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**Services for Parents with Commercially Sexually Exploited Children**

In 2012, Los Angeles was identified as a major hub for commercial sexual exploitation of children (“CSEC”). Children, some as young as 10, but generally 12-18 year olds, are being bought and sold by adults for sex on streets throughout Los Angeles County and online. In 2014, the California Legislature amended the Welfare and Institutions Code, to declare that children who are sexually trafficked may be protected under the California’s dependency laws.

Today, in partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court, County Counsel, and Children’s Law Center (CLC), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) participates in a collaborative court, known as the DREAM Court. The DREAM Court serves CSEC in the dependency system. The Probation Department similarly participates in a collaborative court, known as the STAR Court.

The purpose of the dependency court system is to promote the safety and protection of children. If removal of a child from his or her home is determined by the dependency court to be necessary, safely reunifying the child with his or her family is

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the primary objective. The dependency court will order a case plan, which establishes the services necessary to meet the underlying needs of the family. Some examples of services to parents include: parenting classes, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, domestic violence classes, anger management programs, individual counseling, and conjoint therapy between the child and their family member(s). In Los Angeles County, these services are coordinated by the DCFS.

At each review hearing the court must make a finding of whether DCFS provided “reasonable services” to the parent or legal guardian. These services, their application to the needs of the family and the parents’ participation and progress in them, are the lynchpin of the case. Failure to participate and progress in services can result in the termination of parental rights. Nevertheless, unlike some counties in the state, Los Angeles County does not provide financial assistance to parents for these programs. Moreover, traditional parenting classes do not address CSEC, or the trauma that many of these parents have experienced in their own lives and/or as victims of trafficking themselves. DCFS therefore struggles to facilitate reunification services tailored to the CSEC family’s particular needs, and families are challenged to correct the circumstances that resulted in court intervention in the first place. Probation clients are afflicted by the similar challenges, and often lack access to services and resources.

To address these concerns, Los Angeles County needs to develop specialized and targeted services for the parents of commercially sexually exploited children. In order to facilitate safe reunification, these services must focus on the parents and above all, the unique needs of the child. “Parent Partners” are an example of a helpful intervention for parents involved in the dependency system. Parent Partners are

parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system due to their own case. Parent Partners already exist within the dependency system, but none have been created specifically for the CSEC dependency and delinquency populations.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE**, that the Department of Children and Family Services and Probation, in consultation with the County Counsel, the Health Agency, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, Independent Juvenile Panel, District Attorney, and other interested stakeholders such as the Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Children's Law Center and applicable courts (STAR and DREAM), report back in 60 days on the following:

1. Services provided by other jurisdictions, and the identification of best practices or evidence based programs, if any, for parents/caregivers (with a significant and supportive relationship with the child) with children involved in CSEC; and
2. Possible funding streams available to develop and provide services, such as Parent Partners or Wrap-Around, to parents with children involved in CSEC.