholas went on, returning to the subject of family involvement. "They love their kids so much, but they've all but given up, sometimes. Working with them to help them re-engage with their children is so important." Probation is moving toward a child- and family-centered, community-based approach, Schwartz said. Families and youth must be involved in case planning; treatment can't be externally imposed. The motivational interviewing technique in the cross-training component is meant specifically to help respondents open up so clinicians can help them design a successful plan.

With the emerging adult population, Mary Helen Vasquez urged a focus on prevention through early childhood education. "They're creating their own families," she said. "They don't have a real sense of themselves yet, but they're bringing new life. Early childhood programs can help them make a good life for their children." Paul Chung mentioned pre-parenting programs aimed at teen populations, which teach life and parenting skills and ask participants to think about what they want for their children. Will those be integrated into Probation programs? Iaria said they

would, and that elements of moral reasoning—should I bring a child into the world? what's needed to sustain that life?—are some of the skills the department is hoping to build. Schwartz added that specific curricula are being explored for youth who are already parents and those about to have children. The department also wants to do some training for the families of probation youth, to help give them better skills in dealing with their offspring.

Jacquelyn McCroskey thanked Iaria and Schwartz for their presentation, saying she was thrilled to hear the Probation Department talking about these concepts. "The question is how do we help you?" she asked. "Lots of people in universities all over the county are working on research that is germane to what you're doing, or could highlight new practices in the future. It would be great to have some internal capacity, but in the meantime, I know some of us would volunteer. Let us help you identify some folks to work with your internal staff to make connections to the people doing the research." An additional recommendation from the Children's Planning Council was, in fact, to create a research, evaluation, and policy institute—an entity that the Chief Executive Office agreed with in concept, but that would require additional resources. According to Iaria and Schwartz, Probation staff are talking with Peter Greenwood and Susan Turner at RAND Corporation, as well as with other Southern California experts in evidence-based practices, and are creating an ad hoc group to look at research.

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

- To ensure the Council's capacity to fulfill its mission, Mendoza has been encouraged by volunteer leaders to revise its management structure to distribute job responsibilities more evenly, improve communications between headquarters and the field, and better support the SPA/AIC Councils. The initial phase of these adjustments replaces the two existing community planning and engagement manager positions with a director of strategic initiatives and three regional managers to help stabilize work in the SPA/AIC Councils and provide more training, planning, and technical assistance. The completed management plan, which Mendoza hopes to bring to the Council in a few months, is being informed by human resources consultant John Wisor and community engagement constant Cecilia Sandoval, in tandem with recommendations from the governance subgroup.

As of December 1, Chrysta Wilson, current community planning and engagement manager, will become the first regional manager. Mendoza anticipates filling other positions in late December or early January; interviews of internal candidates begin on Friday.

- The Council has hired its first Community Action Researcher, Tamara Hamai, who will collect community-based data and teach communities, neighborhoods, and parent and youth groups how to use data to take action on their own behalf.
- At Council meetings earlier this year, reports from the family economic success task force included the recommendation that the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign find a permanent home, ideally at the offices of United Way of Greater Los Angeles. Mendoza was pleased to announce that this plan has come to fruition, and that as of December 5, the EITC campaign will be housed at United Way, with the Children's Planning Council subcontracting with that organization to conduct the outreach campaign.
- The 2008 meeting schedule for the Council was included in member packets.

- Mendoza expressed her appreciation for having worked with Chair Burke and her deputy, Miriam Long, and announced that the role of Council chair would rotate to Supervisor Don Knabe in January.

First 5 LA Scope of Work: Dan Hutson

As announced at the September meeting, the Council's strategic partnership with First 5 LA has been renewed for another four years with the goals of continuing the development of the SPA/AIC Council infrastructure, expanding community organizing and engagement, strengthening outreach to ethnic communities within the SPAs, developing new technology for data collection, and implementing the community-building institute to increase parent leadership. A management team is working with SPA/AIC Council conveners and staff to flesh out a detailed scope of work for this partnership, which should be presented to First 5 in mid-December. Once approved, the scope of work will be a solid basis for detailed action planning focusing both on overall outcomes and on demographic and other differences among the SPAs. Hutson thanked participants in an October 30 planning session, and said that a follow-up session on December 6 would finalize the scope of work.

Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors): Yolie Flores Aguilar

About two years ago, a wealth management organization called Wellspring Advisors contacted the Children's Planning Council to assess its interest in building a parent advocacy training program that would look at the whole child, helping parents understand how systems affect children in a comprehensive fashion, not just focusing on a single issue such as education. The Wellspring investors were particularly intrigued by the SPA/AIC Council infrastructure, and wanted to engage parents in personal development that would benefit themselves and their children and groom them to be leaders in their communities.

The Wellspring grant for the project's first year funded research and development. What would add value? What would deepen the Council's work in building the capacity of parents to be the strongest possible advocates for their children? The Council had already established a partnership with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), connecting the SPA/AIC Councils with parents who had gone through MALDEF's leadership training. A missing element, however, was a focus on young children, and the Council began developing a curriculum for the immigrant Latino parents of children birth to age five.

The project's 2005–2006 research and development phase identified existing trainings and best practices, developed a curriculum, and laid the foundation for an evaluation process with Bruce Fuller at the University of California at Berkeley. For the last nine months, the *Abriendo Puertas* program has been in the pilot phase, undergoing evaluation and refinement.

Because it was strongly felt that the trainer needed to be a peer, the project's primary facilitator is a SPA 7 parent who is a graduate of the MALDEF training. The curriculum is highly interactive, using facilitated discussions rather than lectures, since people learn best from each other. It is strength-based, culturally relevant, practical, and respectful of people's circumstances. Twelve weekly sessions, with an average of 20 participants, focus on helping parents understand the systems that affect their children, as well as child development, parenting, and advocacy. The project's goals are to increase:

- Participants' confidence in their parenting
- Their ease in talking to peers and seeking remedies about child-rearing and family issues, thus reducing isolation and enhancing social support
- Their knowledge about and comfort with accessing supports and services
- Their leadership capacity to be strong advocates for their children
- Their familiarity and involvement with the SPA/AIC Councils

The curriculum covers child development, language development, choosing early care and education, kindergarten expectations and the parent's role there, general health and wellness, social and emotional well-being, literacy (both for parents and children), and parent advocacy. Sessions are themed to *dichos*, or well-known sayings, and include field trips, DVDs, a parent resource kit, and a *lotería*. Access to information and resources is stressed, and the program serves as a support system for parents that also promotes civic engagement. To date, 81 parents have participated, with 90 to 95 percent attendance at each session. Evaluation measures include pre- and post-tests, surveys, and one-on-one interviews with parents to see if the curriculum is successful at meeting their needs and helping them achieve their goals.

The participation of county departments has been key, and Penny Markey from the county library system said that the last session of the program is always held at a library that has parent/child programs in place. "Our goal is to bring resources alive to these families," she said. "Kids and parents can play together with developmental toys, we give them books—we want to make the library a comfortable place for them to return to, and show them that we're an information source for them." These parents don't know that they can have a library card, Flores Aguilar added, or where to get health screenings, or that they have a right to ask questions at their children's schools or with their doctors. "Of the many wonderful things that the Children's Planning Council has done," she said, "this is so powerful. What we've seen in this short amount of time is parents feeling their own efficacy and being able to articulate their vision for their children. That brings them hope." She has shared the plan with Los Angeles city attorney Rocky Delgadillo, who commented that it sounds like "the best prevention plan we could invest in," starting early and engaging community members.

Although most participants are mothers, Flores Aguilar mentioned seeing more fathers than she had expected. In response to a question from Elisa Nicholas, Flores Aguilar explained that each program session has a theme and focus, but issues of family dynamics and mental health—domestic violence, substance abuse, drinking—always come up. Weaving those issues into the curriculum is an option, as is simply allowing them to arise naturally, perhaps inviting a speaker to a subsequent meeting if the interest level is high. "People don't talk about these kinds of things," Nicholas advised, "but they will use those resources."

Child care and food are both provided at program sessions, and parents are pleased to have time for themselves. Coursework is deliberately interactive, with parents learning concrete skills they can put to use, and the hope is that they will connect with the SPA/AIC Councils for ongoing support in taking up the mantle of civic leadership. The resource kit that is distributed differs from First 5's in its broader focus—not just concentrating on the early childhood piece—and is developing organically in response to parent needs. Right now, it includes books, videos, a resource guide, and information on libraries, clinics, and Regional Centers. Flores Aguilar offered to provide a list of contents to Council members.

Seeing the program's close connections to early childhood development, Bettye Anderson recommended that it be made part of the college curriculum for students going into the early childhood field, so it is passed on to the classroom where the child is enrolled. "Parents will go to the schools before they'll go to the libraries," she said. "Introduce it there first."

Beatriz Olvera Stotzer perceives the program as a reflection of the Council's ongoing work in the five outcome areas (good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, social and emotional well-being, and achievement and workforce readiness) and a way to tie them together. It also validates the work of the family economic success task force, which has found economic challenges inherent in the fact that families don't understand how county government works. The Council's vision for the project is that it will help county departments better understand how to provide services to the community, and how customer service efforts should change. "The heart of the project is for the county to respond effectively to families at risk," Olvera Stotzer said, and she commended Children's Planning Council leadership, especially Flores Aguilar, for putting it together. Flores Aguilar is happy to provide the project's survey instrument to Council members for comment, acknowledging that the weak link is knowing how to translate what is learned from these families into system change and improved policy directions.

Having a peer parent as a facilitator changes the dynamic of the program from day one, Jeff Farber said, and Flores Aguilar confirmed his assumption that parents going through the training now are expected to serve as the next wave of facilitators during the rollout. Mary Helen Vasquez suggested family resource centers, which provide similar courses, as a key venue, and also asked about opening up the project to all parents in all cultures. Ultimately, Flores Aguilar explained, the Wellspring funders want the Children's Planning Council to own this training, using the pilot as a model to develop curricula for Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American, and other families. Wellspring's goal is to expand the program throughout Los Angeles County, then take it statewide and even nationally, as a revenue-generating scheme for the Council. The full rollout should begin in June, funded by a third \$300,000 grant. According to Flores Aguilar, Wellspring has no intention of limiting the grant; if the program continues a success, it may find other investors who are interested, and possibly other funding sources as well.

Tribute to Honorable Yvonne B. Burke

On behalf of the Foundation Board and the Children's Planning Council, Phillip Williams extended his sincere gratitude for Chair Burke's enthusiastic support and leadership during a very eventful year. As her tenure comes to a close, the governance subgroup is working on recommendations that will recommit the Council to its founding mission (advancing the well-being of children and families in Los Angeles County), reaffirm the Council's core values, and decide how best to organize to operate efficiently. "We owe you a debt of gratitude for your able leadership, and we bid you a fond farewell," Williams told Burke. "We'll miss you and your steady guiding hand, and we wish you much success and much happiness in the future." He presented her with a lovely orchid plant, for which she thanked him warmly.

Cheryl Mendoza also extended best wishes to Chair Burke as she completes her final term as chair of the Council. "She's amassed a long list of 'firsts' over the course of her career," Mendoza said of Burke. "She was the first African-American woman to be elected to the California legislature, the first African-American to be elected to the U.S. Congress from

California, and the first African-American to serve as chair of the Board of Supervisors. Today we're going to add one more 'first' to the list—she is now the first county supervisor to inspire a rapper.” Mendoza introduced Council youth trainer Greg Bell, who was quick to clarify that he considers himself more a poet than a rapper.

Bell began writing poetry when he was 15, when his uncle Patrick died. He recently traveled to New York to perform (under his stage name Pat's Justice) on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, and a poem he read there has turned out to be the most requested one in the show's history, with people from all over the world getting in touch with him. “I'm honored to be able to write a poem at my job,” he said, and read a moving tribute to Chair Burke and her life's perseverance. He then shared a Bible verse, Mark 10:43–45, on servant leadership, which Bell says Burke exemplifies.

Takora Ray, a 2006 graduate of Manual Arts High School, Burke's alma mater, then sang a soaring rendition of “Somewhere” from *West Side Story*, accompanied on keyboard by the Manual Arts music teacher, Tony Llorenz.

Burke expressed her appreciation for the tribute and to all the people with whom she has worked on children's issues over the years. “I'll be chairing the Board next year,” she said, “and I won't be a lame duck. And Miriam will still be here. Thank you for your support, your encouragement, and most especially your vision.”

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, January 23, 2008
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 11:50 a.m.