

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

July 13, 2021

Involving Fathers and Parental Relatives in Children's Lives

Research has determined that positive involvement of fathers can improve a range of well-being outcomes for their children. Involvement of fathers is also associated with other important child welfare outcomes, including reduced likelihood of entry into foster care, shorter periods of time in foster care, and increased rates of family reunification. Unfortunately, systematic reviews of strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare cases reveal little empirical evidence to guide practice.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families has engaged Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (Mathematica) to conduct a descriptive evaluation (Evaluation) of strategies and approaches to improving father and paternal relative engagement being implemented by five child welfare agencies. There are three primary objectives of the Evaluation. The first is to describe potentially promising strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system. The second is to assess the promise of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) as a continuous quality improvement framework for addressing challenges in the child welfare system; whether and to what extent the BSC has potential, and if so, how it may be applied to other child welfare challenges. The third is to assess the extent to which agencies experienced a shift in organizational culture as a result of implementing the BSC, and strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives.

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Results from the study will help the Los Angeles County (County) Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) maintain a focus on father and paternal relative engagement as they seek to spread and sustain strategies and approaches to improve father and paternal relative engagement, and examine the link between these strategies and approaches, father and paternal relative engagement, and placement stability and permanency outcomes. The Evaluation will also benefit ACF and other child welfare agencies considering opportunities to improve father and paternal relative engagement.

As selected participants of Phase 1, DCFS would continue to participate as one of its sites. As in Phase 1, Phase 2 would continue to focus exclusively on Service Planning Areas (SPA) 1 and 6, which cover the Antelope Valley and South Los Angeles, respectively. The Evaluation requires that DCFS enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Mathematica. DCFS's Palmdale and Vermont Corridor Regional Offices would serve as the two locations to participate in the Evaluation. These offices would be expected to participate in Evaluation activities throughout the Evaluation period, including participating in periodic telephone calls, completing surveys, helping to recruit for and participating in focus groups, arranging for an onsite visit, and sharing relevant program and/or administrative data with the Evaluation team.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Delegate authority to the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to:

1. Accept \$130,000 from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (Mathematica) for participating in implementing the Breakthrough Series Collaborative approach and evaluation activities throughout the evaluation period. Additionally, the funds will provide opportunities for ongoing father engagement trainings and the development of media and promotional items.

2. Execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DCFS and Mathematica to conduct a 21-month descriptive evaluation of strategies and approaches to improving fathers and paternal relative engagement being implemented by child welfare agencies who participated in the pilot study. The term of this MOU will be effective upon the execution of all parties, for a period of 21 months;

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3. Amend the MOU for necessary changes to the terms and conditions, as needed. The approval of County Counsel will be obtained prior to executing such amendments and the Director of DCFS, or his designee, will notify the Board of Supervisors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in writing within ten (10) business days after execution; and;

4. Terminate the MOU for convenience or default. The approval of County Counsel will be obtained prior to terminating this MOU, and the Director of DCFS, or his designee, will notify the Board and the CEO in writing within ten (10) business days after MOU termination.

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