COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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July 21, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
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From: David Sanders, Director

JUNE 21, 2004 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #5.10: OLDER YOUTH ADOPTION "PERMANENCY PARTNERS PROGRAM (P3)"

On June 21, 2004 during FY 2004-05 Budget Deliberations on motion of Supervisor Antonovich, your Board instructed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to explore the availability of resources within DCFS' existing budget to allow for the expansion of the Older Youth Adoption Program to other areas within Los Angeles County.

As you know, the Department has been working with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Consortium of Children on the Permanency Partners Program (P3). A pilot serving 50 youth is currently being conducted in DCFS Service Bureau 4 and is being financed by CDSS through a contract with the Consortium for Children.

The Department has identified and is actively pursuing three potential resources to fund P3 expansion.

1. **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau Field, Initiated Service Demonstration Projects in the Adoption Field.**

On July 12, 2004, the Department, in collaboration with the Consortium for Children, the Children's Bureau of Southern California, Latino Family Institute, Institute for Black Parenting and Vista Del Mar Children's Services, applied for a four-year grant with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for expansion of the P3 Program. If selected, the Department will receive up to $398,899 a year to expand the P3 Program to cover the remainder of Service Bureau 4. This grant proposal projects to provide permanency mediation services for 100 youth per year during the four year project period.

Only five projects will be selected from across the nation for this grant opportunity, so this is a highly competitive process. It is anticipated that we will receive notification regarding the grant by October 1, 2004.

2. Child Welfare Services Re-Design – Cohort 1 County Funding

The Department anticipates receiving approximately $1.2 million in funding to support Child Welfare Services Re-design activities in FY 2004-05, subject to adoption of the State Budget. There are three major areas of activity that are to be developed as part of this year's funding:

- CWS Intake Structure (Differential Response/Partnerships)
- Comprehensive Safety Assessment
- Enhanced Youth Permanency and Transition

We plan to explore with CDSS the feasibility of including the expansion of the P3 Program as one of our intended activities in the Enhanced Youth Permanency and Transition area. The plan for our use of FY 2004-05 CWS Redesign funds is due to CDSS on July 30, 2004.

3. MacLaren Children's Center (MCC) Funding in the Provisional Financing Uses (PFU) Fund

We are working with County Counsel, and the CAO to explore the feasibility of using the MCC funding currently in PFU for expansion of the P3 Program. Most of the children who are targeted for permanency mediation services through P3 are the high-needs children targeted in the *Katia A.* class of plaintiffs and those who often resided at MacLaren. Despite having received a wide array of services and placements in the past, these children have not been able to establish lasting relationships with supportive adults.

We estimate that the costs of developing and implementing P3 in the other three Service Bureaus as well as for youth provided services through our Specialized and Alternative Services Division is $1 million annually. The allocation of this level of funding would allow for permanency mediation services to be provided to 400 additional youth per year.

We believe that P3 will benefit children who have been in the system for a substantial time, and significantly reduce the number of children in the *Katie A.* class of plaintiffs. P3 would also provide children with the individualized services, enhanced assessments and permanence that the settlement aims to provide. We are working with County Counsel to ensure that P3 would be an appropriate use of the MCC funds as required by the *Katie A.* lawsuit.

Next Steps

The Department is developing an expansion proposal for P3. When the proposal is finalized, the cost to implement the expansion will be quantified; and I will return to the Board with the expansion proposal and funding information.

Detailed information about P3 is provided in the attachment. If you have any questions, please call me, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Manager, Board Relations section, at (213) 351-5530

DS:JS
MHM:bah

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Attachment

Older Youth Adoption "Permanency Partners Program (P3)

The Permanency Partners Program (P3) will connect eligible children receiving long term foster care services with a trained mediator who will review each eligible youth's file looking for significant people in the youth's life. Once the file has been reviewed, the mediator will work with the youth to identify their wants and needs as well as talk about their desires and help them individually to identify and locate family members or others who have had an important, positive role in the child's life. Once these significant individuals are located, mediators will work with them to encourage them to build a relationship with the child. If appropriate, a new permanent plan for the child will be pursued. If a significant person is unable to be identified and the youth agrees that they would like to be adopted, permanent families will be recruited for the youth.

Currently, the Consortium for Children is conducting a pilot program in Service Bureau 4 with 50 youth. The California Department of Social Services is financing this pilot through a contract with the Consortium for Children and there is no cost to the County. The Consortium mediators work one-on-one with each eligible youth to identify the significant persons. Private investigators (who volunteer their time) are available to help find the identified people, if necessary. The significant persons are contacted and assessed. Once an individual has been identified and located, the mediator will work with youth and the individual to bring about a permanent plan for the youth. A detailed permanent plan will be developed by the parties, and once approved by the Department, be implemented. Mediators would also assist the parties identify and address any safety issues or other obstacles to placement.

The consortium estimates that each mediation process with a child will take 30 hours over three months. The mediators are individuals with Master's in Social Work or a related field, at least five years of experience and over 60 hours of specialized training on this issue. Mediators will all have over 100 hours of experience providing mediation to stakeholders in the Child Welfare System. Mediators for P3 will undergo an additional eight hours of specialized training.

We believe that this program would greatly benefit children who have been in the foster care system for many years and have lost touch with their families or former caretakers. This program would provide an opportunity for them to create or re-create those relationships and find new caretakers or mentors.