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**Establishing a Family Treatment Court Model for Los Angeles County Foster Care**

States across the nation are coping with substance use epidemics and the resulting harm endured by children of parents struggling with addiction. The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention commissioned the National Strategic Plan for Family Drug Courts, finding that substance use increased as a reason for entries into foster care from 22.1% in 2009 to 29.7% in 2014. In Los Angeles County, 58.7% of all dependency cases in 2018 involved substance use, impacting approximately 11,444 children. In that same year, 89.7% of all dependency cases opened included parental substance use as the primary reason for out-of-home placement. Furthermore, the overlapping issues of substance use and child welfare involvement disproportionately impact low-income families and families of color.

Across the nation, jurisdictions have created dependency drug courts, commonly referred to as Family Treatment Courts, to address substance use when it is an underlying or related reason for child welfare involvement. Family Treatment Courts use a multidisciplinary, non-adversarial approach to serve families in the child welfare system who seek substance use treatment. These programs bring together child welfare partners, substance use treatment agencies, service providers, and the courts to serve the whole family. Together, they support parents in recovery to promote family success, including keeping families together whenever possible, and ensuring

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successful reunification efforts when removal is necessary. In Family Treatment Court, the court and service providers play a critical role to ensure necessary services for substance use treatment are provided to parents in a timely manner, including immediate assessment of the parent's substance use and increased access to intensive levels of treatment with holistic, team-based case planning, and case management.

Outcomes of the Family Treatment Court are promising. An evaluation of Sacramento County's model dependency drug court shows participants had higher rates of drug treatment participation than comparison participants, and children were reunified 42% of the time at 24 months, versus 27.2% of the time for families who did not participate. The National Strategic Plan for Family Drug Courts, Children, and Family Futures (CFF) cites several evaluations that show positive gains for families who participate in such programs, including longer stays and increased completion rates in treatment, a greater number of children remaining in their home, higher rates of family reunification, and fewer recurrences of child maltreatment and re-entries into foster care. Overall, Family Treatment Courts improve rehabilitation for parents and provides greater stability for children.

In 2017, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) division launched Los Angeles County's implementation of the California Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System, allowing eligible consumers to receive a much broader range of cost-free treatment services for substance use disorders. As a result, this is an opportune time to ensure families in foster care have access to SAPC's expanded substance use disorder (SUD) treatment benefit.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has taken bold, innovative, and collaborative approaches to preventing abuse and neglect, including through its countywide home visitation plan. Additionally, Los Angeles County, in alignment with a broader movement across the country, has moved away from punitive models in response to substance use, and, instead, toward holistic models that emphasize treatment, health, and wellness to improve outcomes and family and community stability. As the largest child welfare system in the country, it is a natural step for Los

Angeles County to explore and implement a Family Treatment Court based on national best practices and the specific needs of the families we serve.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct:

1. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Chief Executive Office (CEO), County Counsel, the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) and the Office of Child Protection (OCP), in consultation with the Dependency Court, and stakeholders, such as the Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers and Children's Law Center of California, to report back in 120 days in writing with a countywide plan for a Family Treatment Court in the Dependency Court, including:
  - a. Development of a robust treatment model, which identifies funding sources, staffing needs, communication protocols, and strategies to increase timely access to holistic treatment resources;
  - b. Establishment of a clear protocol for assessments and linkage to treatment; and
  - c. Creation of performance outcome measurements, effective data tracking, and evaluation, including metrics to track outcomes of this effort as part of the larger child welfare strategy to prevent abuse and neglect, improve reunification timelines, and reduce disproportionalities based on race and poverty.
2. DPH, in consultation with CEO, DCFS, DHS, DMH, ODR, OCP, County Counsel, the Dependency Court, and stakeholders, such as the Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers and Children's Law Center of California, to report back in 120 days in writing with a comprehensive strategy to enhance substance use treatment services in the Family Treatment Court including through:
  - a. Identification of potential service providers and case management entities to participate; and
  - b. Expansion of available service providers.