STATEMENT OF PROCEEDINGS FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 739
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
http://lachildrenscommission.org

Monday, February 4, 2013

10:00 AM

AUDIO LINK FOR THE ENTIRE MEETING. (13-0715)

Attachments: AUDIO

Present: Chair Genevra Berger, Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, Vice Chair Susan F. Friedman, Commissioner Carol O. Biondi, Commissioner Patricia Curry, Commissioner Dr. La-Doris McClaney, Commissioner Daphne Ng, Commissioner Steven M. Olivas Esq., Commissioner Sandra Rudnick, Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW and Commissioner Martha Trevino-Powell

Excused: Commissioner Ann E. Franzen and Commissioner Dr. Sunny Kang

Call to Order. (13-0220)

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Introduction of February 4, 2013 Meeting attendees. (13-0494)

Self-Introductions were made.

2. Approval of the February 4, 2013 Meeting Agenda. (13-0495)

On motion of Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW, unanimously carried, (Commissioners Franzen and Kang being absent), this item was approved. Commissioners McClaney and Olivas were not present during vote taken for this item.

3. Approval of the minutes from the Meeting of January 28, 2013. (13-0496)

On motion of Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW, seconded by Vice Chair Helen Kleinberg, unanimously carried, (Commissioners Franzen and Kang being absent), this item was approved. Commissioners McClaney and Olivas were not present during vote taken for this item.

Attachments: SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

II. REPORTS

4. Chair's report for February 4, 2013 by Genevra Berger, Chair. (13-0497)

Chair Berger reported that the next Commission meeting will be held on March 4, 2013. Only one regular meeting was scheduled this month (February).

By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

5. DCFS Director's report for February 4, 2013 by Philip Browning, Director, DCFS. (13-0498)

Director Browning reported the following:

- **At a recent DCFS initial meeting discussing the Institutional Analysis, disproportionality was a leading issue. One of the objectives in the strategic plan is to reduce racial disproportionality.**

- **DCFS Strategic Plan Team meetings have been underway; staff has expressed difficulty in scheduling meetings due to the availability of team members.**

- **The Department is working towards modifying existing agreements with Schools of Social Work, out of concern that the current university curriculum and DCFS' Academy training is academic focused and lacks practicality. In addition, as part of an effort to address the Children's Special Investigations Unit's (CSIU's) recommendations that brought to light the criticalness of investigative skills of Social Workers who have the first contact with a child or family, the Department has implemented a separation of the Emergency Response from Continuing Services with DCFS.**

- **The DCFS new organizational chart became effective, February 1, 2013. Some Department changes include a shift in responsibilities for Senior Management.**

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Director Browning responded with the following:

- **Until recently, universities held the position that the social worker coursework was relevant and should be continued. There is now a consensus among the universities for change. The course content is forthcoming. During a recent meeting at the University of Southern California with representatives from several universities, the responsibility of instructor selection and content of coursework was discussed.**

- **Juvenile Judge Michael Nash was involved in the Institutional Analysis meeting. The Institutional Analysis Report has been released and will be made available to the Commission.**

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

III. PRESENTATIONS

6. Update by Department of Children and Families (DCFS) on Child Fatalities:

- Brandon Nichols, Senior Deputy Director, DCFS
- Francesca LeRúe, Acting Division Chief, Risk Management Division, DCFS (13-0076)

Mr. Nichols reported the following:

- **Risk Management has two sections that are involved with child fatality, neglect and abuse review; one section is the Critical Incident Child Fatalities (CICF) and the other section involves SB 39, which requires public reporting about child deaths in the County that are made known to DCFS.**

- **Anytime a child is involved in a critical incident and has connection with DCFS, CICF conducts an extensive review of the circumstances involved and completes a detailed report for County Counsel at the end of the review. Several questions are asked during the course of the review concerning safety and procedures. As a result of the review, recommendations are provided to the staff members who serviced the child involved in the incident.**

Staff performance and systemic issues are identified and addressed as well.

- **A recent case out of San Diego referred to as the "Butterfield Case" modifies the reporting duties outlined in SB 39. This case ruling may expand the reporting obligations determined by the State.**

  Laura Quinonez, County Counsel further detailed that this ruling specifically affects Subdivision A reporting; a section of the Welfare and Institutions Code that requires a certain subset of limited information be available to the public.

  The "Butterfield Case" determined that until there has been a decision by the State to appeal, the State statute on public reporting supersedes the regulation. The issue is that the child welfare regulations are more limiting than the statute. DCFS will likely be obligated to expand public reporting duties based on the statute.

In response to questions posed by the Commission regarding child fatality reports and review process, Mr. Nichols responded with the following:

- **The State maintains a log for all counties on cases that meet specific child fatality, abuse and neglect criteria. DCFS provides monthly reports to the State and only certain reports are made available to the public.**

- **Ms. LeRúe reported that in 2012 there were 62 child fatalities found to have a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect with 28 of the fatalities determined to be a result of abuse or neglect. Mr. Nichols clarified that the numbers are of all cases in the County that DCFS is aware of and not specific to children that DCFS has had contact with.**

  Ms. LeRúe added that the complete 2012 statistical report which includes a trend analysis is being finalized and is due to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on April 3, 2013. Data showed a decrease in fatalities in 2012. Mr. Nichols stated that the report to the State and the Board includes only child fatalities. However, the Department internally tracks serious incidents.

- **The Board has expressed interest in establishing a single reporting entity for collecting and reporting child fatality, abuse and neglect information and requested the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to take the lead on identifying an entity within the County that is best suited for this undertaking.**

Antonia Jimenez, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Children's and Family Well Being Cluster, CEO, is leading this initiative and recently provided the Board a letter stating that a report will be issued within 90 days that identifies the County agency best suited to report this information, support needed to gather the reporting information, and types of reports that are possible . Additionally, the Board directed the CEO to identify factors for all County departments involved in the process to collect and report in a uniform way.

- **In terms of staff performance, "desk duty" for staff may be exercised as an immediate action by DCFS Regional Managers upon approval of Director Browning. The Risk Management Division may also make a recommendation to the Director for "desk duty" when there is a safety concern. Additional training specific to the performance issue may also be provided to staff.**

- **Administrative Review roundtable discussions are held with individuals from multi-disciplines including other County departments to discuss fatality reports.**

  Ms. LeRúe explained the process for investigating a case that meets the critical incident criteria includes a review and analysis of; 1) CWS/CMS historical data, 2) contact notes and case plan, 3) policy and procedures, 4) Family Preservation and/or private agency records. Interviews with the Coroner and law enforcement are also conducted as part of the investigation. A follow-up report is completed 10 days after the preliminary report has been issued with a full report including outstanding issues and a corrective action plan issued within 30 days. The current review efforts are moving towards a corrective action approach where, the previous focus had been more case oriented. With this new direction, recommendations on training and policy changes have been made.

- **Monthly meetings are held at the Coroner's office with representatives from different agencies attending. A Risk Management analyst attends the meeting as well.**

Chair Berger requested Ms. LeRúe to return before the Commission in April once the 2012 report has been issued to the Board.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

7. Update by Department of Children and Families (DCFS) on Adoptions:

- Bill Thomas, Adoptions Acting Division Chief, DCFS
- Joseph Prusak, Adoptions Assistant Regional Administrator, DCFS (13-0077)

Mr. Thomas distributed the following reports and presented the following:

- **Los Angeles County Outcomes (Calendar Year 2007 – 2012)**
- **Los Angeles County Outcomes (Federal Fiscal Year 2007 – 2012**
- **Exits from Foster Care (Federal Fiscal Year 2007 – 2012)**
- **Adoptions Finalization Achieved in 24 Months**
- **Adoption by Age 2007 – 2012**
- **Average Time from Detention to Finalization (Age at Finalization)**

<u>Los Angeles County Outcomes (Calendar Year 2007 – 2012)</u>:
A manual count was conducted on adoption finalizations that were not available through the Berkeley Child Welfare Dynamic Report System. The data showed a decrease in adoptions as a result of the Department's improvement in family reunification efforts.

<u>Los Angeles County Outcomes (Federal Fiscal Year 2007 – 2012)</u>:
The Federal Fiscal Year report is data through September 30, 2012 and indicated similar data to the calendar year report.

<u>Exits from Foster Care (Federal Fiscal Year 2007 – 2012)</u>:
The data indicated that 57.7% of children were reunited with their family in 2007 and 54.7% in 2012. Approximately 50% of current adoptions are with relative adoptions. The Kin-GAP is a separate category and includes legal guardianship. Between 16 - 17% of exits from the system are either Kin-GAP or relative adoptions.

More work is being done in providing alternative planning in adoptions in order to minimize reentry into the child welfare system. It was found that many of the reentries were due to the death of an adoptive grandparent.

The Commission suggested that Title IV-E reinvestment funds be used towards aftercare services for adoptions and pointed out that some of the youth being adopted are difficult children with emotional issues that would benefit from aftercare services. Additionally, Title IV-E funds should be used for older youth in order to increase adoptions in this more challenging age group.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Mr. Thomas responded with the following:

- **In terms of the continuum of aftercare, the Department has in place Adoption Promotion and Support Services which includes experts in adoptions, case management, and therapy and support groups. These services are available partly through Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program funding. More recently, Adoption Assistance Program Wraparound is available, and in situations where a child is "acting out," residential care is an option with an 18 month stay limitation per episode.**

- **In terms of outreach, the Department has an older youth adoption project and promotes adoptions on Fox 11 television news station with a weekly segment titled, "Wednesday's Child."**

- **Diane Wagner, DCFS explained that previously, there had been State funding to promote adoptions among older youth which was successful. However, that funding is no longer available.**

  The Commission suggested branching out to more television stations for adoption promotional programming and encouraged the Department to look towards past programs that had been proven successful in adoptions among older youth.

<u>Adoptions Finalization Achieved in 24 Months</u>:
The adoptions finalization in 24 months is a Federal goal. The Department is currently at 24.9% of adoptions finalized in 24 months with the Federal goal currently at 36.6%. There is a Strategic Objective Team focusing on working towards this goal.

The Commission suggested that instead of the State contracting with regional renters, DCFS explore the feasibility of direct contracting with the regional centers. Direct contracting would allow DCFS to seek out regional centers that are doing a good job and allow DCFS to continue contacts with such regional centers.

<u>Adoption by Age 2007 – 2012</u>:
Mr. Thomas clarified that the chart titled, "Adoption by Age" is based on the age a child exits care whereas the chart titled, "Adoption Finalizations Achieved in 24 Months" is based on the time the child enters into care and exits care.

After discussion, by common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

Attachments: SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

Matters Not Posted

8. Matters not posted on the agenda, to be discussed and (if requested) placed on the agenda for action at a future meeting of the Commission, or matters requiring immediate action because of an emergency situation or where the need to take action arose subsequent to the posting of the agenda. (13-0499)

There were none.

Announcements

9. Announcements for the meeting of February 4, 2013. (13-0500)

There were none.

Public Comment

10. Opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on items of interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission. (13-0501)

Yolanda Preyer was not present at the time this item was taken up. No members of the public addressed the Commission.

Adjournment

11. Adjournment of the meeting of February 4, 2013. (13-0502)

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.