County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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June 18, 2013

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Philip L. Browning, Director

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY SUPERVISORS ANTONOVICH AND MOLINA DURING THE JUNE 11, 2013 BOARD MEETING

During the Board's regular meeting of June 11, 2013, Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich and Supervisor Gloria Molina instructed the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services to report back in one week on:

- The number of budgeted Children's Social Worker positions, both encumbered and vacant;
- A hiring plan for the vacant budgeted Children's Social Worker positions;
- The impact to caseloads and projected outcomes improvement upon filling vacant Children's Social Worker positions;
- The Department's training and academy redesign;
- A plan to improve the quality of supervision for Children's Social Workers, including but not limited to ensuring enhanced casework oversight in the field by Supervising Children's Social Workers; and
- A process for notifying the Board of any preliminary concerns regarding placement agencies once the issues become known to DCFS and/or the Auditor-Controller.

NUMBER OF BUDGETED CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER POSITIONS, BOTH ENCUMBERED AND VACANT

The department is currently budgeted for a total of 3,347 Children's Social Worker positions. Of those, 3,096 (93%) are encumbered; 251 (7%) are vacant; and 48 (<1%) require additional reconciliation between CWS/CMS designations and departmental position control records, which is currently in progress.

Of the 3,096 encumbered Children's Social Worker positions, 1,801 (58%) are performing primary case-carrying work in regional offices; 82 (2%) are performing primary case-carrying work in specialized units, serving countywide; 337 (11%) are performing secondary case-carrying work in regional offices associated with dependency investigations and adoptions; 205 (7%) are on either short- or long-term Leave of Absence or on Military Leave; 623 (20%) are performing a variety of non-case carrying specialized assignments, such as screening Child Protection Hotline calls; and 48 (2%) require additional reconciliation between CWS/CMS designations and departmental position control records, which is currently in progress.

Below please note two matrices – one matrix details the numbers of Children's Social Workers per departmental regional office and their average caseloads, the other matrix details work assignments for the department's 3,347 budgeted Children's Social Workers.

	NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS			CASELOADS (AVERAGE REFERRALS/CASES)	
OFFICE	TOTAL	Emergency Response	Continuing Services	Emergency Response	Continuing Services
Belvedere	**118**	**41**	**77**	**26.9**	**33.1**
Compton	**114**	**39**	**75**	**20.3**	**28.8**
El Monte	**35**	**14**	**21**	**19.5**	**34.2**
Glendora	**109**	**42**	**67**	**16.7**	**29**
Lancaster	**86**	**29**	**57**	**22.6**	**29.1**
Metro North	**115**	**46**	**69**	**21.8**	**30.9**
Palmdale	**76**	**22**	**54**	**19.1**	**29.2**
Pasadena	**99**	**45**	**54**	**19.6**	**31.4**
Pomona	**74**	**26**	**48**	**13.9**	**26.4**
S F Springs	**108**	**44**	**64**	**21.2**	**31.3**
San Fernando Valley	**126**	**54**	**72**	**18.2**	**31.4**
Santa Clarita	**97**	**35**	**62**	**20.7**	**22.9**
South County	**162**	**65**	**97**	**20.8**	**29.8**
Torrance	**87**	**36**	**51**	**26.3**	**25.6**
Vermont Corridor	**135**	**40**	**95**	**19.5**	**31.9**

	NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS			CASELOADS (AVERAGE REFERRALS/CASES)	
OFFICE	TOTAL	Emergency Response	Continuing Services	Emergency Response	Continuing Services
Wateridge	**165**	**68**	**97**	**19.8**	**37.8**
West LA	**36**	**18**	**18**	**24.1**	**34.8**
West San Fernando Valley	**59**	**28**	**31**	**25.9**	**28.8**
TOTAL	**1,801**	**692**	**1,109**		

Service Categories[1 2]	
Emergency Response	**692**
Continuing Services	**1,109**
American Indian	**6**
Asian Pacific	**25**
Deaf Unit	**7**
MART	**16**
Medical Case Management Services	**28**
DI Units	**202**
Adoptions Operations	**135**
ASFA Assessments	**60**
Child Protection Hotline	**138**
Diligent Recruitment	**1**
Education And Mentoring	**3**
Emergency Response Command Post	**83**
Foster Home Re-Evaluation Unit	**4**
Harbor UCLA Crisis Center	**2**
High Desert Health System	**1**
High Risk Svs. Admin.	**2**
Housing Services	**7**
Independent Living Program	**1**
Independent/Stepparent Adoption	**6**
Juv Court Svs - Antelope Valley	**3**
Juv Court Svs - Court Liaison	**56**
Juv Court Svs - Intake & Det Control (IDC)	**24**
Kinship Support Services	**7**
LAC-USC Medical Center (VIP)	**5**
Medical Hubs	**1**
MLK/Drew Medical Center	**1**

OHC Dev./State Appeals	2
Olive View Medical Center	1
Out-Of-Home Care Investigation	1
Out-Of-County Services	10
Permanency Partnership Program	70
Placement & Recruitment	20
Post Adoption Services	12
Public Affairs	3
Public Inquiry	1
Resource Fam. Assess/Reassess	15
Resource Utilization Mgnt. (RUM)	23
Runaway Outreach Program (ROU)	6
Schedule D-Rate Program	15
Sensitive Case Unit	6
Skid Row Homeless Services Unit	5
Stuart House	2
Wraparound - Liaisons	25
Youth Development Svs. Support	1
SUBTOTAL	2,843
CSW Staff on Leaves[3]	205
Vacancies	251
Continued Research*	48
GRAND TOTAL	3,347

Data sources:

- **[1]BIS data pull of 5/31/13**
- **[2]HR data pull of 6/3/13**
- **[3] HR monthly leave report of May 2013**

***Note: This table reflects a shortage of 48 positions. We believe that the shortage is due to due to the use of different data sources used to compile this data.**

HIRING PLAN FOR THE VACANT CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER POSITIONS

There are currently 251 budgeted vacant Children's Social Worker positions. To fill them, since April 2013, the department has conducted or is in the process of scheduling 141 interviews. Interviews of 83 candidates were conducted on April 6, 2013 and May 11, 2013. Of those, a total of 37 candidates are moving through the hiring process. The department has received an additional 58 applications from candidates recently-graduated with a Master's of Social Work degree. Since the department anticipates that all applicants will not successfully complete the examination and meet all other conditions of employment, we will continue to accept applications from recent graduates of the schools of social work. The next rounds of

Children's Social Worker interviews are scheduled to take place on June 29; July 13 and July 20, 2013. From these efforts, we project the hiring of at least 104 new Children's Social Workers by September 30, 2013, following which the department will still have 147 budgeted vacant Children's Social Worker positions.

The overall number of vacant departmental positions is 661 Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), only a portion of which are Children's Social Workers. The department's targeted vacancy level is 404 FTEs based on a salary savings calculation. In order to reach the goal of filling the remaining budgeted vacant 147 Children's Social Worker positions, included within the overall total of 661 vacant FTEs, the department is developing a targeted hiring plan as an initiative within its adopted 2012-2015 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan's targeted hiring workgroup is focusing on adequately staffing the hard-to-staff offices located in Spas 1, 2, and 6. In addition to targeted recruitment events for qualified area residents who may be interested in working for the offices in these SPAs, additional strategies include working with universities on targeted recruitment and hiring; streamlining the hiring process; providing incentive and/or retention bonuses; requiring a minimum three-year staff commitment to work in regional offices located in the three aforementioned SPAs; applying the department's Caseload Equity Analysis findings to reducing caseloads; and improving the quality of oversight and supervision by reducing the span of control for Supervising Children's Social Workers (please note section below for additional details). The department anticipates filing the remaining budgeted 147 Children's Social Worker vacancies throughout FY 2013-2014.

IMPACT TO CASELOADS AND PROJECTED OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT UPON FILLING VACANT CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER POSITIONS

There are two types of case-carrying Children's Social Workers. Emergency Response Children's Social Workers investigate referrals of alleged child abuse and neglect received through the Child Protection Hotline. Continuing Services Children's Social Workers manage those cases in which allegations were substantiated and a plan exists by which to maintain children safely in their birth homes under supervision or, for detained children, to achieve their timely permanency, either through safe reunification with their birth families or through the alternatives of adoption or legal guardianship.

The State yardstick is a caseload of ***27*** referrals for an Emergency Response Children's Worker; and a caseload of ***34*** cases for a Continuing Services Children's Social Worker. Based upon a straight mathematical calculation of the number of Children's Social Workers and the number of existing referrals or open cases, the current average number of referrals that an Emergency Response Children's Social Worker carries ranges between ***19*** and ***27***, with the department-wide average being ***21***. The current average number of cases that a Continuing Services Children's Social Worker manages ranges between ***23*** and ***38***, with the department wide average being ***31***. However, in reality, those averages are higher because, for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to medical and driving restrictions, there are currently 223 Children's Social Workers department-wide who carry a reduced caseload.

If all 251 budgeted vacant Children's Social Worker positions were filled, for an Emergency Response Children's Social Worker, the average caseload is projected to decrease from an average 21 to 18; and for a Continuing Services Children's Social Worker, the average caseload is projected to decrease from an average 31 to 27. The anticipated outcomes resulting from these caseload reductions is improved safety and permanency as Children's Social Workers would be afforded more quality time to spend with children and families.

CASELOAD AVERAGES	STATE YARDSTICK	CURRENT DEPARTMENT RANGE	PROJECTED REDUCTION
Emergency Response Children's Social Worker	27	between 19 and 27 average: 21	from 21 to 18
Continuing Services Children's Social Worker	34	between 23 and 38 average: 31	from 31 to 27

TRAINING AND ACADEMY REDESIGN

Earlier today, on June 18, 2013, the Board approved a six-month extension of the current training and academy contracts with the Inter-University Consortium for Social Work, until December 31, 2013. The department secured permission to extend the current contracts from the State Department of Social Services in order to continue working closely with the Inter-University Consortium Schools of Social Work on entering into a new contract for a redesigned training and academy. The most significant change under the new contract with the Inter-University Consortium will be enhanced accountability by contracting with a single university. Under the new contract, overall governance will be through a University Oversight Board comprised of DCFS leadership and key stakeholders; and the department is currently negotiating provisions that will enable the department's input into the faculty who are chosen to teach classes or to disallow instructors who are not meeting the established standards from teaching.

Under the redesign, a DCFS University will be established to support the Department's mission, vision and goals; aligning the departmental training and development experiences for all levels of DCFS staff with the Core Practice Model. The DCFS University will offer a 52-week curriculum that moves away from a classroom only, wholly theoretical approach to a model that teaches critical thinking in the development of family engagement, assessment, interviewing and documentation skills. The Children's Social Worker will receive intensive experiential instruction with ample opportunities for skill practice, feedback and evaluation. This will be accomplished through both direct field experiences with clients; and simulated training scenarios modeled after real world field experiences. The proposed changes, based on a teaching hospital model, will provide necessary skills through planned intensive practical application and practice-based learning. Simulation training is one of the new methods that the Inter-University Consortium and the department are pursuing. For example, the University of Southern California uses the MILES project as part of their military social work program. In the MILES Project, an actor plays out short scenes or modules to prepare students for initial

interviews with combat veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Through the proposed new DCFS training methods, Children's Social Workers will conduct a simulated "home visit," in which they will interact with "parents" and "children" to assess for abuse or neglect within a teaching environment.

The quality of professional social work practice at the line level is the keystone to achieve the departmental mission. As part of the new training design, all line staff, supervisory, management and executive training will be aligned with the practical, core work of child welfare. An up-front Needs Assessment will be conducted to ensure appropriate design for all levels of staff; and ongoing, diligent oversight and evaluation will ensure quality training. The DCFS University will provide foundational training for all new Children's Social Workers and additionally provide professional development and leadership training, emphasizing advanced practice training for existing line, support staff, managers and executives. The DCFS University will also provide quality training for both newly-promoted and existing Supervising Children's Social Workers. Planned courses include but are not limited to: Coaching; the Supervising Children's Social Worker as Trainer; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving; and Evaluation of Children's Social Worker Performance and Progressive Discipline. Furthermore, Continuous Learning Communities for Supervising Children's Social Workers and Children's Social Workers will include on-line and in-person learning modalities that will provide other training topics; reinforce prior training; and provide opportunities for sharing best and emerging practices based on the Shared Core Practice Model.

IMPROVING SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS/ENHANCING CASEWORK OVERSIGHT IN THE FIELD

Current departmental policy requires Supervising Children's Social Workers to accompany Children's Social Workers during their investigations and/or home calls on a periodic basis (no less than two occasions per year/per Children's Social Worker). The purpose is to provide guidance and learning opportunities for the Children's Social Worker in their fieldwork practice. For a Supervising Children's Social Worker who oversees six Children's Social Workers, the visits would total a minimum of 12 per year.

In 2005, the department engaged the Union in planning for a three-month Supervising Children's Social Worker Visitation Pilot. The parameters of the pilot required Supervising Children's Social Workers in three pilot offices, chosen for their relatively better staffing and Supervising Children's Social Worker spans of control, to accompany Children's Social Workers on four visits each month. The goals of the pilot were to have Supervising Children's Social Workers provide hands-on guidance and supervision in the field and evaluate the quality of the Children's Social Worker's case management skills. In fact, to ensure greater objectivity, Supervising Children's Social Workers were allowed to conduct their visits with or without the assigned Children's Social Worker.
The pilot effectively quadrupled the amount of field visits required per departmental policy, in that, the Supervising Children's Social Worker was required 48 rather than 12 annual field visits if the pilot period would extend a full year. However, within the first half of the three-

month pilot period, the workload impacts of advance case review; transportation to and from the home; observing the Children's Social Worker; and completing evaluations, in addition to their Supervising Children's Social Worker responsibilities associated with a 1:6 staff supervision ratio; became so excessive that the pilot participants determined mandatory Countywide implementation was premature without reductions to a Supervising Children's Social Worker's span of control and caseloads counts.

As stated above, through the department's Caseload Equity Analysis, DCFS plans to reduce caseloads for those offices with more complex cases that effectively increase workload. In so doing, the Department expects reduced average caseloads overall. When implemented, the department may revisit testing the merits of another Supervising Children's Social Worker Visitation Pilot.

PROCESS FOR BOARD NOTIFICATION WHEN PROVIDER ISSUES BECOME KNOWN TO DCFS OR AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

The Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation conduct annual programmatic audits of contracted Group Homes. Children and Family Services additionally conducts annual programmatic audits of contracted Foster Family Agencies. The Auditor-Controller conducts fiscal audits of contracted Group Homes and Foster Family Agencies. Information-sharing between the departments takes place during monthly Audit Committee meetings.

The department is informed that the Auditor-Controller will issue a report to the Board under separate cover providing additional details on Board notification processes pursuant to findings from audits.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above matters. For any additional questions, please contact me at (213) 351-5600 or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Executive Assistant at (213) 351-5594 or via email at HBerberian@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

Cc: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel

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