



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

Walking the COLLABORATION Talk



Ten Lessons
Learned
*from the
Los Angeles County
Children's Planning Council*

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By

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Dedicated to Celeste Kaplan and Vivian Weinstein

acknowledgements

Working to develop and launch the Children's Planning Council has been a labor of love for me and for many other people. Even though I know that lasting solutions to large-scale social problems require both interpersonal and cross-institutional collaboration, it sometimes seems overwhelmingly difficult to actually walk the collaborative talk in a place as large, fractious, and diverse as Los Angeles County.

Because hundreds of people have made significant contributions to the Children's Planning Council and to the development of the ideas in this paper, I cannot thank everyone individually. I am more indebted than I can say to everyone who has believed in and supported the development of the Council for their commitment to children and families, their ideas, their work, and their companionship on this long and amazing journey. I must, however, single out a few exceptional individuals:

- *Celeste Kaplan created the Los Angeles Roundtable for Children, the organizational precursor of the Council. It was her vision and her passion that paved the way. Vivian Weinstein set the highest standards for integrity and leadership among advocates in Los Angeles County, providing personal guidance and unwavering support to untold numbers of people. Life-long friends, they were accomplished community organizers who came of age working together on left-wing causes in L.A. during the 1930s and 40s. They taught many of us how to organize on behalf of children and families.*
- *When the Roundtable took its data and ideas about how to improve the lives of children and families to the business and civic leaders in The 2000 Partnership, Roy Anderson, David Fleming, and Phil Williams led the fight to establish the Children's Planning Council. Without such leadership from respected members of the business community, the Council would not have been created. Dave and Phil are continuing members and supporters whose personal commitment to this vision has never wavered.*
- *Sharon Watson was the first executive director of the Council (1991-1999) and Yolie Flores Aguilar is the current executive director. Anyone familiar with the field knows that it takes a great deal of knowledge, strength, and determination to guide such a complex effort. With different styles and in different times, both Sharon and Yolie have demonstrated extraordinary leadership based on concern for the common good, respect for diversity, openness to a range of opinions, and belief in consensus-oriented processes.*

This paper was written to complement the more objective analysis of the Council's work conducted by Ira Cutler and his colleagues at the Cornerstone Consulting Group in *The Tasks Ahead: Strategic Choices for the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council*. I offer the personal view of an "insider" who has invested a great deal of volunteer time and energy to develop and maintain the Children's Planning Council as a network of collaborative tables around which people could not only plan together, but leverage substantial changes to improve the lives of children and families.

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introduction

In 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created the Children's Planning Council to serve as its principal planning body to improve conditions for children and families by integrating and coordinating health and human services. The Council has close to 50 members, including representatives of county government departments serving children and families, as well as representatives of nonprofit agencies and the county's many cities and school districts. It includes members from business, philanthropic, and service provider groups, as well as representatives of ethnic and geographic communities throughout the county (see *Appendix 1*). The chair pro tem of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors serves as the chair of the Council (that is, each of the county's five elected supervisors chairs the Council in the year prior to becoming the chair of the Board).

Over the last decade, the Council has become a credible and effective planning body, representing the unified voice of an extremely diverse group of people. The Council has established a government-community partnership and a regional infrastructure that connects efforts to engage citizens in planning for services to children and families across eight geographic Service Planning Areas (see *Appendix 2*) and the American Indian community countywide.

Throughout the past several years, many reports and conferences have explained why it is important to integrate the fragmented system of child and family services, support the development of comprehensive community-based initiatives, and move toward collaborative cross-system, cross-jurisdiction planning (Schorr 1997). Only a few authors, however, have reported on the challenges of this kind of collaboration based on practical local experiences (Cutler 1997; Gardner 1998; Nelson 1996; Walsh 1998). The fact is that, even when there is a compelling case for change, the pathways for institutionalizing such collaborative efforts in diverse urban areas are largely unknown. Collaboration is relational and political, and would-be collaborators must be extremely sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of particular times and places.

This paper outlines some of the major lessons learned by the author and her colleagues who have tried to "walk the talk" of public/private cross-sector collaboration over a twenty-year period in Los Angeles. It describes how the Children's Planning Council has gone about its work in a place with more than its fair share of social, geographic, and political challenges. The paper is written from the admittedly biased perspective of an "insider" who helped to start the Council and who is still an active member. The details of organizations and relationships are obviously specific to Los Angeles, but some of the lessons learned may be helpful to people working with similar entities in other communities. While all politics are local, many of the institutional, professional, and personal dynamics described here should be familiar to people in other complex urban areas.

The paper begins by describing a precursor organization, the Los Angeles Roundtable for Children, and then briefly summarizes the Council's development and some of its major accomplishments. It outlines ten lessons learned and concludes with some of the key challenges facing the Council as it enters its second decade.

prelude

The Los Angeles Roundtable for Children

In the early 1980s, the fact that there wasn't a place where people could talk across organizations about how to improve the lives of children and families inspired Celeste Kaplan to create the Los Angeles Roundtable for Children. On her retirement as executive director of a nonprofit social service agency, Celeste was urged by faculty at the University of Southern California School of Social Work to use the school as a base to facilitate cross-sector discussions. Begun in 1982 with a series of small group meetings, at its height the Roundtable included about 150 leaders of civic groups, universities, and public and private organizations serving children and families. Celeste set out a few simple but effective principles to guide the Roundtable:

1. *Members should be individuals who were personally committed to improving the lives of children and families, but who were also recognized as credible representatives of key organizations.*
2. *Members should "leave their hats outside the door," agreeing to focus on children and families rather than on organizational priorities.*
3. *Those most familiar with each field of practice should teach others so that everyone would become a little less bound to their own disciplinary or institutional concerns and a little more aware of the big picture.*
4. *Data on the conditions of children and families, and the structure of the service delivery system, should guide collective action.*

Like ripples on a pond, the effect of these simple principles on Roundtable members reverberate through the county still, influencing decisions in many groups and organizations that include former Roundtable members. Organized as a forum for learning and discussion, the Roundtable created a culture of trust and shared purpose. Its lasting legacy is that a very diverse group of local leaders concerned about children and families began to see each other as partners with a common purpose, rather than as competitors pursuing their own agendas. Although there are still organizational agendas, turf issues, and heated discussions on all kinds of issues, there is also a shared sense that we can't meet the needs of children and families in L.A. by focusing on one agency or one sector or one discipline at a time. Working together is the only way to get where we need to go. This sense of common purpose was shaped by a series of "first-time" studies designed to provide basic information on the organization and financing of services for children and families in this large, complex, and confusing county (see Appendix 3 for Roundtable studies).

history

Development of the Children's Planning Council

In 1984, a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Children's Services recommended that county government take child welfare functions out of the Department of Public Social Services and create a separate Department of Children's Services (now the Department of Children and Family Services). Celeste Kaplan and Richard Dixon (soon to become the County's Chief Administrative Officer or CAO) co-chaired this Blue Ribbon Task Force and developed a relationship that led to the Roundtable's study of county government spending on children. Working closely with CAO analysts and fiscal staff of county departments, Roundtable members analyzed county expenditures for children over a five-year period, from 1980-85. The Roundtable's 1986 report on their findings included seven recommendations that were accepted by the Board of Supervisors as a reasonable framework for improving services for families and children. These recommendations included the development of a "practical planning mechanism for children's services to include both public and private service providers" (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children 1986; McCroskey 1988). *{See note 1.}*

A 1987 motion by the Board of Supervisors ordered the CAO to implement the Roundtable's recommendations, which led to the creation of a Children's Budget Implementation Coordination Committee. Co-chaired by Dixon and Kaplan, Committee members included directors of county departments serving children and families, along with representatives of key private sector groups. The group worked together for almost five years, producing a series of reports and recommendations on key issues (Children's Budget Implementation Coordination Committee 1988, 1990, 1991).

At about the same time, the Roundtable undertook a supplementary set of studies to determine how much was being spent on children and families by nonprofit agencies and local school districts. The Roundtable showed that, taken together, by the early 1990s county government, 88 cities, 82 school districts, and about 1,100 not-for-profit agencies were spending over \$11 billion dollars annually on services for children and families without any plan to ensure that the services would lead to a desired set of outcomes (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children 1986, 1989; McCroskey 1991; Olenick & McCroskey 1992). *{See note 2.}* Roundtable members brought this information to the attention of The 2000 Partnership, a group of Los Angeles business leaders, asking a critical question that helped to persuade business and civic leaders that a countywide planning structure was essential. *{See note 3.}* This question – *Would any business invest this amount of money without knowing what results it wanted and without a mechanism to measure its progress?* – helped forge what would become an early and important alliance with the business community.

Advocacy by The 2000 Partnership convinced the Board of Supervisors to establish a Blue Ribbon Committee to study the possibility of creating a more comprehensive approach to planning. The Committee's report strongly supported the creation of a countywide planning body focused on children and families, and made recommendations on how the group might be structured. In 1991, the Board of Supervisors declared that it was "high time" to establish the Children's Planning Council, a public/private collaborative body unlike any existing entity in county government, that would include county department heads, representatives of key private organizations, and business and community members. Members of the Blue Ribbon Committee selected the first executive director who, with an assistant, began a strategic process to build the Council.

In 1992, leaders of the fledgling Council, The 2000 Partnership, the Roundtable, and other key groups developed a joint "declaration of principles" that should guide the transformation of family and children's services in Los Angeles. The declaration was sent to thousands of elected officials, organizational leaders, and advocates around the county, and many signed the declaration to signal their agreement with its principles. These principles provided a credible starting point for the Council's deliberations, and the list remains surprisingly relevant a decade later (see Appendix 4).

That the Council has been able to achieve so much in just over a decade surprises many people knowledgeable in the ways of public bureaucracies. Its accomplishments include:

1. *Brokering agreement on a set of regional geographic boundaries, the eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs), now used for planning and information-sharing across county departments and among a broad range of partners and funders outside of county government*
2. *Establishing nine community-based councils (eight SPA Councils and the American Indian Children's Council) that include public and private service providers, as well as representatives of local communities and civic groups*
3. *Increasing commitment to children and families from the five members of the Board of Supervisors, and becoming a broker trusted by the Board to help resolve sensitive issues*
4. *Helping directors and managers of county departments to work together, and building structures for cross-agency collaboration*
5. *Brokering agreement on a set of five outcome areas to guide results-based accountability: good health, economic well-being, safety and survival, emotional and social well-being, and education/workforce readiness*
6. *Producing a series of data-based reports designed to frame key issues and provide data on trends in child well-being*
7. *Translating between community groups and county government, helping local leaders gain access to county decision-makers*
8. *Encouraging the Chief Administrative Officer and the Board of Supervisors to include a section in the county's strategic plan dedicated to the well-being of children and families (Goal 5, County's Strategic Plan)*

The Council has also helped to expand thinking about "children's services" well beyond the intensive services provided to children and youth with extremely serious problems –

such as the abused and neglected children served by the Department of Children and Family Services or juvenile offenders served by the Probation Department. The Council has stimulated conversations about children and families that continue to expand beyond "service delivery" to include "service integration," "community partnerships," and "community engagement."

Along the way, there have been numerous opportunities to learn about the many groups and organizations that work across the county and in local communities to enhance the lives of children and families. Council members have come to know many people who care passionately about children and families, to appreciate their talents and skills, and to share their frustrations with the structural and institutional barriers that inhibit change. We have grappled with the implications of demographic and economic changes and have come to appreciate the very real differences between regions and communities in this far-flung and diverse county. We have come to know the political infrastructure of county government and to better understand the dynamics of a five-member board that plays both executive and legislative roles. In fact, work on the Council over the last decade has provided a bird's-eye view of the practical realities of life in the dynamic, sometimes contentious, and super-sized place that is Los Angeles.

lessons

Ten Lessons Learned

Working on the very complicated challenges of engaging communities and leveraging public and private resources to improve the lives of children and families in L.A. has yielded many lessons – with all of the circling, back-tracking, and confusion that might be expected on a journey for which there is no specific map. The challenges have, at times, seemed so overwhelming that only one or two people could see a way to go forward. And there probably haven't been more than a handful of moments when everyone was convinced that we were on the right track. And yet, over time, somehow we have managed to make some significant strides forward. The "lessons" discussed in this paper highlight the most positive aspects of the process. Listing our mistakes would be an altogether different (and probably much longer) paper. If these "lessons" sound simple or straightforward, it is only because they are framed with the advantage of hindsight.

1. *Planning has to "fit" a particular place and time.*
2. *Build influence, let go of control.*
3. *Connect existing networks.*
4. *Recognize the power of shared ideas and determined action.*
5. *Invest in relationships.*
6. *Remain flexible enough to seize opportunities.*
7. *Maximize access and political power for adults who care about children.*
8. *Use data to drive planning.*
9. *Follow the money.*
10. *Connect the people most engaged in local communities with decision-makers.*

planning

1

Planning has to “fit” a particular place and time

The success to date of the Children’s Planning Council surprises many people who have worked on similar collaborative efforts in much smaller localities. Indeed, some foundations that help to support such efforts have based their investments on the belief that collaborative efforts work best in discrete, well-defined local communities (Kubisch et al. 2002). From the beginning, Council leaders believed that we would need to fashion something unique to fit the special circumstances of this sprawling and outsized place.

Home to almost 10 million people, Los Angeles County’s population is greater than that of 42 states. The diversity of the population is perhaps the single most striking fact about L.A., both in terms of the relative proportions of key racial and ethnic groups and in terms of ethnic subgroups, immigration, and citizenship status. While there is no majority group among the total population, Latinos account for over 60% of children and youth, while Whites account for 19%, Asian/Pacific Islanders for 11%, African-Americans for 9%, and American Indians for 1% (Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council 2002). More than a third (36%) of county residents were born in another country and 54% report that they speak a language other than English at home (United Way of Greater Los Angeles 2002). Even the “sub-regional” areas created by the Service Planning Area (SPA) Councils include more people than many other states. For example, SPA 5 is about the size of Vermont, SPA 7 is the size of Maine, and SPA 2 is the size of Nevada (*see Appendix 5*).

For most state government purposes, Los Angeles is treated like any other county – on the receiving end of numerous, sometimes conflicting, federal and state mandates. However, the county’s size and depth of need also distinguish it from the 57 other counties in the state. Many officials in other counties, and at the state level, fear the influence of the “500-pound gorilla” – and county representatives haven’t always been known for their collegiality. County officials have been characterized as (Rohrlich 1998: B7):

“... more bully than supplicant – demanding to be served the biggest portion of the pie, rather than sitting down politely with the rest of the family and helping to figure out how to fairly cut it up.”

But L.A. accounts for a third or more of California’s “needy” population in almost every category, and it seldom receives a proportionate share of state or federal resources. So there are good reasons why officials and advocates sometimes feel aggrieved and slighted by decision-makers at state and federal levels who expect us to “sit down politely with the rest of the family.”

Because of L.A. County's size and scope, there have been few countywide efforts to organize like-minded people or to set out an agenda of what working together might accomplish. For example, most state legislators feel more closely connected to the cities they represent, and there have been very few instances when they have banded together as a "county delegation." Many people believe that the power of the Children's Planning Council is that it has been able to establish a countywide umbrella network to connect numerous service and advocacy groups, using both geography and organizational affiliations to link the people who care most passionately about children and families.

The "network of networks" approach fits the horizontal form of Los Angeles better than vertical, hierarchical organizational forms that may work better in other places. Los Angeles County sprawls over a broad horizon with few recognizable urban centers, and this physical difference from traditional urban areas has also led to different approaches to governance and problem-solving (Southern California Studies Center & the Brookings Center on Urban Metropolitan Policy 2002). Los Angeles County is simply too big to control, too diverse to coordinate, and too complicated to track fully. The best approach is to keep working to connect existing networks, always broadening the base and making room for new players.

L.A. is a fascinating place that sometimes looks wide open and laid back, but it can be very difficult to see beneath the surface to the private interactions across diverse social spheres that drive public discourse. Because Council leaders had their feet firmly planted in L.A., they appreciated the nuances of history, context, and relationships between key players. They did not limit their scope to public and private service providers, but saw that the Council needed to include an extremely diverse group of elected officials and representatives from community groups, business, philanthropy, higher education, and many other worlds. While some planners might have approached their tasks from a more linear perspective, using rational models tailored to a fixed set of options, Council leaders realized that this kind of planning would not fully incorporate the opportunities of this unwieldy place and time.

control vs. influence **2**

Build influence; let go of control

In his classic book on long-range planning, Michael (1973) explains that usual approaches to social planning reflect the values that our culture places on control (page 110):

"The enormous emphasis we place on control is evidenced by our preoccupation with technology and material possessions, that is, with controlling the natural environment; by our gratuitous or ritual emphasis on rationality; and by the huge investments of ideas and

dollars we make in “public relations” and advertising, which are aimed at controlling the direction of emotionality. The fear of being caught out in a mistake reflects the heavy emphasis our culture puts on the virtues and necessity of control of self and setting.”

The “simple” realization that a very small organization in the basement of the massive County Hall of Administration could not possibly control anything helped to place the Council ahead of the curve in terms of its approach to inclusive, iterative, and data-driven planning. Although the Council has recently expanded its staff somewhat, for years the entire infrastructure was “two women in the basement.” Ironically, the very fact that it was such a small organization, one that couldn’t possibly compete with the service delivery functions of county government departments, gave it a kind of reverse cachet. Since government agencies generally compete over which has the biggest budget and the largest workforce, a small group that preferred to rely on volunteers was, at the very least, a distinct curiosity.

The Council set out to see if there were different kinds of institutional power that might be effective in helping to “steer rather than row” the massive boat of county government (Osborne & Gaebler 1992). Since county government has over 82,000 employees, making it the largest employer in the region, it was clear that even the best-organized and well-funded collaborative intermediary would be able to exert influence only at the margins. Having given up on the notion of “controlling” services for children and families, however, the Council could perhaps see a little better how shared information could help to build common purposes, influencing the development of similar ideas bubbling up from different sources in different communities at the same time. Rather than focusing on getting more staff, a bigger budget, and more control over specific activities, the Council looked for ways to influence decision-makers, to reframe business as usual by focusing on different kinds of questions, and to bring people to see potential benefits in crossing organizational, disciplinary, and service area boundaries.

networks **3**

Connect existing networks

Building a “web,” or network of networks, has become a popular metaphor for alternative organizational forms that rely less on positivist, mechanistic views and more on relativist, constructionist views.

“The ‘dynamic connectedness’ of the web means that web organizations reflect organic rather than mechanical principles; that is, they work in the same way that life does. This naturally

makes them more congenial environments for human beings to exist in; more nourishing, more favorable to growth. This congeniality is important, for as we move away from the notion of the organization as a great machine – rational, static, compartmentalized, and closed – we also move away from perhaps the essential aspect of the estrangement of human beings from nature that took root in the Industrial Revolution: the belief that, to be efficient, organizations must mimic the design and workings of a machine.” (Helgesen 1995: 16-17)

In 1995, when the Council addressed the difficult issue of how to “define” communities in this extremely complex place, it affirmed the belief that there are multiple possibilities – including those defined by place and by social, and functional associations, as well as by the administrative jurisdictions that were commonly used for county service delivery (Balaoing, McCroskey & Sandoval 1995). Stressing the importance of a common “regional” geographic framework – the Service Planning Areas or SPAs – did not diminish the importance of other ties that bind people. When it began building a geographic system of councils, it also created a council focused on American Indian children – having been persuaded that they had a unique relationship to government, assured as sovereign nations through treaties, and that a geographic approach would not work for these children. While L.A. County is “home to the largest urban American Indian population in the United States” (Frith-Smith & Singleton 2000), only a tiny fraction of children in any of the SPAs are American Indians. Without a targeted approach, these children would continue to fade into the background of conflicting needs and priorities.

An early “test” of local organizing in select communities (in Pasadena and in Midtown ZIP Code 90019) convinced the Council that one size could not fit all communities. The diversity of communities in L.A. is truly staggering – from the rural high desert communities of the Antelope Valley to immigrant communities in Pico-Union to iconic places like Malibu or Hollywood. Public agencies must provide equal access for all citizens, but they do not necessarily have to do so by treating all communities alike. Since even the best informed, best intentioned people who looked at the county from the perspective of “downtown” were unlikely to see communities as residents saw them, the idea of developing a system of regional councils provided a way to connect people in local networks with downtown decision-makers.

Council leaders came to believe that their greatest contribution would be the development of a regional infrastructure (the SPA framework) for planning, data-gathering, and information-sharing. The SPA/AIC Councils would become a forum for networking among existing groups, linking people involved in the many local communities that made up the region. They would also help local groups make connections with county government departments, advocacy networks, and others who exerted influence over the public resources so necessary to support children and families.

shared ideas **4**

Recognize the power of shared ideas and determined action

The basic ideas underlying the work of the Council are not new. They have cycled through policy discussions and been studied, demonstrated in pilot projects, and lauded by pundits for decades. They took on a new relevance, however, at the beginning of the 1980s when the "Reagan revolution" threatened to dismantle 50 years of social service infrastructure. That threat caused many people to take a more critical look at the existing system, recognizing its fragmentation, bureaucratic "silos," and inefficiencies. The Roundtable gave up-and-coming leaders in L.A. a chance to examine the local system of services, to try their ideas out on one another, and to craft a shared set of "public ideas" about services for children and families.

"Ideas matter because they establish the contexts within which policy debates are conducted, organizational activities are rendered coherent and meaningful, and people's actions are animated and directed. Ideas nominate particular people to do particular kinds of work and give them support for doing the indicated work. As the ideas change, the locus and nature of the society's work changes. The ideas are not always self-consciously known in advance, but once expressed and articulated they can have substantial power to continue one line of activity and investment and discontinue others. Although related to existing political forces and institutions, they seem to follow a logic of their own, which sometimes unbalances or rebalances existing political forces." (Moore 1990: 78)

Several authors have written about the power of "public ideas" to guide decision-making about public resources (Reisch 1990; Moore 1990). Another way of thinking about the power of such shared ideas is being developed through the semi-scientific, semi-humanist analysis of "memes" (Blackmore 1999):

MEME: (pronounced 'meem') 1. A self-spreading thought, idea, attitude, belief, or other brain-stored item of learned culture. 2. (Technical usage) A memory item, or portion of an organism's neurally-stored information, whose occurrence depended critically on causation by prior occurrence of the same memory item in one or more other organisms' nervous systems (Lynch 1998).

The most powerful public ideas become "memes" as they spread across groups such as the members of the Roundtable or the Council. Whether they are thought of as public ideas or memes, there is now a shared stock of ideas and values that provides the con-

text for decision-making about children and families in Los Angeles County. Perhaps the most important idea advocated by the Council is that even the most effective and efficient set of professionally run services cannot by themselves significantly improve outcomes for children and families. Families need to feel engaged in and supported by their communities. Community members need to have access to decision-makers to assure that strengths and differences are respected, that local needs are met, and that decisions taken in different jurisdictions complement rather than contradict each other. Other shared ideas and values include service integration, data-driven planning, community engagement, inclusive decision-making, and results-based budgeting. More importantly, the Council has also recognized its responsibility to organize action at multiple levels to try to test the practical value of these ideas. By promoting and acting upon this shared set of ideas, the Council has encouraged a shared commitment to change amongst a growing network of previously disconnected people.

relationships **5**

Invest in relationships

The network of ten councils provides multiple inter-connecting forums for the discussion and testing of shared ideas. Not surprisingly, the interpersonal challenges are legion. For example, many Council members represent existing agencies that compete with each other over limited funding, and members often need to reinforce the mutual benefits available to collaborating organizations (Sarason & Lorentz 1998: 68).

“It is extraordinarily difficult for people to think other than in terms of their autonomous, formal organization; its needs, limitation of resources, programs, perceptions of competing with others for funding, status and enhanced recognition. That the organization can engage with others so that its deficits can be partially reduced while its assets serve a similar purpose for another organization without being diverted from its own purposes, allowing each organization to render more and better service, is a possibility alien to thinking, let alone action. If rugged individualism is part of the national rhetoric, it is also part of organization rhetoric.”

Funders may be uncomfortable sitting around a table with representatives of the groups who ask them for money. Other members represent grassroots or civic groups that don't want to see too much focus on “service delivery” because it diverts attention from community development and engagement. Still others are most concerned that children from the poorest racial/ethnic groups do not get left behind. Representing the best interests of all children and families produces a different mindset than advocating for one's

own organization, discipline, or perspective. The primary challenge of representing the best interests of children and families is to keep multiple possibilities in mind at the same time – balancing the best interests of children with possibilities for improving services and enhancing capacity and self-determination for community groups.

One of the continuing challenges for Children’s Planning Council members has to do with maintaining a balance between being a member of the group and playing a specific role as a “representative” of a particular interest group or constituency. Because the Council includes elected officials, funders, businesspeople, public and private sector administrators, community-based service providers, and community members, considerable political savvy is often required to maintain personal relationships while arguing against organizational interests or strongly held beliefs. People must also keep thinking broadly to assure that the group remains open to new members and relationships.

Given opportunities to find information and develop relationships with decision-makers, as well as a deep belief in the values and principles of collaboration, however, leaders of many of the key service provider organizations in L.A. have come to see the advantages of participation in Council and SPA/AIC activities. As government agencies increasingly see the benefits of consultation with community groups, they look to the SPA/AIC Councils as an organized and credible way of obtaining community input. And community leaders who see that decision-makers actually listen to their concerns let others know that this is an important place to be.

One of the lessons learned early on is that the process of planning can be even more important than the plan itself. The process of planning together helps people develop shared goals, a shared language, and trusting relationships – especially when the conversation has been difficult, highlighting honest differences and conflicts, but eventually reaching some level of consensus. While the specifics of any plan will be outdated very quickly, the personal relationships established through honest give and take remain. The struggle to establish the Council, as well as more than a decade of disagreements over many different initiatives, have provided plenty of cement for lasting relationships and alliances. The depth of those relationships, evident in most of the forums where children’s issues are now discussed in L.A., signals a powerful force for the future.

People also recognize that alliances can change as quickly as the issues change – and one should not forget that the most unlikely person today could be an effective ally tomorrow. For this reason, good advocates make and keep as many friends as possible. They learn to argue about heated issues without making enemies or demonizing their opponents. People who are passionate about children will still be around when today’s arguments are settled. Though roles may change, we all have long memories about whether we were treated with respect or disparaged and dismissed in the heat of emotion.

The following sections describe some of the specific lessons learned about relationships with key groups that participate in the Council:

Relationships with elected officials: *One of the best decisions made by the Blue Ribbon Committee was that a member of the Board of Supervisors should chair the Council. Now that each member has rotated into the position of chair twice, the impact of having a regular opportunity to inform elected officials about key issues is clear. At the beginning, the disruption of having a new chair every year was a challenging management issue, but the rewards have been substantial. One indicator of the Council’s success is that every motion the Council has taken to the Board has passed (and only one did not pass*

by unanimous vote). Increasingly, the Board has asked the Council to facilitate or broker in delicate arenas – a vote of confidence that could also become a burden if it takes limited time and energy away from core tasks. Council staff and volunteers have also taken advantage of the opportunity to develop relationships with key deputies in each Board office.

Relationships within the bureaucratic structure of County government:

County government includes more than 35 different departments and commissions with a wide array of responsibilities, employing a large and diverse group of people in a highly bureaucratic structure. While efforts to alter the bureaucratic culture of county government are underway, change on this scale can be a slow process. The “old county” culture was self-protective, secretive, and closed to “outsiders.” Departments operated quite separately and information was protected, often closely guarded. Relationships between managers and elected officials were extremely tense, as described in a 1998 Los Angeles Times article (Bernstein 1998: B1):

“In the old days, managers were so secretive and hierarchical that in many departments none but the chief was allowed to speak to a board member, said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. To this day, many county employees are so afraid to deal personally with their elected bosses that they will not step into an elevator if a supervisor enters, Yaroslavsky said.”

Although the Council has been challenged by bureaucratic assumptions many times over many issues, it has persevered and become an accepted fact of life in L.A. County government – even though it has, at times, been perceived as a persistent irritant, half inside and half outside county government.

The Council has also had to face some of its own mistaken assumptions about how government works over the years. A 1999 report to the Board on lessons learned about collaboration included some of the Council’s mistakes when it developed a set of specific recommendations and left it to county departments to carry out their implementation. Its assumptions included a belief that the people who were asked to work across departments and with community groups would know how to collaborate, that community participants understood how county systems worked and vice versa, and that everyone understood that communicating, coordinating and collaborating were different processes (Yaffe & Watson 1999). All these assumptions were proven wrong during that process.

Relationships with communities: The SPA/AIC Councils were based on the notion that relationships between government and communities could be developed around the shared vision of improving outcomes for children and families. A recent report set out two overarching planning principles (Children’s Planning Council 2001: 2):

1. The best way to ensure that children become healthy, productive adults is to build strong communities – communities that provide the opportunities, facilities, programs, and positive environments to meet children’s developmental needs.
2. Communities can offer this support only if residents are full participants in their design and governance, and only if the political system of which they are a part encourages and supports this self-determination.

As with other such high-minded principles, saying the words is easy and making them real can be very difficult indeed. Having created the SPA/AIC Councils, the Planning Council now struggles with how to support them appropriately to carry out their evolving roles. Some of the key challenges of the next decade will be around questions of autonomy and interdependence – how to balance the needs of the whole network with the needs of each of its parts. The Council will also need to enhance training and support a facilitative leadership style among paid staff and volunteers so that leaders can continue to balance potentially competing interests and demands.

Relationships with funders: *One of the founding “rules” of the Council was that approximately half its operating budget should be from public sources and half from private sources. In the early years, when private funds were essential because little public funding was available, many local foundations were very generous in their support of the developing Council. In more recent years, when Los Angeles County was relatively flush, it also made generous contributions, but too much reliance on public funds can raise several problems. For one thing, the state’s budget crisis and local shortfalls will undoubtedly affect the Council. Reliance on public funds also raises the possibility of co-optation – at what point does a Council largely dependent on public funds become more like an arm of county government than a public/private partnership?*

Private funds continue to be extremely important, both because they are more flexible than government dollars and because they underscore the Council’s credibility outside the halls of government. Most private funders, however, do not provide ongoing or core support for grantees. Until this point, the Council has managed to maintain a lengthy relationship with some funders and to engage the interest of new funders, but at some point it may exhaust the patience and resources of the relatively limited number of potential private supporters.

A 1994 study of the history of community-based planning in Los Angeles (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children 1994) highlighted a long-term dynamic tension between funder-driven and community-driven needs and processes. Too often, those responsible for community-driven processes don’t have the power to assure that their recommendations are adopted by funders, while funder-driven processes may end up paying too little attention to community “input.” This tension is obviously not unique to L.A., but the large number of private funders and the limited number of forums for discussion about substantive issues may exacerbate this tension. Although successful with individual funders, the Council has had little success engaging the attention of the funding community as a whole. The Southern California Association of Philanthropy (SCAP), which has had three different representatives on the Council over the decade, has convened some information-sharing forums, but to date only a few funders have been interested in participating in regular Council activities. This will also be an area for continued work in the future.

One of the things that differentiates the Council from similar collaborative efforts in other urban areas is that it was not initiated or driven by funders. For one thing, L.A. County did not fit neatly into the community-based models of some funders. Several national funders were reluctant to “drop in” on a place as big, complicated, and unwieldy as L.A. One of the advantages of standing on its own from the beginning is that the Council was free to craft something that “fit” the needs of L.A. One of the disadvantages is that fundraising has been a constant, and often consuming, challenge.

flexibility **6**

Remain flexible enough to seize opportunities

While structured planning processes are necessary in a place as large and diverse as L.A., the Council has probably benefited even more from a fine-tuned ability to react to opportunities as they present themselves. Although it didn't have a name for it in the early days, the Council has always maintained a "complex adaptive systems" view of organizational change. It has tried to strike a balance between planned, rational activities and determined efforts to seize important opportunities. A few years ago, the Council helped to bring Margaret Wheatley to L.A. to participate in a training session for county managers and SPA/AIC Council leaders that helped many participants to crystallize the Children's Planning Council's natural bent:

"First, I no longer believe that organizations can be changed by imposing a model developed elsewhere. So little transfers to, or even inspires, those trying to work at change in their own organizations. Second, and much more important, the new physics cogently explains that there is no objective reality out there waiting to reveal its secrets. There are no recipes or formulae, no checklists or advice that describe "reality." There is only what we create through our engagement with others and with events. Nothing really transfers, everything is always new and different and unique to each of us." (Wheatley 1992:7)

As with many such efforts, the beginnings of the Council were relatively low-key, of interest primarily to the actors most involved. In retrospect, this was a good thing because it allowed leaders time to experiment and take chances without attracting much interest or opposition. For example, several people later said that they paid little attention to the Council's proposal for common geographic (SPA) boundaries because they did not believe that they would ever be taken seriously.

After a few years and some notable achievements, however, more people began to notice that the Council was not simply doing business as usual. And inevitably, the Council and its work would be questioned and challenged as to its structure, its processes, and its authority to conduct business independent from typical county rules. Suddenly there were many reasons why the Council could not continue to challenge the rules, working half inside and half outside county government. As the rules and directives piled up, some of us said that it felt like the county's "immune system had kicked in." Predictably, it was not people in the direct service departments that had representatives on the Council, but those from "administrative" units of county government who had not bought in to the vision, who decried the Council's continuing to operate

independently. Neither the business people on the Council nor the Supervisor who was chair at that time would accept that message. Consequently, a nonprofit entity – The Children’s Planning Council Foundation, Inc. – was created as an arm of the Council to assure its fiscal autonomy. A Memorandum of Understanding was developed between the Board of Supervisors and the Foundation, providing one legal foot outside and one structural foot inside county government.

Ultimately the Council was stronger because it had persevered in the face of opposition. It has become clear, both to observers and to participants, that the Children’s Planning Council isn’t going to go away easily. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Council can withstand pressures to become just one among the many operational parts of a highly bureaucratic county structure. As it grows, employing more staff and taking on more responsibilities, can it keep itself free enough from the overwhelming immediate issues of a very large county to maintain flexibility? Will new generations of staff and volunteers who walk into an “established” organization still prize and protect the flexibility that served so well in the early years? Hopefully, Council members will remember Wheatley’s advice that “there are no recipes or formulae, no checklists or advice” and the Council will continue to create space for honest discussion about the well-being of children and families through its real-time engagement with people and with events.

access **7**

Maximize access and political power for adults who care about children

“For the typical public manager who heads a bureaucracy charged with implementing the law, public debate is not something to be invited. It is difficult enough to divine what the legislature had in mind when it enacted the law, how the governor or president wants it to be interpreted and administered, and which course is consistent with sound public policy. It is harder still to commandeer the resources necessary to implement the program, to overcome bureaucratic inertia and institutional rigidity, and to ensure that a system for producing the desired result is actually in place and working. In the midst of these challenges, public controversy is not particularly welcome. The tacit operating rule holds that the best public is a quiescent one, the manager should work quietly, get the job done without disturbing the peace, and reassure everyone ‘out there’ that there is no reason to be concerned or involved.” (Reich 1990: 123)

Effective advocacy for children requires a combination of political power, technical expertise, hard data, moral argument, and politically mobilized constituencies with a uni-

fied vision and practical focus on solutions. Some advocates rely on legal strategies or lawsuits, while others focus on political or community organizing strategies. Regardless of the exact mix of elements, however, a key premise is that advocacy is not only about the children – it is about the political power of the adults who speak on their behalf. The Council has tried to maximize access by including elected officials, their staff deputies, and other politically connected individuals (business people, supervisorial appointees, members of other county commissions, etc.) in its activities. It has also tried to give a diverse group of community leaders involved in the SPA and American Indian Children's Councils access to decision-makers and forums where the next set of ideas are being formulated. This approach has generally been successful because most people have been willing to leave their parochial interests or organizational "hats" outside the door.

The downside of the Council's emphasis on inclusion, however, is that new members can change the agenda – either by expanding it exponentially or by limiting it to a small number of non-controversial issues. Inclusion requires the Council to fashion collaborative rather than adversarial positions, seeking consensus over a majority vote. Strategy in selecting a short list of powerful issues around which consensus can be framed is clearly essential. Recently, each of the ten councils in the network agreed to focus at least part of its energy on increasing school readiness and school success for all of L.A.'s children. Developing consensus on a shared goal was hard, but even more difficult challenges lie ahead – working to engage a critical mass of hundreds of the councils' members, coordinating actions across very different communities, tracking progress, and measuring results for children and families.

While it takes firm positions, the Council tends to do so behind the scenes on controversial matters, not by taking public positions against the policies or actions of member organizations. This kind of persuasive advocacy relies on skills different from those required for hardball advocacy or "hell raising." Thus there is a steep learning curve for people who are new to the process. One community member reports that she "didn't know what they were talking about for ages." Being determined to figure it out, she stuck with it long enough to begin to unravel the puzzles, but many others have not had the determination or the support necessary to see through the talk to the potential power of coordinated action.

Although the Council has had more than its share of "wins," it has weathered some "losses" too. One such "loss" occurred when it tried to convince the Board of Supervisors to use the existing commissions concerned with children to implement Proposition 10, a tobacco tax initiative to support families with children under age five led by Hollywood producer Rob Reiner. Although the Board opted to appoint a new commission, it did agree that "ex officio" members representing existing commissions should be included. The fact that these members represent the four existing child- and family-related county commissions – the Children's Planning Council, the Commission for Children and Families, the Child Care Policy Roundtable, and the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect – has encouraged cooperation among the commissions both around Proposition 10 and on other matters. {See note 4.} This is just one example of the Council's continuing efforts to find alternative paths to desired ends, turning "losses" into new opportunities, and working always to widen the circle and improve relationships with potential allies.

The Council has had many other opportunities to find alternative paths to desired results when its first strategy didn't work. One of its most tested, and most necessary,

attributes over the years has been the belief that there are many possible pathways to achieving a better future for children and families. Making sure that committed advocates who know and trust each other are active in influential groups and policy discussions going on throughout the county makes it more likely that children and families will ultimately benefit.

data 8

Use data to drive planning

In 1973, Donald Michael anticipated how information technology would expand the awareness of social planners, encouraging people to look outside the boundaries of their organizations and increasing demand for boundary-spanning approaches such as those used by the Council (page 239):

“Partially because more information technology will be used by both the organization and the environment, there will be an increase in information that clarifies the distribution of several consequences: consequences of the organization’s activities, of the interaction of activities between organizations, and of the interaction of those activities and the turbulent properties of the environment which are independent of the organization’s activities. This increase in information will press organizations to pay more attention to who it is that they burden with social costs or bless with benefits. In turn, this will increase the need for them to connect themselves, by boundary spanners, with other organizations in order to enhance the rewards and reduce the costs to the environment...”

The Council’s early decision to integrate the use of available data into all of its planning activities has had an enormous impact on its approach to planning, the networks established, and the relationships developed over the last decade. Data have been essential for the Council since the beginning, as illustrated by the number of data-based reports it has produced. One advantage of using data to drive planning is that most people don’t argue with numbers, especially when they come from a credible source such as the Council. Just because they don’t dispute the numbers, however, does not necessarily mean that they know how to translate data into useful information. Some don’t know how to read tables, others are intimidated by numbers, and still others just can’t make the leap from data to possible action.

Because the Council’s Data Analysis and Technical Assistance (DATA) Committee was initially made up of “data junkies” and researchers, it tended to over-estimate people’s interest in and ability to use data. The recruitment of “data liaisons” from each of

the SPA/AIC Councils helped to broaden and diversify the committee, offsetting the natural tendencies of the immersed to converse in jargon. In order to be useful in helping to chart directions for change, data cannot be just the purview of researchers and technicians. The new Data Partnership Committee is now making a bigger investment in training so that those who are least familiar in dealing with data become more comfortable doing so, but it also needs to do a better job of “translating” data into usable information.

Another lesson learned from more than a decade of work with population and service utilization data is that many of the indicators for which data are readily available do not contribute to any deep understanding of what is going on in the lives of children and families. Not only are data collection methods subject to many kinds of bias, institutional data collection has generally evolved over time to serve institutional purposes. Thus the most reliable data in any organization are those on which its funding is based – but those data elements may not be especially helpful in community-based planning.

Notwithstanding those limitations, the Council has continued to invest considerable time and energy in gathering and organizing available data through its Children's ScoreCard, producing five versions since 1994. *{See note 5.}* Although some advocates have questioned the use of a scorecard as a vehicle for change, the Council has seen its practical utility in several ways. To begin with, the categories used to organize the ScoreCard – the five outcome areas – have garnered increasing support over time, so that they now represent broad political agreement on the key arenas where people need to work together. They were designed originally to answer the question “what do we want for our children?” and thus function more as domains of child well-being than as priorities. This inclusive cast has helped to draw more people and organizations into the fold, both as Council members and as allied organizations. For example Los Angeles County's First 5 L.A. (Proposition 10) Commission, the L.A. City Commission on Children, Youth and Their Families, the Los Angeles County Education Foundation, and the Los Angeles Unified School District have adopted the same outcome areas.

Since the Council did not, until recently, have staff devoted to data, the ScoreCards were developed in partnership with other organizations (United Way of Greater L.A. and the Los Angeles County Department of Health), expanding alliances and partnerships in a number of ways. Because we purposely vary the format and indicators each time, each release of a ScoreCard seems to bring more people into an engaged conversation about the issues. SPA Councils have used data to galvanize their membership toward defining specific action areas, and the American Indian Children's Council has used the lack of accurate data on American Indian children to push the Board of Supervisors to put more focus on this area. While the principles developed in 1993 to guide the development of the first scorecard (*see Appendix 6*) have provided useful in thinking about subsequent iterations, it is clear that the development of rigorous outcomes and indicators to measure the status of children and families is in its infancy.

Even in business, where measurement is a bit more advanced, it is difficult to develop an “intricate understanding” of complex interactions (Pascale, Millemann & Gioja 2000: 232-4):

Intricate understanding is an important discipline for disturbing equilibrium and promoting self-organization in the ranks. It is based on establishing clear connections between a firm's

overall strategy and each individual's performance. Colloquially, this is called "line of sight." Employees see the direct connection between their contributions and their company's commercial success. This is harder than it looks. Burying employees in raw data won't achieve it, nor will abstract financial indicators such as profit, return on investment, and so forth. Rather, one must identify activities that are tangible, that employees can influence, and that correlate with an overview of strategic intentions.

'Deep indicators' are an important facet of the discipline of intricate understanding. Identifying them requires moving beyond the surface scorecard to the underlying drivers of results. Surface metrics are like a game score, they capture the outcome. Deep indicators monitor the underlying factors that produce the outcome.

The children's services field has a long way to go before it even begins to identify, much less to understand, the deep indicators that drive improved results for children and families. The good news is that people are invested in increasing shared capacity to collect and analyze meaningful data. The challenges involved in improving existing information systems, updating data collection processes, and "harvesting" data from multiple sources are daunting. The limitations of most of the existing county information systems are profound, including antiquated categorical MIS systems (data for some programs are still not automated); a lack of common definitions of key data elements used across departments; a limited ability to track individuals or families across departments or even across funding streams in a single department; and a limited understanding of how to develop and test reasonable program performance measures. But there have been significant steps forward, including the formal implementation of a children's budget process designed to link the performance of county programs to expenditures.

money

9

Follow the money

Since the beginning, the Council has focused on the county budget, working with the CAO to produce regular analyses of the county's "children's budget" along the lines initiated by the Children's Roundtable. Council leaders agree with Halpern (1999: 213):

"Successful system reform will not occur until reform is built on an understanding of two things: how and why service systems allocate resources as they do... and how funding patterns constrain reform efforts themselves."

The Council's analysis of twenty years of budget data (McCroskey & Yoo 1999) emphasized the need to make use of a strategic opportunity in 1999 to coordinate new sources

of funding that could add up to almost half a billion new dollars available for children and families. {See note 6.} The Council led an interdepartmental group to analyze and make recommendations on the lessons learned from the coordination of these resources.

The Council has supported the development of the Service Integration Branch (SIB) in the Chief Administrative Office, and has worked actively on developing its county-wide Service Integration Action Plan. The Council has also worked with the CAO to implement the county's first strategic plan – all the more eagerly since one of the plan goals is to improve the well-being of children and families. Perhaps the most important new SIB/CAO initiative on which the Council is working, however, is a formalization of the children's budget process initiated by the Roundtable in 1984. After many years of being an "after the fact" process, in 2002 the CAO asked all county departments to include specific information on their children's programs during the regular budget planning process. County CAO David Janssen notes in the Children's Budget Addendum to the 2002-03 budget that (Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office 2002: 1):

"The Fiscal Year 2002-03 Children and Families Budget begins the process of linking program performance measures with budget allocations, actual expenditures and funding sources. The Budget provides a summary of efforts being taken to improve outcomes for children and families; a review of the current conditions of children and families in Los Angeles County; an identification of County-administered programs; departmental program performance and results based budget detail; and a summary of funding source and revenue stream data."

In the first year, 22 departments submitted baseline information on the programs that serve children and families. Departments began by providing performance measures for only two of their programs, but will add their other programs over time:

"Full implementation of the restructured Children and Families Budget will provide the Board of Supervisors, County departments, and the community with a better understanding of how resources are being utilized, how well services are being provided, and what are the results of the services: is anyone better off? The County will evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and results of individual programs, as well as review the collective cross-agency contributions being made toward the five Board-approved outcomes for children and families in L.A. County" (Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office 2002: 1).

Although the first formal Children's Budget Addendum to the County Budget passed "under the radar" for many advocates, its full development over the next few years presages a significant breakthrough for L.A. County. In fact, Los Angeles will be the only urban jurisdiction in the country that will not only be able to document how effective each of its programs really are on an ongoing basis, but be able to put cost figures to specific kinds of benefits for children and families.

communities 10

Connect the people most engaged in local communities with decision-makers

The Council began with a vision of helping county government decentralize its approach to service delivery, recognizing differences among regions in this vast and far-flung county. At the beginning, even the idea of taking different levels of need into account was quite a step for a county used to "dividing by five" (the number of elected officials on the Board of Supervisors) any new pot of resources. Data helped to call attention to the reality that, while each region had high-need communities, they also had different kinds of needs and different kinds of strengths. Over time people came to see that initial vision as too "government-centric," investing too much faith in service delivery and too little in community-based change processes. Although the Council is still committed to "transforming" the service delivery systems of county government, it is paying much more attention to helping SPA/AIC Councils engage communities around local action. Its two major purposes are now defined as strengthening community capacity and transforming systems. To support these efforts, the Council also continues to work on developing data partnerships that build and support countywide commitment to outcomes.

As the SPA/AIC Councils have developed, it has become clear that local leaders are much better able to represent and "tell the stories" of their communities than are traditional downtown players at the County Hall of Administration. In order to tell these stories effectively, they need information about who makes different kinds of decisions, the different forums in which policy issues are debated, and how and why decision-making processes proceed as they do. With some training, support, and facilitation, many SPA/AIC Council leaders have become able spokespersons who are increasingly in demand to serve on the many committees and work groups that guide county government. In fact, some are so much in demand that their biggest problem is trying to balance their regular jobs, SPA/AIC involvement, and countywide activities, making difficult judgments about which activities are most likely to spark real changes. Likewise, many local community leaders (in "sub-SPA" areas) face similar challenges in working at both local and SPA levels.

Increasing participation by community representatives may be one of the most visible changes in county decision-making processes brought about by the Children's Planning Council. This is certainly not to say that every decision goes the way that community representatives want, nor that people feel that they have full access to all decision processes, but it is no longer acceptable to exclude credible community representatives from key decision-making processes. At the beginning, the first executive director was greeted by comments about how she had joined the "county family," sug-

gesting that she was now a county employee and thus one of “us.” As it turns out, the Council has brought an extended network of kith and kin into the family, diminishing the difference between “us” and “them” in the process.

challenges

The Challenges Ahead

Although the Children’s Planning Council has done a great deal in a relatively short time, garnering widespread support and credibility, there is still a long way to go before everyone believes that such collaborative partnerships can significantly improve the lives of children and families. The key challenge of the Council’s second decade will be to maintain the vision, retaining a cohort of committed leaders who can make connections with the past while initiating a new group to take the vision forward. The second decade may be even harder than the first. Beginnings have the advantage of new energy and grand expectations, while maintaining the course – learning from mistakes and adapting expectations – doesn’t necessarily generate as much enthusiasm.

The Council will need to continue to balance the many dynamic tensions that have defined its first decade, balancing a focus on service delivery with a focus on building the capacity of communities to solve their own problems, balancing the roles of community-based service providers with those played by community residents, balancing differences among the “cultures” of the many communities in Los Angeles County, and allowing SPA/AIC Councils more autonomy while maintaining the network of networks.

As if these weren’t enough demands on the energy and attention of a group of very busy people, the Council also needs to work hard to engage the attention of many other key actors, including the county’s 88 cities and its 82 school districts, the philanthropic sector, and the media.

Fortunately, there is increasing consensus about the importance of finding practical solutions for these and other challenges. Over the last decade, the Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council has come a long way. It has morphed and grown, sometimes taking paths that none of its founders would have predicted or envisioned, and has taught its members some profound lessons about working together toward shared goals. Its achievements to date have been significant, but we still have miles to go in terms of improving outcomes for all children in Los Angeles. Although we can’t be satisfied until we see substantial improvements in conditions for children and families, we have learned that working hard to keep the many different kinds of partnerships and coalitions that make up the Children’s Planning Council vibrant and functioning is worth the effort. We know how to work together and believe that we can make a difference for hundreds of thousands of children – a difference that will have a profound impact on the future. At least now we have some ideas about how to get there from here.

notes

1. Other recommendations of the Roundtable's first Children's Budget report included blending funds when children needed services from more than one department; comprehensive case management for at-risk children; an increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention; the systematic use of program budgeting; and an increased use of management information systems to support planning.
2. By 2001, the combined expenditures of this fragmented and diverse array of organizations serving children and families had increased to about \$18 billion.
3. The 2000 Partnership had inherited its action agenda from L.A. 2000, a leadership group convened in the early 1980s by L.A. City Mayor Tom Bradley to map future directions for the City of the Angels.
4. The author serves as the Council's ex officio representative on the First 5 L.A. (formerly Proposition 10) Commission.
5. Children's ScoreCards were produced in 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, and 2001. {See Appendix 3 – Precursors to Results-Based Accountability in Los Angeles County: Data-Based Reports on Children and Families}
6. The four were: 1) Proposition 10, non-categorical resources for pregnant women and children under the age of five and their families based on a statewide ballot initiative sponsored by Rob Reiner; 2) the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan, or performance incentive monies available through welfare reform; 3) the Tobacco Settlement and 4) the Healthy Student Partnership.

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appendix 1

Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council – 2003

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Lauraine Barber, SPA 8 (South Bay/Harbor)

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Priscilla Charles-Carter, Foster Parent/Caregivers

Rose L. Clark, Ph.D., American Indian Children's Council

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Honorable Steve Cooley, District Attorney

Teresa A. DeCrescenzo, MSW, Third Supervisorial District

Nefertiti Edwards, Youth Representative

Dorothy Fleisher, Ph.D., Southern California Association for Philanthropy

David W. Fleming, Business Community

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Timothy Gallagher, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation

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Linda Lewis, Private Child-Serving Organizations

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Governor Roy Romer, Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District

Bruce Saltzer, Association of Community Human Services Agencies

David Sanders Ph.D., Director, Department of Children and Family Services

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Carol Shauger, LCSW, SPA 1 (Antelope Valley)

Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer

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Beatriz Olvera Stotzer, Latino Community

Nancy Tallerino, SPA 5 (West)

Deanne Tilton, ICAN Policy Committee

Margaret Donnellan Todd, County Librarian

Pat Vining, SPA 6 (South)

Sharon Watson, Ph.D., Member at Large

Phillip L. Williams, Board of Directors, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

Bryce Yokomizo, Director, Department of Public Social Services

Vacant, African American Community

Vacant, City of Los Angeles, Commission for Children, Youth and Their Families

Vacant, Second Supervisorial District

* Pending Board of Supervisors approval

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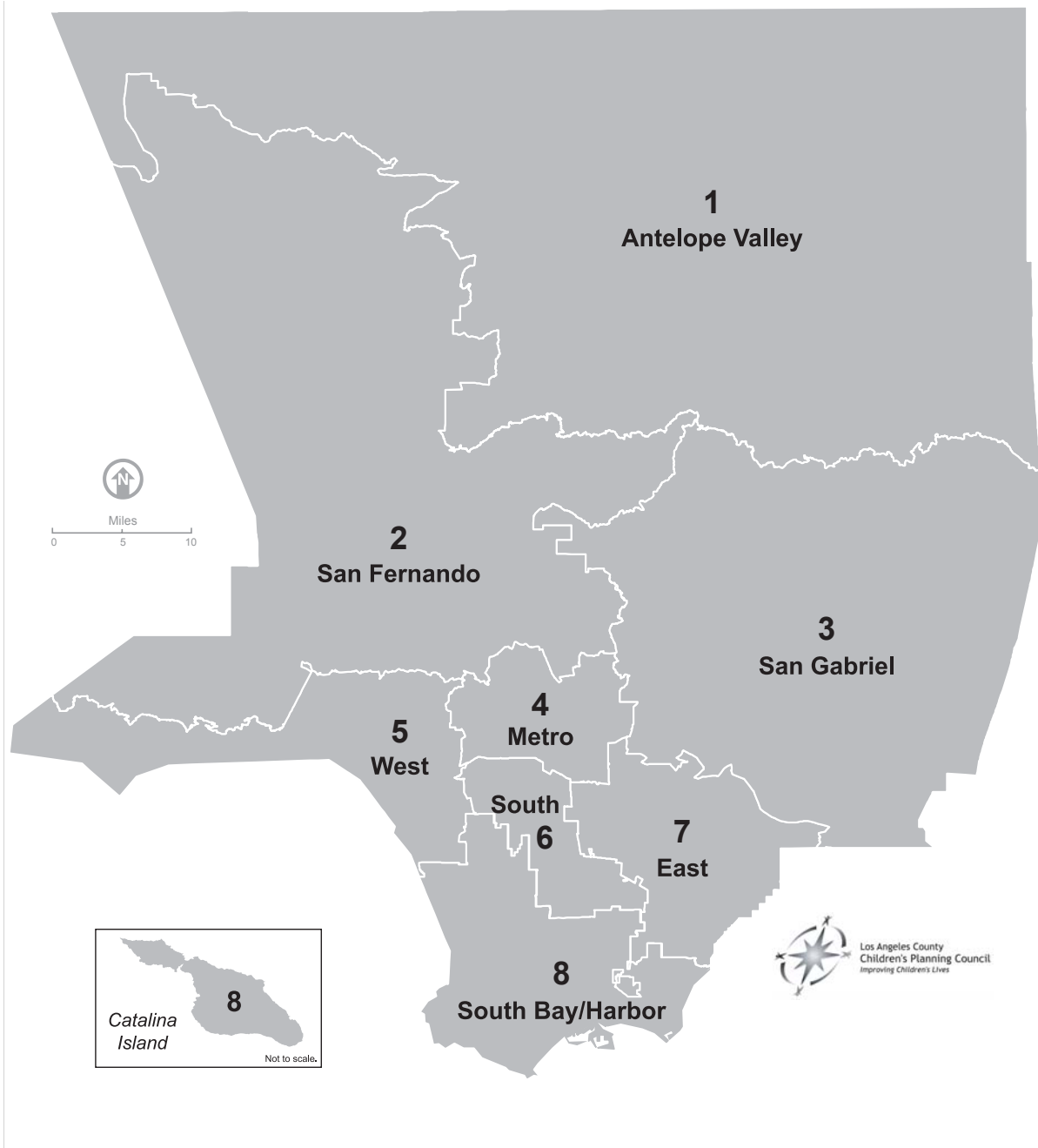
Becki Nadybal

Cori Shepherd

Laura Valles

appendix 2

Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas Map



appendix 3

Precursors to Results-Based Accountability in Los Angeles County: Data-Based Reports on Children and Families

- 1984 Profile of the children of Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
- 1985 State of child abuse in L.A. County (Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect annual data report begins)
- 1988 California report card (Children Now statewide annual report card begins)
- 1986 The children's budget of Los Angeles County government (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
- 1989 Services for children with disabilities in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
Private sector services for families and children in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
- 1991 Private sector services for families and children in Los Angeles County: Finance, location and multiservice organization of not-for-profit agencies (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
A geography of children's services in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
Listing of not-for-profit agencies included in the study sample by geographic area (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
- 1992 Social and health services in Los Angeles County schools: Availability, need, and funding (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
Who are the children of Los Angeles County (Children's Planning Council)
Outcome measurement for family and children's services in Los Angeles County (position statement by the Children's Planning Council)
- 1993 An agenda for children's health care in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
How are the children of Los Angeles County (Children's Planning Council)
- 1994 School-linked services report: Transforming school-linked services in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
Community Planning Principles: A bridge from the past to the future (Los Angeles Roundtable for Children)
Collaboratives for children, youth, and families in Los Angeles County, partial list (Children's Planning Council)
State of the County Report (United Way of Greater Los Angeles)
- 1995 Collaboratives for children, youth, and families in Los Angeles County, second edition (Children's Planning Council)
Defining "communities" in planning services for children, youth, and families (Children's Planning Council)
Findings and recommendations of Los Angeles County's first data match project (Children's Planning Council)
L.A.4KIDS, A youth agenda for the 90's and beyond (Los Angeles Mayor's Committee on Children, Youth and Families)
- 1996 Profiles of Los Angeles County (Children's Planning Council)
Youth participation and youth networks (Children's Planning Council)
Ethnic community profiles – Planning for a new Los Angeles (Children's Planning Council)

- 1998 Laying the groundwork for change, Los Angeles County's first action plan for its children, youth, and families (Children's Planning Council)
- 1999 The children's budget of Los Angeles County government, 1980-1999 (Children's Planning Council)
Children, youth and families, City of Los Angeles ZIP Code data book (United Way of Greater Los Angeles)
A tale of two cities, Promise and peril in Los Angeles, State of the County Report (United Way of Greater Los Angeles)
Los Angeles County service planning area databook (United Way of Greater Los Angeles & Children's Planning Council)
- 2001 Urban American Indian children in Los Angeles County: An investigation of available data (Frith-Smith & Singleton, UCLA. American Indian Studies Center)
Telling it as they see it, What families say about getting services from multiple agencies (Children's Planning Council)

Children's Score Cards

- 1994 Los Angeles County Children's ScoreCard 1994 (Los Angeles 1994, State of the County Report) (United Way of Greater Los Angeles, 1994)
- 1995 Children's Baseline Data for Los Angeles County 1995 & Data Comparison for Service Planning Areas (Profiles of Los Angeles County, Service Planning Area Resources for Children, Youth and Families) (Children's Planning Council, 1996)
- 1998 Los Angeles County Children's ScoreCard 1998 (United Way of Greater Los Angeles & Children's Planning Council, 1999)
- 1999 Multi-ethnic Children's ScoreCard 1999 (United Way of Greater Los Angeles, 1999)
- 2001 Children's ScoreCard – joint effort of the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council and

appendix 4

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

1992 Declaration, Transforming Family and Children's Services in Los Angeles County (excerpt)

Whereas families and communities have multiple assets and strengths, but may need additional skills, resources, and power to improve their own lives, and

Current dollars must be spent as effectively as possible to support family and community efforts, and

Systems and services for families and children in Los Angeles County should be transformed to better meet child, family, and community needs.

We, the signators, believe the following principles should guide this transformation:

1. Redirect resources towards the needs of children, families, and communities;
2. Expand the use of outcomes data on effectiveness and efficiency to enhance services; such data should also be used to allocate resources among programs, agencies, and geographic areas to ensure public accountability for results, without prescribing the means to accomplish desirable outcomes;
3. Address underlying and systemic causes of family and community problems such as poverty, and not just their symptoms;
4. Strengthen service capacity at all levels through training and technical assistance; assure that staff and leadership are culturally responsive, reflective of neighborhoods, and effective in the new environment;
5. Expand support for family-centered programs, especially those which address young families, intervening more comprehensively at (and before) birth to produce better school readiness outcomes;
6. Increase incentives and rewards for youth engaging in positive behavior; and
7. Create new incentives for partnerships rather than promoting isolated efforts that compete against each

appendix **5**

other for funding and staff attention.

Place	Population	Place	Population	Place	Population
California	33,871,648	Arizona	5,130,632	SPA 3 - San Gabriel	1,734,254
Texas	20,851,820	Minnesota	4,919,479	Nebraska	1,711,263
New York	18,976,457	Louisiana	4,468,976	SPA 8 - South Bay/Harbor	1,500,185
Florida	15,982,378	Alabama	4,447,100	Idaho	1,293,953
Illinois	12,419,293	Colorado	4,301,261	SPA 7 - East	1,285,210
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	Kentucky	4,041,769	Maine	1,274,923
Ohio	11,353,140	South Carolina	4,012,012	New Hampshire	1,235,786
Michigan	9,938,444	Oklahoma	3,450,654	Hawaii	1,211,537
Los Angeles County	9,519,338	Oregon	3,421,399	SPA 4 - Metro	1,144,083
New Jersey	8,414,350	Connecticut	3,405,565	Rhode Island	1,048,319
Georgia	8,186,453	Iowa	2,926,324	SPA 6 - South	955,054
North Carolina	8,049,313	Mississippi	2,844,658	Montana	902,195
Virginia	7,078,515	Kansas	2,688,418	Delaware	783,600
Massachusetts	6,349,097	Arkansas	2,673,400	South Dakota	754,844
Indiana	6,080,485	Utah	2,233,169	North Dakota	642,200
Washington	5,894,121	Nevada	1,998,257	Alaska	626,932
Tennessee	5,689,283	SPA 2 - San Fernando	1,981,961	SPA 5 - West	613,191
Missouri	5,595,211	New Mexico	1,819,046	Vermont	608,827
Wisconsin	5,363,675	West Virginia	1,808,344	District of Columbia	572,059
Maryland	5,296,486			Wyoming	493,782
				SPA 1 - Antelope Valley	305,400

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, SF1

appendix 6

Population Comparisons between Service Planning Areas and States

Principles Guiding the Development of the Children's ScoreCard in Los Angeles

1. Outcomes are useful at multiple levels, but should be designed differently to fit different levels. Outcomes can measure the results of service programs for individuals, families, groups, or agencies. Outcomes can be used to track changes in the conditions of children and families in communities, regions, counties, or the state. Outcomes can also be used to plan for or track the impact of policy and programmatic changes.
2. At any level, outcomes and indicators should be practical, results-oriented, clearly important to the well-being of children and families, and stated in understandable terms.
3. Desired outcomes should, whenever possible, be stated as positive expressions of well-being rather than as an absence of negative conditions. Attempts to focus on desired conditions are not only worthwhile in themselves, but they underline the extent to which current data collection focuses professional and public attention on negative conditions (problems, failures, illnesses, crimes, deaths, etc.).
4. Since no one indicator captures the full dimensions of outcomes sought, outcomes should be measured by a set of indicators chosen from the most valid and reliable data available. Multiple measures and multiple perspectives are especially important when the outcomes sought are complex and multi-faceted (the rule rather than the exception in this arena).
5. Whenever possible, outcomes should reflect the well-being of children, families, and communities, not the state of the service delivery system. Performance measures are also necessary to track the state of the service delivery system; however, a well-functioning delivery system is a means to an end, not the end itself.
6. Initial efforts should focus on a strategic set of outcomes and indicators that reflect concerns shared by multiple stakeholder communities, including policy-makers, service providers, and families. A more inclusive set of outcomes can be built incrementally over time based on initial experiences. The process of developing appropriate, practical, and accurate outcome measures will be an evolutionary one, from which there is much to learn.
7. One of the most important steps in developing outcomes is clarification of the cultural and value foundations that underlie the process. The process used may be as important as the outcomes selected, both in terms of ensuring understanding and buy-in, and in terms of providing opportunities for informed discussions of underlying values and assumptions. Depending on community values, needs, and resources, outcomes and indicators may vary across communities.
8. Standards for success and expectations for progress should be set at levels that challenge and encourage



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