County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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May 30, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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From: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

FEBRUARY 28, 2006 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #13 REGARDING GANG VIOLENCE

On February 26, 2006, your Board instructed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to report back in ninety days with a plan to enhance and strengthen the provision of gang awareness and prevention education for caregivers, and to inform caregivers about alternative public resources available to keep young people safe from gangs. This report includes actions, both taken and planned, to enhance caregiver training, strengthen the assessment skills of staff in recognizing potential gang involvement or at-risk behavior and to strengthen important linkages between caregivers and local community resources. While for reporting purposes these areas are described separately, it's important that they be seen as part of an overall approach, which, along with other large scale County actions and activities, will help us more directly confront this important issue for children, families and communities.

Enhanced Training

Utilizing the resources of our Training and Law Enforcement Liaison Sections, local communities and our line operations staff, we have developed a half-day in-service training on this topic for all relative and non-relative caregivers, adoptive parents and legal guardians to be offered at locations throughout the County. Our initial roll out plan will include three to five offerings each quarter beginning in June 2006. We have established these as smaller follow-up conferences to our larger scale **Mi Casa Es Su Casa Conferences** and will be enlisting trainers and presenters with local knowledge of Gang Prevention and Intervention resources that caregivers can access. All caregivers are being contacted/informed regarding this important training and we will add sessions as needed.

We have continued to use our **Mi Casa Es Su Casa Conferences** as a means to reach large numbers of caregivers with critical information. Scheduled four times throughout the County this Fiscal Year, these Conferences are currently underway with the first two attracting over 400 caregivers. We have been careful to include seminar offerings regarding gang awareness and prevention at each of these, again, utilizing presenters/trainers with knowledge of local community resources. We are also building a seminar on this topic into our upcoming **Relative Caregiver Conference** slated to be held in early June 2006, and are finalizing presenters for this offering.

Our pre-service training for caregivers **(Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting)** has been revised to specifically include information and skill development pertaining to children/youth in gangs or with gang affiliation. Current trainers are being trained on updated activities and the revised curriculum will roll out to all new/prospective caregivers beginning in July of 2006.

Local community colleges across the County continue to offer in-service training on gang awareness and prevention. Offered under the auspices of the Chancellor's Office and at local community college sites, we will be including notification of these offerings in our quarterly mailings to caregivers.

We have been regularly updating our Core Academy Training for new Children's Social Worker staff. Training on our Department's assessment approach (**Structured Decision-Making**) includes an assessment of family strengths and needs including an assessment of each child/youth in a family. Assessing for delinquent or at-risk behaviors is a part of this process to inform case planning and intervention. We have integrated this with updated information for workers regarding the recognition of gang related or at-risk behaviors so they can, in turn share this information during regular visits.

In addition, we will also be piloting an updated Structured Decision-Making tool to assist us in the placement process. This Placement Protective Capacity Assessment, currently in the final stages of development, will serve as a tool for staff to assess specific child needs including delinquent or at-risk behavior relative to the caregiver's willingness or ability to manage these behaviors. It also allows for an assessment as to whether or not these behaviors on the part of a particular child/youth might endanger any other children placed in a foster family. Phased in training and implementation of this tool by DCFS office location will begin in August 2006.

Linking Caregivers With Local Resources

In addition to updating caregivers regarding a range of training opportunities, we will be including information regarding local **Interagency Gang Task Force** meetings by city/community in our quarterly updates/mailings. As you may know, these are regularly scheduled meetings by Region of community resources, public agencies and local law

enforcement officials to address specific gang-related issues by community. We have been in contact with the Task Force Leadership. Caregivers are welcome to attend and we will be encouraging caregivers to do as needed with the expectation that this is an opportunity to access local resources. Our line staff will also receive this updated information quarterly, so it may be discussed and shared with caregivers during regular home visits. We will also be posting information regarding gang awareness and prevention (**Interagency Gang Task Force** meeting information, relevant Web site links and addresses) on our Department's Website, both internally to update our staff (LAKIDS), and externally on our DCFS website to provide access for caregivers and stakeholders.

We have also alerted our local management teams regarding the importance of including this important topic as they meet at the local level with caregivers and caregiver association leadership. Many of our managers have established such meetings, including local law enforcement officials and community resources to support caregivers in mitigating and preventing the impact of gangs on children/youth in care.

Finally, we will be monitoring and reporting on this issue through our Child Protection Hotline; specifically tracking any death or serious injury to a child/youth under DCFS supervision that is related to gang activity. Additionally, we receive reports of any and all child deaths regardless of whether the case is under our supervision and can/will report information regarding gang-related deaths/homicides as well. This information will be forwarded to you on a quarterly basis beginning July 2006, for the period of April-June 2006. The report will include date of referral, date of incident, child's age, ethnicity, location and type of incident.

In closing, I appreciate the Board's interest in addressing this important issue. We will continue to partner with leadership at the County level and with local communities to coordinate efforts, link caregivers with local resources and mitigate the impact of gangs on children/youth, families and communities. For any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 351-5600, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

DS:JS:mam

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