

Children's Planning Council Meeting

March 15, 2006

9:30 a.m.

Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 140
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, California 90012

Present: Victoria Adams, representing Steve Cooley
Lauraine Barber
Cheryl Branch
Samuel Q. Chan, representing Marv Southard
Priscilla Charles-Carter
Rabbi Bernard Cohen
Deborah Davies
Teresa A. DeCrescenzo
Duane Dennis
Nancy Diaz, representing Bryce Yokomizo
Jeff Farber
David W. Fleming
Chris Floyd
Lisa Garrett, representing Philip Browning
Larry Lue
Hector Madrigal, representing Roy Romer
Jacquelyn McCroskey
Kay Michaelson, representing Russ Guiney
Elisa Nicholas
Terry Ogawa
Michi Okana
Lupe Delgado, representing Darline Robles
Danny Ramos
Marsha Ramos
Lisa Cleri Reale
Vivian Rescalvo, representing Chair Zev Yaroslavsky
Bruce Saltzer
Wendy Schiffer, representing Thomas Garthwaite
Phillip L. Williams

Staff:	Yolie Flores Aguilar	Becki Nadybal
	Paula Angeles	Ben Rodriguez
	Ernesto De Guzman	Laura Valles
	Deanna Martinez	Chrysta Wilson

In the absence of Chair Zev Yaroslavsky, unable to attend because of illness, Phillip Williams brought the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m. and asked that Council members and the audience introduce themselves.

Approval of the Minutes of January 18, 2006

With an amendment by Marsha Ramos to reflect her presence at the meeting, the minutes of January 18, 2006, were unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Phillip L. Williams for Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

- As members recall from a discussion at the January meeting, the executive director has proposed extending the term of the Council's current Executive Committee for an additional year to ensure continuity in the ongoing strategic planning process. Background material on the committee and its composition were in member packets. **Larry Lue moved that the current Executive Committee term be extended, terminating in November 2006. Teresa DeCrescenzo seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.**
- At the request of the Board of Supervisors, the Children's Planning Council has been coordinating an Earned Income Tax Credit campaign through the EITC Campaign Partnership. In 2004, the Board accepted the Council's recommended goal of increasing by 20,000 the number of families claiming the EITC. (An estimated 75,000 families are currently eligible, but are not claiming the credit.) During the campaign's first year:
 - A total of 860,608 EITC returns were filed.
 - The IRS reported 227,178 new EITC claimants, or individuals claiming EITC for the first time (an increase of 26.4 percent).
 - EITC refunds in Los Angeles County totaled \$1.6 billion (an increase of more than \$134 million from the prior year).
 - The IRS reported an increase to 246,638 of total countywide returns claiming the EITC and also claiming the Child Tax Credit (an increase of 28.7 percent).
 - Refunds of all tax credits countywide totaled \$2.2 billion (an increase of 16 percent).
 - Los Angeles County's investment of \$250,000 resulted in an increase of 29,145 new EITC claimants who filed for the credit through a campaign-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site.
 - The overall impact of the county's investment in EITC contributed toward countywide increase of 205,212 new EITC claimants. With an average EITC return of \$1,862 per family, the potential total return on investment to the county was \$382,104,744 for the EITC campaign, or approximately \$1.22 per family.
- The Board of Supervisors yesterday approved a motion introduced by supervisors Knabe and Yaroslavsky asking the Chief Administrative Office—in partnership with the Children's Planning Council, the Commission for Children and Families, the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), and the New Directions Task Force—to submit a plan by July 2006 that identifies what is required to fund, organize, test, implement, contract for, and administer a community-specific child abuse prevention program in Los Angeles County. This is a long overdue endeavor that should allow greater strides to be made in supporting and strengthening families in ways that prevent child abuse and maltreatment.
- Jonathan Freedman's presentation on the governor's budget impact on children and families in Los Angeles County was postponed until the May Council meeting.

Executive Director's Report: Yolie Flores Aguilar

- Flores Aguilar thanked Children's Planning Council staff and the staff of the EITC Campaign Partnership for the "stellar results," as she put it, of the first-year campaign coordinated by CPC. Instead of the hoped-for 20,000 new filings, according to the IRS, more than 200,000 new claims were made countywide, over 29,000 of which came through the campaign's VITA sites. The campaign's second year is well underway, with flyers on every MTA bus and public service announcements on two popular radio stations. Several SPA/AIC Councils have hired EITC community outreach workers through mini-grants, and Flores Aguilar asked anyone with access to families who might be eligible—with income levels of \$37,263 or less—to help spread the word. (Families who have not claimed the credit in the past can retroactively file for three years.) Informational brochures are available, and campaign staff are happy to make presentations.

Rabbi Bernard Cohen suggested outreach through the churches by working with as many groups of clergy, in all denominations, as possible, and Elisa Nicholas noted that the staff of many nonprofits, who make between \$10 and \$12 per hour, may themselves be eligible for the credit. Flores Aguilar said that staff would welcome these and other ideas.

- With a composition reflecting the public and private sectors as well as community members, the Family Economic Success Advisory Committee met February 23 to begin developing a countywide plan for family economic success, based on Children's ScoreCard recommendations and feedback from the SPA/AIC Councils. Though the Board of Supervisors originally asked to see this plan by July 2006, it is hoped that some flexibility with the due date can be negotiated to ensure broad community input.
- Space at the Children's Planning Council offices is again at a premium, and the Chief Administrative Office has identified square footage just behind the current area into which the Council may expand. Work is expected to start in another couple of months; some disruption will be necessary, but staff should not have to move out during construction.

Executive Committee Report: Samuel Q. Chan for Beatriz Olvera Stotzer

- The ad hoc policy committee has recommended that the Council's new strategic plan include a structure and process to address policy issues related to children and families. This recommendation is being considered by the Strategic Planning Committee, which will continue to meet through April. A final plan should be presented to the Council at its May meeting.
- The 15-Year Anniversary Committee has met with staff to generate ideas for the ongoing celebration, and Jacquelyn McCroskey and Yolie Flores Aguilar have suggested an event on the history of child advocacy in Los Angeles, probably toward the end of the year, with a reception to follow. Goals for this event would be to increase the visibility of the Council and the work of the SPA/AIC Councils, highlight conditions for children in Los Angeles, and chart a vision for the future.

Chan invited discussion on other ideas, and Lisa Cleri Reale suggested a document listing the Council's accomplishments over its first 15 years, perhaps as a fundraising tool—\$15,000 grants, for example, being sought from targeted foundations. Flores Aguilar said that a review of 15 years of Children's ScoreCards was being considered, and that a '\$15 for 15' fundraising strategy was in the works to support the anniversary event and raise money for

other efforts. Phil Williams agreed with Cleri Reale that promoting the Council's accomplishments would go a long way to helping the general public understand what the Council is and what it does. The SPA/AIC Councils will help engage the community, Flores Aguilar said, and Elisa Nicholas recommended both local and countywide celebrations so that involvement can be assured on the grassroots level. At the mention of a possible video, Priscilla Charles-Carter asked that it not be merely a public service announcement to be distributed after the event. "We want something more personal and hands-on," she said.

David Fleming recommended that the anniversary event be open to the media and that it include all five supervisors plus former supervisor Ed Edelman, who was involved in the Council's creation. "We wouldn't be where we are today," Fleming said, "without the supervisors' support." Much of what happens to promote a larger public awareness, Chan remarked, will take place at the SPA level, perhaps in a series of weekly events with neighborhood-based groups. Marsha Ramos urged the involvement of the press, citing the local-interest features produced by numerous radio and television stations; possibly the supervisors could be asked to participate in those venues.

Foundation Board member Sara Jiménez McSweyn advised leveraging the legitimacy that the Council has already established with regard to identifying and investing in the challenges that still lie ahead. Chan agreed, saying that celebrating the Council's accomplishments must ask, "Are we as a county any better off?" and chart a course for the future.

- As part of her recent performance evaluation, both the Executive Committee and the Foundation Board urged the executive director to create an executive management team to support the organization's growth and to provide for succession planning. The Executive Committee has approved three new positions, which it will raise funds to support: chief operating officer, chief program officer, and chief communications officer. Recruitment efforts are proceeding for two of these slots, but Laura Valles, manager of community planning and engagement, was unanimously selected for promotion to the position of chief program officer.

During her three years with the organization, Flores Aguilar said, Valles has performed the very difficult job of managing the SPA/AIC Councils and, with the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee, creating a new vision around their community building and engagement work. She has become adept at integrating the work of systems and community, and has ably represented the Council on the Interagency Operations Group. She has stepped up her leadership capacity so she is ready to take on new duties, and Flores Aguilar said she was "delighted and honored" that Valles has accepted the chief program officer position.

Los Angeles Delegation to Tel Aviv

Last month, a nine-member delegation from Los Angeles—including Jacquelyn McCroskey and Flores Aguilar—visited Tel Aviv, Israel, as part of an exchange sponsored by the Jewish Federation. Over the past decade, similar events have sought to engage professionals and lay people in studying innovative responses to pressing social concerns in both places (domestic violence, emergency response procedures, senior services, poverty), using video conferences and site visits to share information. Sally Weber from Jewish Family Services reviewed the Los Angeles/Tel Aviv partnership and gave examples of the successful programs arising from the various

exchanges. February's trip focused on children and families; specifically, preventing child abuse and maltreatment.

McCroskey compared data between the two areas; Israel as a whole has about 2.2 million children under 18, while Los Angeles County has approximately 2.6 million. Between 18,000 and 23,000 Israeli children are in 'boarding schools,' a designation that includes yeshivas, Army schools, and academic academies, as well as residential institutions for high-risk children. In the Tel Aviv/Yaffo area, out of the 363,400 total population (which does not include an estimated 30,000 undocumented foreign workers), 83,000 are under 18. Only about 14,000 of those are known to social services; 2,000 are 'at risk,' and 774 are 'high need.'

The framework for child abuse prevention used by the Los Angeles delegation was a three-level model, similar to a public health approach, developed by a joint work group of the Department of Children and Family Services and the Commission for Children and Families. This model was referenced in this week's Board of Supervisors motion regarding prevention strategies:

- **Primary prevention**—universal efforts targeting *the general population*, supporting families so they can provide the best possible care for their children, thereby preventing maltreatment from occurring.
- **Secondary prevention**—efforts targeting *families who may have special needs for supportive services or who have been identified as being at high risk* as a result of one or more inconclusive reports to protective services. Families typically participate on a voluntary basis.
- **Tertiary prevention**—efforts targeting *families when maltreatment has been substantiated*. Services aiming to prevent further maltreatment and/or reduce the negative consequences of maltreatment may be mandated.

Although approaches to child abuse prevention in the two locations are different, the focus of concern is the same: making scarce dollars stretch so that all who need services can get them. Various delegation members summarized observations made by the team.

1. **Early childhood development centers, which include family support services, serve as both primary and secondary prevention.** Social workers interact with families there, both as an alternative to removing children from the home and to intervene with families reported at risk. Many centers offer a full range of health and developmental services, such as physicians and well-baby care.
2. **An emphasis on equality and social justice provides the basis for strong relationships between government and community-based agencies.** The shared responsibility for families is deep-seated, and turf battles are not evident. The government actively seeks collaborations with private organizations to provide services, and feels such partnerships are essential. Tel Aviv's deputy director of child welfare services, for example, knew staff member names at every facility the delegation visited.
3. **What families want for themselves and for their children matters. There is respect for the knowledge and wisdom in communities, and businesses and community-based agencies play a special role.** The solid social contract has a ripple effect; although 17 percent of

Tel Aviv's families are 'known to the municipality,' only one-third of 1 percent are actually detained. The percentage of cases going to court is far lower than in Los Angeles, and one key factor is the family's role in determining outcomes for their children. A judge with whom the delegation met stated that if the family was not involved in and in agreement with the plan for the child, it wouldn't work. Within DCFS, point of engagement is part of a shift toward that approach, but Los Angeles has far to go in clarifying the role of the system in reflecting the community's responsibility for its families. "We're moving to partnerships with the community," said delegation member Marilyn Garrison, "but in Israel they get it."

4. **Youth matter. Opportunities for youth to discover their skills and passions are important, and the staff who help them do so are honored.** Programs for at-risk youth (drop-outs, substance abusers, victims of sexual abuse and violence, etc.) include counseling centers designed as coffee shops, a mobile outreach van, therapeutic efforts for youth engaged in prostitution, a vocational high school that teaches cooking and jewelry-making, and a restaurant—considered one of the best in the city—staffed by drop-out youth studying the culinary arts. A shelter for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) youth involves their families, and 60 percent of the youth there successfully return home.
5. **Social workers are highly respected and highly visible in multiple settings. Creativity in collaborative partnerships is rewarded.** The system trusts social workers' knowledge, and they have the authority to remove children from the home without waiting for a court order. Following the government's decision to deport undocumented foreign workers, mostly men, single mothers faced a serious challenge in finding child care. Many offered care informally in their apartments, and Tel Aviv saw the lack of oversight and standards as a crisis. Because of the families' illegal status, the municipality could not fund child care centers directly, but instead found and furnished a building where the mothers could offer care. An on-site social worker receives parents' fees and in turn pays the government for rent and utilities.
6. In Israel, **everyone is a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse**, and penalties for failing to report include prison. "That sends a real message," said McCroskey.
7. **Empirical data isn't nearly as important in Israel as in the United States. Is that because the society places a greater value on children and families? Or because, until recently, social services have been better funded?**

The delegation has reported to DCFS managers and will be presenting to First 5 LA and other key groups that may partner around the Board's prevention motion. As McCroskey said, "All we hear about [Israel] is the fighting and the disputes, but what we experienced was a deep love and respect for families and children, and a desire to create partnerships to give them their due." Rabbi Cohen, who travels to Israel frequently, said, "Everyone who goes there comes back with a similar attitude. We can't depend on the media to report what's happening."

Mentioning that a group from Tel Aviv had asked her West Hollywood agency to help design the shelter for GLBT youth that the delegation studied, Terry DeCrescenzo went on to urge systemic changes within the county and its agencies. Without them, she warned, advocates will face the same problems on the 30th anniversary of the Children's Planning Council as they do at its 15th. Despite its success, a program her agency instituted to train youth in a working restaurant was forced to shut down because of workers compensation and other administrative issues. "It's vir-

tually impossible to get these kinds of [innovative programs] supported and funded," she said. Yet, Jeff Farber noted, these are precisely the kinds of efforts that the community forum process showed residents want. Only the systems consider them 'unique and alternative' in nature. Part of the purpose of the partnership, Flores Aguilar said, is to bring to light programs to be strengthened and relationships to be built.

Sam Chan suggested a conversation about the multi-ethnic, multi-faith history of the Middle East and any similarity in dynamic to Los Angeles's communities of color. Bruce Saltzer urged representation of the private sector and communities in work on the Board's prevention motion, since he noticed that the Children's Planning Council is the only entity named in that motion that is a public/private partnership. "There are huge ethnic issues in prevention that we want to make sure are there," he said, "and a broad range of entities is needed."

Danny Ramos applauded "the common commitment to the human spirit, to do better for one another" evidenced in both Tel Aviv and Los Angeles, and praised work with communities of color, GLBT youth, and others. He went on to outline his experience with the child welfare system in Los Angeles, growing up in foster care and going on to careers in both DCFS and the Probation Department. Social workers here also have the authority to detain children pending a formal court order, and Los Angeles County, too, relies on relationships with nonprofits. The importance of social work to child welfare cannot be overestimated, and he sees the cornerstone of the system's dysfunction in Los Angeles to be the time social workers are forced to spend not with children and families, but inputting data into computer systems. In the 1970s, his individual caseload was 120 children; in the 1990s, his nine-worker unit had a caseload of 1,200. Caseloads may have been reduced since then, he said, but the computer work has been multiplied four times. A foster-care package is currently moving through the state Assembly to make those distinctions and to reduce caseloads further, and Ramos encouraged Council members to become informed about that legislation.

According to Marilyn Garrison, Tel Aviv social workers reported their caseloads to be about 100 children each, but, as she said, "they don't live in our world" of supervised visitations, regular court reports, and scheduled hearings every six months.

SPA 6 Council Recertification and Workplan

SPA 6 Council members, council coordinator Jacquie Orozco, and youth organizer Greg Bell highlighted the council's accomplishments during the long and stressful reconstitution process that began in April 2004. A series of community forums were held in June 2005, and elections occurred in June and July of that year. Bylaws were ratified in November to include sections on vision, membership and elections, staff roles, meetings and committees, and budget. Asset-based community development (ABCD) trainings took place in December, and the council's workplan was completed in January 2006.

The council's 39 members include parents, youth, and representatives of social change organizations, service organizations, and county and local government. Its stated purpose is "to work collaboratively toward improving the lives of children and families in the communities of the SPA 6 region by informing, engaging, and organizing youth and families around the concerns identified during the community forum process, and to use this opportunity to continue and expand community action groups." The council's workplan includes six major areas:

- **Economic well-being**, addressing job and training opportunities in South Los Angeles by hosting opportunity and business fairs and by establishing a SPA 6 youth web page with job and internship postings
- **Education**, supporting parent action groups with community-based projects (strengthening parental leadership and involvement, increasing cultural understanding, and providing education and training for youth to become active participants in school board and city council meetings)
- **Health**, developing and supporting community action groups to advocate for more health resources in South Los Angeles, collaborating with the Community Health Council, SCOPE, and the Community Coalition on the creation of a health curriculum
- **Media**, promoting positive perceptions of South Los Angeles communities by hosting themed youth movie nights and providing small grants to youth filmmakers
- **Safety and security**, bridging the relationships among police, youth, and community members by identifying four schools interested in working with parents and residents to create safe surrounding environments
- **Council development**, supporting community action groups and committing to diversity across community interest, cultural, racial, and gender lines

The council meets on the third Tuesday of every month, and its next steps include the election of co-conveners, an election to fill council vacancies, and continuing the work of the community action groups, which include a youth/police advisory board at the Youth Opportunities Unlimited charter school, research on neighborhood cleanliness with the parents at Jefferson High School, and MALDEF PSP courses at Normandie and 52nd Street elementary schools. Orozco introduced staff members Katynja McCory, outreach consultant, and Susana Coracero, community organizer, saying she was happy to have them on board.

Supervisor Burke's deputy, Miriam Long, praised everyone involved in the two-year journey to recertification, expressing her gratitude that the SPA 6 Council is finally in place. "We can be proud of this work," she said, singling out several council and transition-team members for special thanks. Cheryl Branch echoed Long's thoughts as well as her pride in the community and in the Children's Planning Council staff who assisted in the process. Laura Valles' promotion was well deserved, Branch said—"thank you for leading the charge"—and she also expressed appreciation to Orozco, to Greg Bell, and to Flores Aguilar and the rest of the Children's Planning Council. Larry Lue, former chair of the Strengthening Community Capacity Committee, thanked the Children's Planning Council members and conveners from other councils who volunteered their time to the difficult process, and Flores Aguilar thanked the transition team.

Flores Aguilar applauded the commitment of the SPA 6 Council members, predicting that the council would be "a force to be reckoned with." Every person involved understands why this council is vital, she added, since knowing the conditions of children in the SPA 6 region is critical to any assessment of the county as a whole. "We're here to support you," she told council members.

Danny Ramos moved that the SPA 6 Council be certified and that its workplan be accepted. Lisa Cleri Reale seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

SPA 2 Workplan

SPA 2 council convener Deborah Davies touched on the large geographic area and diverse population of that region, acknowledging the difficulties the council has encountered over the last couple of years. In 2005–2006, the council is ensuring that its organizing and capacity-building efforts are owned by existing and emerging SPA 2 community action groups, and that advocacy and training is provided for these groups so they can mobilize for change and act on their own behalf. The region's community forums identified safety, affordable housing, and education as priorities for the council, and residents are involved in activities such as establishing a pocket park in Panorama City, converting a storage facility into a multipurpose room in Canoga Park, and forming a task force on youth violence at Sylmar Juvenile Hall. Davies agreed with Terry DeCrescenzo's comment that the community bonding that takes place in parks is very important, and reported that representatives of both the county and city parks departments regularly attend SPA 2 Council meetings, and have helped to organize activities.

Lisa Cleri Reale moved that the SPA 2 Council workplan be accepted; Danny Ramos seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Since the SPA/AIC Council reports are so compelling, Cleri Reale asked that they be moved up on the Council's agenda so they can be heard before members have to leave for other meetings; Flores Aguilar explained that agenda placement is often a matter of balance, but she would bear the suggestion in mind.

The Children's Partnership—Measuring Digital Opportunities for Children: April KirkHart, Special Projects Coordinator

The Children's Partnership is a national nonprofit child advocacy organization focusing on health and technology, with offices in Washington, DC, and in northern and southern California. Its mission is to ensure that all children, especially those at risk, have the resources and opportunities they need to grow up healthy and lead productive lives. The partnership provides an independent research base, community-based activities and demonstrations, and strategic linkages, and it also develops policy and advocacy agendas to expand demonstrated solutions.

The partnership's data on technology and youth match many of the findings from the Children's Planning Council's community forums, especially in SPAs 4 and 6, whose residents voiced concerns about digital opportunities for youth. "Knowledge of computers and software is now mandatory for the workforce," forum participants said, and research published by Harvard University in January supports that view. A Children's Partnership report, distributed to attendees, compares facts from 1994 and 2005, summarizes the impact technology is having on youth, identifies youth who are missing out, provides an accountability tool, and offers recommendations to leaders about maximizing opportunities.

When applied properly, the partnership contends, technology can create positive opportunities for children in ways that closely relate to needs identified by forum participants in Los Angeles County's five outcome areas.

- Education/workforce readiness—access to computers, high-speed Internet, and training in communities, schools, and at home

- Economic well-being—access to better-paying and meaningful jobs and training that will prepare youth with skills for the future
- Good health—access to health insurance and to information regarding sexual health and teen pregnancy
- Social and emotional well-being—after-school programs that keep youth off the streets and help them improve academically

Facts sheets, also distributed, outlined the gaps in digital opportunities for youth in California and Los Angeles County, including the tendency of lower-income families not to have computers at home, the high percentages of workers who now use a computer for employment, and the high numbers of students sharing each computer in the public schools. In addition, California is not among the 25 states that have established education technology standards by grade level.

The Children's Partnership suggests three action ideas for the Children's Planning Council to help Los Angeles County youth gain access to digital opportunities:

1. **Include technology indicators in the Children's ScoreCard**, under educational achievement, economic opportunity, and health.
2. **Incorporate technology issues into SPA/AIC Council organizing**, by assessing the resources available in each SPA (technology in languages other than English, for example), developing a community resource directory, and working with policy-makers, schools, and community centers to provide resources and training.
3. **Work with local Workforce Investment Boards** to find out how much Workforce Investment Act funding is available for technology training, and what kinds of training are available through WIB programs.

Terry DeCrescenzo reported that at the nonpublic school associated with her agency, she has one computer per child, but her proposed curriculum was rejected because of an overemphasis on the Internet. KirkHart offered to help the district to recognize the need for technology. More information on The Children's Partnership is available at <http://www.childrenspartnership.org>.

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, May 17, 2006
9:30 a.m.
Room 140, Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles

There being no public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.