



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

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ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, CHAIR
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON, VICE CHAIR

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **August 18, 2008**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Susan Friedman	Adelina Sorkin
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Martha Trevino Powell
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Sandra Rudnick	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Carol O. Biondi	Rev. Cecil Murray
Patricia Curry	Tina Pedersen
Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Helen Kleinberg	

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Sorkin, Chair.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions of the audience were made.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda for the August 18, 2008 meeting was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes for the August 4, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Commission Chair Sorkin reported that she and the Executive Director, Kimberly Foster, attended the DCFS System Improvement Planning (SIP) meeting on Tuesday, August 12, 2008 at Shriners Hospital and provided input in the "breakout" groups. DCFS will prepare a draft report that should be available in approximately 3 weeks; the final report will go to the Board of Supervisors, then to the State in October.

Chair Sorkin called for the cancellation of the September 1, 2008 Regular Commission Meeting, due to the Labor Day holiday. The Commission moved, seconded and unanimously approved the motion.

Chair Sorkin called for the cancellation of the October 6, 2008 Regular Commission Meeting; and the scheduling of October 6, 2008 as a "Special" Commission Meeting, for the Commission Retreat. The Commission moved, seconded and unanimously approved the motion.

Chair Sorkin announced that Commissioner Trevino Powell has agreed to Chair the Nomination Committee.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director, Kimberly A. Foster, reminded the Commissioners to submit their Annual Report forms as she is in the process of working on the Annual Report. She informed the Commissioners that Committee Chairs and Commissioners who represent the Commission in an official capacity should submit a report.

The Commission was informed that as a result of meetings that were initiated by DCFS; the Commission Chair, Executive Director, DCFS and the Chief Deputy from the Executive Office have been meeting to establish operating protocols for the purpose of improving collaborative effort between DCFS and Commission Office. The Commission's Policies and Procedures were used as the primary document for establishing the protocols. The Executive Director informed the Commission that the protocols that were agreed upon in collaboration with the Commission Chair would be distributed to each of them. In addition to the development of the operating protocols, the Commission was informed that an assessment of the technological needs is being completed with the goal of improving public access to the activities of the Commission, and to improve office efficiency. The Executive Director informed the Commission that the Commission Secretary has begun training that will enable her to post items onto the Commission website.

The Commission was updated regarding the current staffing in the Commission office and the possible impact that DCFS' budget could have on fully staffing the office. The Commission was reminded that the Commission budget is funded through DCFS, and that due to budget concerns, DCFS has asked that the Commission not fill the vacant Intermediate Typist Clerk (ITC) position in the Commission office at this time. The Commission was informed that the office staff has been reduced, and an assessment of the Commission Office needs and potential implications for Commission office operations and the ability of the Commission to fulfill its mandate. The previous staffing pattern was a full-time Executive Director; full-time Commission Secretary, full-time Clerk; and a part-time/contracted professional transcriber for the Commission Minutes.

The Commission was updated on the Statement of Economic Interest training that was attended by the Commission's Executive Director and Secretary. No changes are anticipated in the existing code and the update will be submitted to the Executive Office in compliance with the October 1, 2008 deadline.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton recommended the Commission becoming more "green conscience" by reducing the use of paper in the Commission office that will assist the Commission office with its efficiency goal. The Executive Director informed the Commission that efforts are underway to address the issue raised by Commissioner Worthy-Clayton (i.e. change in format for Commission/Committee Minutes, using e-mail as a primary mode of communication instead of the US Mail, etc.).

Commissioner Sorkin mentioned that copies of the Commission's Policies and Procedures are available, upon request, in the Commission office. She indicated that assignments for Commission staff will go to the Chair and to the Executive Director, then to the Commission staff. Commissioner Williams expressed concern regarding the protocols as it relates to Commissioners working through the Chair instead of contacting the Commission staff directly regarding assistance. Commissioner Williams indicated this might provide delays in work completion. She further indicated on occasion there has been some difficulty accessing the Chair. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton recommended reviewing the existing Commission bylaws for applicable policy to Commission practice. The Executive Director clarified for the Commission that the new protocols are not intended to create a barrier to Commissioners contacting the Commission office directly for requests, such as obtaining copies of documents, information that has already been approved by the Commission, or routine office assistance.

The Executive Director stated that she is working with Nancy Castilla, DCFS Liaison to follow-up on Constituent Inquiries/Complaint procedures and better coordination responses with DCFS. The response/follow-up from DCFS will be forwarded to the Commissioner.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Trish Ploehn reported that DCFS received two NACo Awards and eight Productivity and Quality Awards (PQA). All eight PQA awards were collaborative efforts with stakeholders, clients, children, or other County Departments. She also informed the Commission that DCFS is partnering with Casey Family Programs in a program called "Breakthrough Series Collaborative". These are partnership projects that deal with difficult issues that are broken down into small parts and tackle them a piece at a time. The Director also informed the Commission about three new collaboratives that are just beginning are: Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Integration, Timely Permanency through Reunification, and the Elimination of Racial Disparity and Disproportionality. Director Ploehn informed the Commission that additional information will come forth at a future date regarding these efforts. Commissioner

Williams informed the Commission that disproportionality is also being discussed at the State level. DCFS has begun to gather data and will be conducting meetings to discuss this issue and will include all stakeholders and Commissioners.

Director Ploehn mentioned that Supervisor Molina's office has partnered with Montebello Unified School District (USD) and DCFS to fund Social Workers in Montebello USD and Pomona USD to connect with foster children to DCFS. Currently DCFS has two existing collaboratives, one in education and one around safety and risk assessments, both of which are in the Pomona area. The Pomona USD, along with DCFS' Pomona office, has made impressive accomplishments in the education arena. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton recommended that DCFS contact Pasadena USD regarding possible collaboration in a similar fashion to the Pomona USD project. The Commissioner stated that Pasadena USD is currently involved in efforts to better serve children/youth who are involved with DCFS.

VIII. PRESENTATION – SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Department of Public Health - Alcohol and Drug Program: Wayne Sugita, Chief Deputy Director of the Department of Public Health's Alcohol and Drug Program, gave brief background information on the County's Drug and Alcohol Program and introduced Cinderella Barrios Cernik, from his staff, who gave information on the Community Assessment Service Centers (CASC). Cinderella stated that the CASCs provide information and referrals for supportive services and work closely with a network of contracted alcohol and treatment agencies, mental health providers, domestic violence agencies and other community based organizations. Their clientele include the general public, DPSS, DCFS, and Proposition 36 clients. The services provided include face-to-face comprehensive clinical alcohol or other drug assessments and ancillary service referrals such as vocational rehabilitation, education, transportation, public social services, housing, health, legal, and mental health services. The Department of Public Health invited two providers to make presentations.

Tarzana Treatment Center: Erin Garvasi, of the Tarzana Treatment Center, gave an overview of their utilization of an integrative family-based approach to substance dependency treatment. The program assists families in making changes that affect the individual using alcohol and/or drugs and intervene with remaining family members to prevent any developing substance abuse problems. They also address socioeconomic constraints on the family such as poverty; and they address the resulting family survival issues of food, shelter, medical needs, etc. Family involvement in substance abuse treatment is associated with better long term recovery results for both the client and the family.

Commissioner Trevino Powell inquired about the level of collaboration with the local schools as the children are typically spending most of their time at school. Commissioner Rudnick asked about the average caseload, and overall how many families are serviced by Tarzana Treatment Center. Ms. Garvasi reported that they use the partner system with

the counselors backing each other up during absences and each counselor has a caseload of 10-12 cases. She did not have specific data/information with her regarding the number of families they are treating but informed the Commission she would forward the information. Commissioner Sorkin inquired about their level of involvement in Team Decision Making (TDMs). According to Ms. Garvasi, there has been an increase in the number of TDMs they have participated in; however, they do not occur with every client.

Shields for Families: Kathy Icenhower, Executive Director of Shields for Families; and Phyllis Story, the Alumni Coordinator, gave a presentation of the services offered at Shields for Families, and the Exodus Program (a family centered therapeutic program) where the entire family receives services while residing in 1 of 86 apartments where all of the services are provided on-site. The range of services include: substance treatment services, mental health services, child development, youth and educational/vocational services are all provided at the Exodus Program. Upon completion of treatment services, families are able to remain in their housing for a transitional period of up to one year, allowing for adequate time to develop vocational, educational and/or supportive systems necessary for ongoing recovery and family maintenance.

Vocational and employment training services are designed to prepare individuals for financial independence by providing a variety of services such as: remedial education, high school diploma program, etc. Completion of a high school diploma and a reading level of 10th grade is a requirement for program completion. Lifetime aftercare services are also provided which include support groups, self-help groups and participation in the alumni organization.

An evaluation of the outcomes show an 81.2% completion rate, family reunification rate of 85%, with 85% of children with normal development scores; and the results for youth indicates that the program has had a positive impact on their attitudes, grades, self-esteem, confidence, cultural awareness, identity, community mobilization skills, and awareness of substance abuse related issues.

Phyllis Story spoke on her personal experiences as a former Exodus Program participant. At the time she entered the program, she was a drug addict with seven children, all in foster care placement. During the program, she went back to school and took child development classes, completed the program, and eventually had her children returned to her. Her husband also attended counseling in the program and returned to the family and the program gave them a three bedroom apartment. When she left the Exodus Program, she was able to purchase a home and she now works in the Exodus Program as the After Care/Alumni Coordinator.

Commissioner Olivas commended Shields for Families for their work and questioned how their internal evaluation data related to the National evaluation data. Ms. Icenhower explained that their data was used for the National evaluation and they have built on that initial evaluation data. He also asked why there aren't more centers like this. She

responded that family integrated centers are going to be used as a model throughout the country and legislation is currently being worked on to push for family integrated treatment centers.

IX. PRESENTATION – PROPOSED REDUCTION IN COUNTY PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL BEDS

LAC-USC HUB: Dr. Astrid Heger, from the LAC-USC HUB Violence Prevention Program (VIP) presented to the Commission regarding her concerns about the proposed reduction in pediatric beds at the LAC-USC Medical Center Replacement Hospital. Dr. Heger informed the Commission that the initial plan for the new hospital included 44 beds for children and adolescents. Dr. Heger indicated that the Department of Health Services is now limiting the number of pediatric beds from 44 to 25 and restricting them by redefining/changing the definition of children from 0-18 years old to 0-13 years old. Dr. Heger further indicated that the proposed changes would result in children ages 14-18 being placed in the adult unit of the hospitals instead of the children's unit, which would be detrimental to the HUB system of care in improving services to children in foster care. Additionally, Dr. Heger stated, with only 25 pediatric beds, LAC-USC will become the smallest University-affiliated teaching program in the U.S., quality residents will not come to this program, and it will fail. The resulting financial impact will be a loss of funds because pediatric beds out earn medical/surgical beds at a rate of \$1million per year. In addition to the fiscal implications, Dr. Heger says the reduction in beds will create accessibility challenges for the children/youth and their families who reside in the East Los Angeles and South Los Angeles region of the county.

Dr. Heger informed the Commission that the Board of Supervisors indicated the matter would be taken up with the Children's and Health Deputies prior to any action taking place; however this is not the case. Dr. Heger requested the Commission to approach the Board of Supervisors' Children's Deputies and ask that they meet with the Health Deputies to discuss the impact of this reduction in pediatric beds on the hospital and the HUB projects.

Commissioner Trevino Powell made a motion and Commissioner Williams seconded, to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors asking for the Children's and Health Deputies to convene a meeting with Dr. Heger to discuss the reduction in licensing of pediatric beds and the negative financial impact this reduction will have on the hospital. The letter should also state the Commission's support of the definition of pediatrics as 0-18 years old. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the letter in concept.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS
None

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner McClaney announced the 22nd Annual McClaney Gospel Song Fest on August 23, 2008.

XII. ADJOURN

Commission Chair Adelina Sorkin adjourned the meeting.