



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

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STACEY SAVELLE
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, **May 4, 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	Martha Trevino Powell
Patricia Curry	Sandra Rudnick
Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Susan Friedman	Adelina Sorkin
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Helen Kleinberg	Tina Pedersen
Rev. Cecil Murray	

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sorkin.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Action

Motion by Commissioner McClaney, seconded by Commissioner Williams, the Agenda for May 4, 2009 was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **April 6, 2009**
- **April 20, 2009**

Action

Motion by Commissioner McClaney, seconded by Commissioner Worthy-Clayton, the Minutes for April 6, 2009 and April 20, 2009 were both unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sorkin stated that she attended the 10th Anniversary celebration for Building Educational Success Through the Arts (BEST Arts) held at Long Beach Community College. This program was developed by the Mental Health Commission and Commission for Children and Families.

Chair Sorkin announced that May is Mental Health Awareness month and Commissioners indicated that May is also Foster Care Awareness month.

Chair Sorkin thanked Commissioner Trevino Powell for chairing the 25th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee. Commissioner Trevino Powell worked tireless hours to create a memorable celebration. Some of the attendees were Wilma Benjamin, a Commissioner in late 1980s and early 1990s; Jackie Dolan, the co-founder of CASA; and Faith Jordan, a former foster child and former Commission office employee, who is now a Social Worker at DCFS. All attendees were delighted with the event. Commissioner Trevino Powell circulated an article from today's L.A. Times regarding the 25th Anniversary and the catering by the Probation Department youth from Camp Gonzalez. Commissioner Trevino Powell thanked Carol Biondi for her generous contribution for the food. Vice Chair Curry also thanked Chair Sorkin for her work on the 25th Anniversary event.

VI. COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS

- **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)
"Stimulus" Ad Hoc Committee**

Vice Chair Curry reported that the report on the Los Angeles County Stimulus Plan is going to the Board tomorrow, May 5th. Commissioner Savelle and Vice Chair Curry have been trying to get money earmarked specifically for the TAY population. They have had some successes such as tutoring and extending the TAY age to 24, which is the population they have been trying to target, along with some special County projects being included.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton expressed appreciation to Vice Chair Curry for all her work on the Stimulus package.

- **Children's Council Joint Commissions Meeting**

Vice Chair Curry reported that the Children's Council Joint Commissions Meeting included First 5 L.A., Education Coordinating Council (ECC), Children's Council, Child Care Roundtable, ICAN, Child Support, and our Commission. The first meeting focused on prevention issues; the second meeting included discussion on getting information on Stimulus money to the community. The group will work on a plan to have the Chief Executive Office (CEO) include wording in the Stimulus Plan to put money aside for community based organizations and specifically for TAY. Other issues they are advocating for is expanding funding for Transitional Housing Program (THP) Plus providers and Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) providers and to add services beyond those provided by DPSS, as there are 11,000 TAY youth on General Relief (GR) and approximately 200 of those former foster youth, Vice Chair Curry indicated they are advocating for money to go to existing providers to expand services for these former foster youth on GR. Commissioner Williams suggested that money be earmarked specifically for the 200 foster care youth. Vice Chair Curry agreed and has been advocating for this, but has not received a commitment that this will be done yet. Commissioner Freidman inquired whether the Stimulus money has arrived. Garrison Smith, from the CEO's office, stated the money is not here yet; May 18, 2009 is the deadline to submit the application for the homeless prevention/wraparound housing portion to HUD. The County may possibly receive the funds in September, depending on how quickly HUD releases the money.

Vice Chair Curry informed the Commission of a New York Times article that states that there is no housing for children aging out of foster care as they are not eligible for the federal housing vouchers. She stated that when they lose their job and lose their housing it is important to put them together with providers that have a comprehensive package and not only housing or only jobs.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton suggested having a Plan B to educate the TAY population on how to access programs, money and services available. She suggested that DPSS identify the population and do something using their own pot of money, something broader than the Stimulus Plan. She suggested that PIDP partners in the community can make it easier to access funds. They can also set-up networks with community based organizations that are providing services.

Vice Chair Curry stated that as work on the Stimulus money is happening very quickly, she and Commissioner Savelle requested authorization from the Commission to continue to advocate getting some money to the community. In response to a request from County Counsel to carry over any action on this request, Chair Sorkin stated that there is a sense of urgency to this matter as they anticipate working with the CEO and the Board before the next Commission meeting on May 18, 2009. Therefore, a motion was made.

Action

Motion by Commissioner Biondi, seconded by Commissioner Williams and unanimously approved, the Commission authorizes Vice-Chair Curry and Commissioner Savelle to advocate and give input on behalf of the Commission, to the CEO and the Board offices on the allocation of Stimulus Plan funds.

Vice Chair Curry suggested Garrison Smith take this suggestion to DCEO, Miguel Santana. Commissioner Savelle inquired if there is any dissemination of information to the caregivers regarding foreclosures. Trish Ploehn stated that they have had discussions of disseminating information to caregivers with their checks informing them that there is money available, where to go, and who to contact but have not yet developed any procedures. Vice Chair Curry inquired if Social Workers are aware of the services available, in order to pass on to caregivers.

Commissioner Williams inquired if DCFS staff can be informed and pass on information to the TAY population. Trish Ploehn stated that DCFS, DPSS and CSS have had a number of discussions on how to ensure that foster care and TAY youth are given priority. Cynthia Banks is taking the lead on this issue.

Follow-Up

Garrison Smith agreed to discuss with Miguel Santana the dissemination of information to the public using the media.

- **MHSA-TAY**

Vice Chair Curry discussed the TAY Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Annual Update Report for FY 2009-10 and indicated the numbers used in the report compare a one year period with a three year period and make it difficult to get a good comparison. She also stated that the report indicates that Systems Navigators are in a high percentage of compliance. However, the Systems Navigators include those for adults, older adults, TAY youth and children. Vice Chair Curry stated that this may satisfy the State but from the perspective of an oversight group, they should have better numbers. In the MHSA TAY Committee meeting, they were informed that out of 18 TAY System Navigator positions, only four were hired in a three year period. She also stated that DMH had put out an RFP for TAY housing but in three years they still had not contracted with anyone.

Commissioner Biondi inquired about legislation requiring program evaluation. Vice Chair Curry stated that she has only seen preliminary outcomes and nothing final. Commissioner Biondi inquired if the System Leadership Team (SLT) was going to decide how money is spent, how unanticipated needs are met, and with how much money. Vice Chair Curry stated that she has not received any definite information. Commissioner Biondi also inquired if there was any discussion regarding the legislation that may pass on May 19th for the State to use 50% of the MHSA money. Vice Chair Curry stated that the SLT group is meeting on Thursday to discuss the issues around the legislation passing.

- **First 5 Los Angeles (Strategic Plan)**

Commissioner Williams represents the Commission on First 5. First 5 is currently developing their Strategic Plan for 2009-2014. She informed the Commission that the meetings are open to the public and they meet once a month, the next meeting is on May 21, 2009, 1:00-4:00 p.m at the First 5 offices. They have established the following goals: Early Learning, Health, and Safe Children and Families. They have also established these

goal statements: Children are Ready for Kindergarten, Children Maintain Healthy Weight, Children are Born Healthy, and Children are Safe from Abuse and Neglect. They have done a lot of work on evaluations, earmarks, and are using dashboards to show progress. Their plan is to have faith-based funding in specific geographic areas as well as county-wide funding. This will use a Tier approach such as: Tier 1-very concentrated, high need; and Tier 2-broader concentration throughout the community. The Board will approve the Strategic Plan on June 11, 2009. They will then have one year for implementation, to work through the tiers and make adjustments.

Commissioner Williams discussed the composition of the First 5 Commission. There are 9 voting members including: Supervisor Knabe as Commission Chair, each supervisorial district has a representative, as well as Public Health, Mental Health, and LACOE. Ex-Officio members include: ICAN, Children's Council, Policy Roundtable for Child Care, and the Commission for Children and Families (CCF). There has been some discussion to elevate CCF as a voting member and to include DCFS as a member. Commissioner Williams will keep the Commission up to date on any progress.

Commissioner Williams stated that First 5 will be impacted if Proposition 1D passes. She asked that each commissioner give serious thought and consideration to this Proposition.

Chair Sorkin inquired about the status of First 5 funding of LA UP. Commissioner Williams stated that First 5 had recently hired an outside evaluator to review the LA UP model and subsequently there were recommendations to change the model. Commissioner Williams stated that these changes were not accepted by the First 5 Commissioners and she expects that First 5 will give full endorsement to LA UP's model.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Trish Ploehn gave an update on the Swine Flu (H1N1), stating that it has been downgraded on a national level as cases have not been severe. There are 3 confirmed cases in Los Angeles County – one in Long Beach and two in Los Angeles. Dr. Sophy has released a comprehensive memo and is working closely with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Health Services to provide updated information to County employees as well as caregivers. At this time, there is no connection with any family from DCFS or any family that the County serves, but they are monitoring this.

Ms. Ploehn announced that May is Foster Care Awareness month. On May 19, 2009, the Board of Supervisors will be honoring foster youth, non-related family members, CASAs, foster parents, and supporters. Some of the other activities include: a luggage round-up, which will collect used luggage for foster care youth; a mentoring dinner cruise and career day on May 18, 2009; a job shadowing day on May 22, 2009; a Harbor-UCLA Medical HUB on foster care awareness on May 28, 2009.

Commissioner Savelle asked Director Ploehn for additional information regarding the mentoring dinner cruise (i.e., who is paying for the event). Director Ploehn replied that the event is for older foster youth and the funding is not from DCFS.

Ms. Ploehn also discussed the L.A. Times article last week reporting child deaths in 2008 where the cause of death was child abuse and neglect. DCFS released 32 records, of which 14 had a history of contact with DCFS. Ten of these cases have been turned over to internal affairs for an additional review of staff performance. There is a total of 53 staff under investigation. These include CSWs, Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW), Nurse, and managers. She stated that for the past 6-8 months they have been reviewing their Risk Management Division to revamp and learn how to take lessons back into training, policies, and practices and not make the same mistakes again. Most changes are needed in the area around the timeliness of investigations. She stated that she was happy with the depth and comprehensiveness of the investigations but was not happy with the length of time taken to conduct the investigations. In addition, Ms. Ploehn informed the Commission the lead attorney for the new Children's Services Investigative Unit (CSIU) is in the process of being selected. This Unit will consist of 1 Lead Attorney, 1 Junior Attorney, 2 Social Work Investigators, and 1 or 2 clerical support staff.

Commissioner Biondi inquired if the investigations will include all children that have had interaction with DCFS, DPSS, DMH, and Probation; and the scope of their work and who they will report to. Ms. Ploehn responded that the contract is still being tweaked but indicated that the staff will report to all five of the Board of Supervisors. In addition, DCFS will have the ability to refer any child death with high visibility or that is suspicious to this unit. The first cases reviewed will be the 32 cases referred to in the Times article. These will include the 10 cases with questions on the process and how investigations are being conducted. They will also look outside of DCFS and review other Departments that have touched the cases.

Commissioner Biondi suggested the Board include the recommendations made by the Commission in 2008. Vice Chair Curry inquired if any of the cases reviewed by the Commission were included in the 32 cases. Chair Sorkin indicated that she is continuing to push forward to have the Commission's cases included in the CSIU's review. This would be in addition to the 32 cases. Commissioner Williams stated that the new Unit has their priorities set and considering the small size of the Unit, suggested the Commission not overwhelm them with additional cases to review. Trish Ploehn also reminded the Commission that the cases referred to by the L.A. Times involved children who died due to neglect or abuse.

Commissioner Friedman stated that she and Chair Sorkin attended the Board meeting when the Times article was released and the Board motion passed. She asked Trish Ploehn how the motion would impact her department and if she had been aware of the article. Ms. Ploehn indicated that they received the request from the Times in February, gathered the data requested, and released the information to the Times on Monday night. Commissioner Friedman suggested the Commission write a letter to the Board of Supervisors stating that since the Commission has been working on these issues a long time, they would like to assist the new investigation unit.

VIII. PRESENTATION –COMMUNITY AND SENIOR SERVICES

- **Seamless Services to Seniors**

Cynthia Banks, Director of the Department of Community and Senior Services gave a brief description of the programs that the department administers (i.e., the Area Agency on Aging and the Adult Protective Services Program, the Workforce Investment Area, Dispute Resolution Program, Domestic Violence Programs, and the Native American Indian Block Grant); and discussed the Seamless Services to Seniors. She provided some demographic information on California and L.A. County seniors.

She informed the Commission of a survey that was distributed a couple of years ago to 100,000 seniors to see what they felt were issues and services important to seniors (i.e., Dental Insurance, Health Concerns, Safety Issues, Nutrition and Meal Preparation, and Lack of Exercise). Ms. Banks stated that 16,500 surveys were returned and, in addition to the services indicated by the survey, they found that services are needed in health, well-being, and elder abuse.

Ms. Banks stated that many of the DCFS children have grandparents as caretakers and they do not have to go through several County departments to receive the services they need. Of the 40 County departments, 23 offer services to seniors; but outside of Adult Protective Services, they do not provide direct services. Most County departments contract out to non-profit agencies to provide the services. In addition, there are non-profits that do not contract with the County that also provide services to seniors. In the past, service integration between the departments has been only by chance.

Under the direction of the CEO, 26 departments and agencies are exploring streamlining services and programs for seniors. Four workgroups have been developed: 1)Supportive Services, 2)Health & Well-Being, 3)Income Support, and 4)Elder Abuse. They have also developed an Inventory of Services and Budget Information Matrix and are looking at measurable goals and performance outcomes; and the possibility of whether one service integration system would work better under one administration. They are looking at this option and will be developing recommendations for CEO approval and to the Board of Supervisors by the end of June this year. Other recommendations being addressed are to have one waiver application for all programs that can be shared with other departments; and to have DPSS and Food Stamp staffs go to senior centers to help seniors apply for services.

Ms. Banks stated that the stakeholder's input has been integral to this process. As a result, they confirmed many of the same issues brought out by the surveys but have also added some very important smaller issues. Some of these issues include: 1)using 14 pitch font for materials for seniors; and 2)do not use voicemail, seniors like a live person instead of being referred to another phone number. Ms. Banks stated that these issues are being included in the recommendations submitted to the CEO and the Board of Supervisors. She also stated that they welcome input and have included Jay Glassman's e-mail address and telephone number in the PowerPoint presentation.

The Commission inquired about: whether CSWs know who to refer Relative Caregivers to and for what services; using seniors to help other senior's access services and information; resources such as Grandma's House to have seniors helping relative caregivers; transportation resources for seniors; childcare for relative caregivers; Foster Grandparents; and seniors helping at visitation centers.

Chair Sorkin indicated that when Metropolitan State Hospital had children a group of senior served as volunteer foster grandparents. This was a win win situation for seniors and the children.

Ms. Banks indicated that: 1)they are compiling a list of programs that will also be on-line for County departments to help staff with referrals; 2)they will look into funding a Grandma's House through non-profit agencies; 3)they have applied for grant funding for transportation as well as funding through private agencies, as transportation is not federal or County funded; connections can be made with DPSS for child care contractors, classes, 4)and respite care; and a joint effort between DCFS and CSS could expand the seniors at visitation centers program that began as a faith-based initiative in SPA 8.

Commissioner Curry suggested exploring a connection between the Commission's Relative Caregiver Committee and CSS. Commissioner Williams stated that at Supervisor Antonovich's request, two members of the Relative Caregiver Committee have participated in the stakeholder sessions with CSS. Commissioner Williams also inquired if they will be able to have input on the final report. Ms. Banks replied that any input should be given to Mr. Glassman for consideration to be included in the final report.

Commissioner Williams also recognized Mary Lee from Kinship in Action in SPA 6. She stated that this group should be involved in anything dealing with caregivers as there are more caregivers in SPA 6 than any other SPA in the county. She stated that they are developing expertise in the area and mentors for caregivers.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Announcements.

XI. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Sorkin.