



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

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **April 6, 2009**, 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)

Carol O. Biondi	Stacey Savelle
Patricia Curry	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Susan Friedman	Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Adelina Sorkin
Rev. Cecil Murray	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Tina Pedersen	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Ann Franzen
Helen Kleinberg
Sandra Rudnick

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Action

After a proper motion, the Agenda for April 6, 2009 was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 16, 2009

Action

After a proper motion, the Minutes of March 16, 2009 were unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sorkin announced that Commissioner Pedersen and she will present to the Board of Supervisors on April 14, 2009, regarding the Childhood Wellness Committee's report and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. These recommendations have resulted in a Board Motion. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton inquired if the Commission had received a copy of the Board Motion. Executive Director Kim Foster informed the Commission that at a copy of the draft motion was received for input; however the final motion had not be received. The Executive Director will forward a copy of the motion once it is received.

Chair Sorkin informed the Commission that an Ad Hoc Committee was created based on an urgent need to give input regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Stimulus). Commissioner Curry was appointed to Chair the Ad Hoc Committee.

Chair Sorkin reported that the Executive Committee met and took action (voted) to respond to Miguel Santana's letter to Commission regarding the Commission Priorities. The response letter to Mr. Santana indicated individual Commissioners appointed to work with the CEO on the Commission's focus areas.

Chair Sorkin also reported that the Executive Committee voted to have the Child Fatality Committee proceed with its report to the CEO Clusters.

**VI. DISCUSSION REGARDING PROPOSITION 1D AND 1E –
RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Chair Sorkin reported that in response to an inquiry by Commissioner Friedman at the March 16, 2009 Commission Meeting, the Executive Director was asked to research and provide a brief synopsis of Propositions 1D and Proposition 1E. Chair Sorkin stated that the Board of Supervisors has not taken a position on these Propositions and as an advisory body, the Commission may make recommendations to the Board for their consideration.

The Executive Director stated that Proposition 1D would redirect First 5/Proposition 10 (Tobacco Tax) funds that are used for the 0-5 population to the State General Fund to offset the budget shortfall. Additionally, Commissioner Williams stated that this would divert 60% of their allocated money for 5 years. Commissioner Williams expressed concern over the impact this would have to universal preschool (LAUP) and Healthy Kids.

The Executive Director provided a brief overview of the intent of Proposition 1E that would divert Proposition 63 (MHSA) funding to the State General Fund in an effort the address the State Budget deficit. If passed, this proposition would move one half of the allocated MHSA money to the general fund, making it unavailable for mental health services.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton inquired if the Propositions don't pass what would be the effect on DCFS' budget. Trish Ploehn responded that if the Propositions pass, they will lose First 5 and Mental Health Services Act money. She also stated that if the propositions don't pass, the Department will have to make further cuts than now proposed because of the budget deficit. However, Title IV-E money is protected.

Commissioner Williams stated that First 5 requested that the Commission endorse these Propositions. Chair Sorkin responded that the Commission can not endorse any Propositions unless the Board has taken a position. However, the Commission may go to the Board with their concerns and make recommendations to the Board for their consideration.

Action

Motion by Commissioner Biondi, seconded by Commissioner Olivas, the Commission will recommend to the Board of Supervisors to oppose Propositions 1D and 1E, approved with Commissioner Worthy-Clayton abstaining.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORT

• 25TH Anniversary Ad Hoc

Commissioner Trevino Powell gave an update on the April 30, 2009 Commission 25th Anniversary Celebration. She informed the Commission that the plans are moving along and going well. She acknowledged the support of Commissioner Biondi for underwriting the cost of food prepared by youth from Camp Gonzales; Commissioner Kleinberg for donating the resources for the music; and she indicated she provided the invitations. Commissioner Powell indicated the only remaining items are the Anniversary Programs, flowers, and gifts. She additionally, thanked Commissioners Worthy-Clayton and Williams for their donations. Commissioner McClaney indicated that she would also give a donation and Chair Sorkin added that Commissioner Curry has also made a donation. The Commission thanked Commissioner Powell for all of her efforts.

• MHSA Delegate Report

In Commissioner Kleinberg's absence, Chair Sorkin stated that at the Executive Committee meeting, Commissioner Kleinberg reported that at the last MHSA Delegates' meeting they were successful in increasing Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funds for SPAs 4 and 6, since these SPAs were areas of high need. SPA 2 gave up \$1 million and several other SPAs gave up money to be reallocated to SPAs 4 and 6. Trish Ploehn indicated that it was reported to her that Commissioner Kleinberg was very persuasive and was very instrumental in changing the originally proposed allocation. Commissioner Curry informed the Commission that Commissioner Kleinberg also stated this was the first time that one SPA voluntary gave money to another SPA. The Commission applauded Commissioner Kleinberg for the success of her efforts.

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Trish Ploehn informed of Commission of the ongoing budget challenges, and discussed the potential for further cuts with or without the initiatives. She indicated that that millions of dollars will be coming to the County from the Federal Stimulus funds to create jobs, and DCFS is exploring 3 proposals for utilizing the funding 1) hiring 100 peer mentors for foster children by former foster youth, 2) hiring parents that have been through the system as partners to help guide parents currently in the system, 3) and community cultural brokers.

Commissioner Savelle expressed concern over the hiring of 100 foster youth as mentors. She indicated that this program was unsuccessful in the past and needed a plan to address Social Worker's attitudes towards the mentors, homelessness, child care, transportation, work skills, or appropriate work clothing. Commissioner Curry agreed and suggested providing a mentor for the foster youth mentors to help address workplace issues. Commissioner Williams suggested using THPP as a resource agency that has staff to work with the mentors and is currently working with youth that has some potential for college. She also suggested reducing the number and providing sufficient mentoring support.

Commissioner Powell expressed concern about sustainability of the program since this is one-time only money and after the one year, there is no money to continue these programs. Director Ploehn agreed and indicated that this issue was also brought up by one of the Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton suggested a provision to hire staff that would be eligible to stay after the one year by having participation criteria that matches entry level criteria.

Director Ploehn indicated that Eric Marts, who is in charge of the plan, could come to present to the Commission at a future meeting or could e-mail the proposal to the Commissioners. Commissioner Williams suggested Eric Marts meeting with several Commissioners regarding the proposal before it goes to the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Biondi inquired about the cancellation of the Probation Department's "Success is our Future" function due to the lack of funds since DCFS has pulled out their funds for this event.

Trish Ploehn invited the Commissioners to attend any one of the five convening's of "Strengthening Community Partnerships" located in Antelope Valley, Pasadena, Norwalk, Downtown L.A., and Woodland Hills on May 5-28, 2009. The purpose is to reach out to the community in developing an L.A. practice model. There will be discussions on Team Decision Making, Ice Breakers, Parents in Partnership, Upfront Assessments, and Domestic Violence. Kim Foster asked that the material be forwarded to the Commission office.

Follow-Up

Trish Ploehn will follow-up regarding the cancellation of the Probation Department's "Success is our Future" function, and indicate she would check on it and get back to the Commission. She will also forward Strengthening Community Partnerships information to the Executive Director.

IX. PRESENTATION – CHILDCARE POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Kathy Malaske-Samu, of the Office of Child Care in the CEO's Integrated Services Branch discussed their Policy Framework for child care, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 6, 2009. The Policy Framework defines four major goals to be carried out during the first two years:

- 1) Increase access to high quality child care and development services aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect, supporting family self-sufficiency, and promoting school and life success.
- 2) Advance public policies – local, state, and federal – to ensure that children and their families receive high quality child care and development and family support services.
- 3) Facilitate the capacity of child care and development programs, publicly and privately funded, as well as fee-based, to meet the needs of children and families in Los Angeles County.
- 4) Review implementation of the Policy Framework and update goals on a biennial schedule.

The services are broken down to services for clients, for employees, and for residents. The first goal is to build on the work started by the Education Coordinating Council and to work with the child development community. At the April 14, 2009 Board of Supervisors meeting, the CEO and DCFS will be proposing joint training with family child care providers and child care centers. They are also working with the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) to review their child care connections.

Goal 1 - Opportunities for partnership

DCFS:

- Participation in training to improve the capacity of child care and development programs to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Relationship building and service coordination between child care and development programs and child welfare service providers.

DPSS:

- Relationship building between CalWORKS clients, their license exempt child care providers, and part-day preschool programs serving three and four year olds.

County Employees:

- Identification of potential on-site child care and development program operators and distribution of that directory.

County Residents:

- Operation of child care and development services in new or renovated County facilities.

Goal 2 - Opportunities for partnership

- Participating in the convening of stakeholders to take place prior to October 30, 2008 and contributing to recommendations on how to streamline the administration of child care and development services.
- Contributing information to the development of a common legislative agenda.

Goal 3 - Opportunities for partnership

- Participating in the convening scheduled to take place prior to January 30, 2009.
- Providing input to the summary document.

Goal 4 - Opportunities for partnership

- Updates to the plan will include input from the Roundtable, Planning Committee, County departments and community stakeholders.

Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that they are working with the PIDP agencies for them to take more of a case management approach to child care issues. They also have a centralized eligibility list in L.A. County where all of the children that are income eligible for subsidized child care are placed on one list. Families register once on this list and all State-funded child development programs can draw down names from that list. Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that families with open DCSF cases have first priority for enrollment as there are 40,000 names on the list.

Ms. Malaske-Samu also stated that another area they are working on is when young people emancipate out of DCFS and are parenting, they want to ensure that their child development services are established and in place before they leave the system.

In DPSS, CalWORKS eligible families that are complying with the regulations are the only families in the State that have an entitlement to child care services. They are trying to make sure that they are using their entitlement. As a result of DPSS's approach to child care services, 60% of families using Stage 1 child care services are using license exempt child care. Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that in conjunction with First 5 L.A., they are planning to work with DPSS on an informational campaign about the positive impact of high quality child development services. Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that this is on hold due to possible lack of funding but if they are not able to fund the project this year, they are going to continue with the planning for the future.

Commissioner Curry inquired how they plan to get to the emancipated youth before they leave DCFS. Ms. Malaske-Samu responded that they are working with DCFS on implementation but haven't gotten that far in the planning process.

Commissioner Friedman inquired how a family would know how to register for the centralized eligibility list if they are not DCFS clients. Ms. Malaske-Samu stated that when a family makes contact with a subsidized child care program, or one of the 10 child care resource and referral agencies in L.A. County, or any State-funded child development program, they will be guided to the centralized eligibility list.

Commissioner Pedersen inquired how many spots are available for children with special needs. Ms. Malaske-Samu responded that there are no limits. She stated that that as a result of a survey, the highest needs were for children with behavioral issues.

Commissioner Pedersen also inquired about the length of time a family can continue child care services, once they are off CalWORKS. Ms. Malaske-Samu responded that there are different stages of the child care system – Stage 1, may be used for about 6 months for beginning eligible CalWORKS families; Stage 2, may be used for up to 2 years after their cash grant ends and they remain income eligible; Stage 3, may be used indefinitely as long as they remain income eligible.

Chair Sorkin stated that First 5 L.A. recently released a report on overweight children under the age of 5 and the Commission is going before the Board next week on obesity. Chair Sorkin inquired if the Office of Child Care is in any way involved in helping child care providers address the issue of overweight preschool children. Ms. Malaske-Samu responded that they are not involved in this issue at this time, but they may in about another year. She offered to distribute any information the Commission may have on April 14 to their providers who will be here for the Board meeting.

Commissioner Curry inquired if there was any child care money included in the stimulus package money. Ms. Malaske-Samu responded that there is child care money but there is a dilemma because a provision of using State-funded money, you must be in school, working or training and as many people are becoming unemployed, they do not have a need for child care.

X. PRESENTATION – CALIFORNIA YOUTH CONNECTION (CYC)

The California Youth Connection (CYC) was represented by three former foster youth, Portia Williams, Montel Langston, and Michael Bowen. After a brief self-introduction by each of the youth, they each spoke to the Commission.

Portia Williams gave a brief background of CYC and its past accomplishments including reforming non-public schools, higher education for foster youth, and the Foster Care Independence Act (Chaffee Grant), as well as extending Medi-Cal to the age of 21.

Montel Langston stated that CYC promotes grass roots and community organizing and policy change through the empowerment of current and former foster youth. Montel Langston informed the Commission that locally, in Los Angeles, they conducted a survey, in May 2008 and in September 2008, to see how foster care youth know about services available to them while they are in care as well as transitioning out of care. They found that 57% of foster youth are not aware of the Chaffee Grant, and 60% was not aware of Transitional Housing Placement Programs (THPP). After the survey was completed, they provided a presentation to teach the youth about the services, as well their rights as foster youth. They also had a dinner in November 2008, where they presented their recommendations to Director Trish Ploehn, Judges, community members and other elected officials. Two recommendations presented were: 1) Group home staff to provide presentations to foster youth on a quarterly basis in order to continually inform the youth rotating in and out of group homes of the services available to them and their rights as foster youth; 2) Foster youth to have access to peer mentoring programs by current and former foster youth.

Michael Bowen discussed the legislative endeavors of CYC, including the Day at the Capitol. CYC has a conference in August, where all the chapters of CYC brainstorm for ideas to present to the California Legislature in Sacramento in January. At the Day at the Capitol, each CYC branch meets with their respective representative in Sacramento to present their issues. This year, the Los Angeles chapter presented on AB 12, to extend Foster Care to youth 21 years old and AB 1393, the higher education bill. The State Legislators were very supportive but indicated that the budget had not yet been passed. In addition, Montel Langston expanded on the efforts of the CYC Legislative Committee including support of: AB 669 (Fong), College Residency for Former Wards and Foster Youth; AB 938 (Judiciary Committee), Relative Notification; AB 154 (Evans), Adoption Incentives for Older and Special Needs Youth.

Commissioners Worthy-Clayton and McClaney commended the CYC youth on their dinner and on their presentation to the Commission and Commissioner Savelle encouraged the Commissioners to become CYC supporters.

Commissioner Savelle inquired if CYC has a voter registration drive for foster youth. The CYC youth responded that there is nothing in place at this time. Commissioner Curry commended the CYC Legislative Committee and inquired if there were any plans on how to get information out to foster youth and former foster youth regarding services and transitional housing. The CYC youth stated that Social Workers are not informing foster youth of the services available. They stated that the ILP website is very useful and is a good resource. They also suggested informing foster youth of the transitional services before emancipation, currently the Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP) is in name only. Commissioner Biondi suggested Social Workers passing the information to foster youth and making it a part of the court package. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton suggested DCFS sending a message to foster parents universally in the Department, and that information regarding CYC be provided to all Social Workers and DCFS programs so that it is provided not just through ILP.

Commissioner Williams inquired what input the CYC youth had about the foster care youth mentoring program discussed earlier. The CYC youth agreed that this is a good program. Most foster care youth stated that they want someone who can relate to their situation. They indicated that in order to get quality mentors, they need to make certain that the foster youth genuinely want to be mentors and that parameters are set. As far as only being paid for one year, they indicated that the mentors should have a passion for mentoring and not doing it for the money. Commissioner Savelle suggested that the foster care mentoring should also be included in the courts to help support foster youth on their court dates.

Chair Sorkin inquired if the survey included any foster youth in Relative Care, in KinGAP. The CYC youth replied that there were not any KinGAP youth included because of the issues of KinGAP youth not being eligible for Independent Living Program (ILP) services, and not being able to identify those youth and reach out to that population.

Commissioner Williams requested clarification regarding KinGAP youth's eligibility for ILP services. The CYC youth indicated that if they go into KinGAP before the age of 14 they are not eligible for ILP. They would need to have an open case after the age of 16 years old to be eligible. Commissioner Williams inquired about legislation regarding KinGAP. CYC stated that KinGAP is a part of the AB 12 legislation.

Commissioner Curry inquired about getting Social Workers and ILP workers knowledgeable about the services available. The CYC youth indicated that they would like to include training Social Workers on how to approach youth and to provide them with all the information on how to make a successful transition.

Commissioner Trevino Powell asked Trish Ploehn, if Social Workers are getting staff development training in these areas. Ms. Ploehn agreed that training is necessary and stated that DCFS has workgroups working with the CYC group on their recommendations.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comments.

XII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Harriet Chase announced that the League of Women Voters of the Beach Cities will be having a foster care forum. The forum, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Foster Child" will be on April 21, 2009, 7:00 p.m. - 8:45 p.m. at the Redondo Beach Library, 303 North Pacific Coast Highway. They will be giving an overview of the foster care system, its successes and challenges. They will also have CYC youth speaking on their personal experiences. After the presentations, they will be distributing information and material on how to become involved. Ms. Chase also had flyers for distribution.

XIII. ADJOURN

Chair Sorkin adjourned the meeting.