County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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Director

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September 21, 2006

To: Mayor, Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Patricia S. Ploehn, LCSW
Director

JULY 25, 2006 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #12: INCARCERATED PARENTS

At the July 25, 2006 Board meeting, the Board instructed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to:

- Work with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) and report back to the Board in 60 days on the progress in developing a program similar to the San Francisco/Friends Outside model, that enhances services and resources for incarcerated parents whose children have been placed in foster care, for cases wherein such interaction is allowed in the family reunification plan approved by the court.
- Work with the Research Consortium to determine the feasibility of conducting a research project that establishes much needed statistical information as well as explores the issues surrounding parent incarceration and the impact on children in foster care.

On August 1, 2006, in response to the motion by Supervisor Knabe DCFS began preliminary research to determine the number of incarcerated parents whose children have open child welfare cases. The data obtained from CWS/CMS Datamart figures as of September 18, 2006 indicates that there are approximately 2,000 incarcerated parents for whom our department has open cases (please see attached tables.)

DCFS also began working with the LASD to determine what programs already in place work with incarcerated parents and to determine what additional and/or alternative services Friends Outside can provide. At the September 1, 2006 meeting with LASD, Director Karen Dalton provided information about several existing programs that their agency uses to work with incarcerated parents. It became apparent that there are several services already in place that child welfare staff can utilize when working with incarcerated parents, including the Sheriff's Teaching-and-Loving Kids program and the Harriet Buhai Center for Law, which presently assist incarcerated parents in their reunification efforts.

Coordinated site visits by both the Sheriff's Department and DCFS managers, to further assess services and implementation feasibility are planned to the Santa Fe Springs Family Foundation and San Francisco's law enforcement/Friends Outside program. DCFS managers also met with Friends Outside Los Angeles Director Mary Weaver, who provided a proposal for DCFS to fund a portion of Friends Outside existing staff's salary to allow the staff to work with DCFS clients. The feasibility of such a proposal is currently under consideration.

DCFS consulted with the Children and Family Research Consortium (CFRC), which has determined that conducting a research project to establish statistical information and to explore the issues surrounding parent incarceration and the impact on foster children is feasible. However, it will take time to determine faculty interest and potential funding for such a study. CFCR will survey faculty members at the five universities to determine their interest.

Lastly, in recognition of the pivotal role that visitation plays in the reunification process, DCFS will implement the Family Visitation guidelines as approved by Juvenile Dependency Court to ensure best practice for incarcerated parents. This includes an assumption that a determination has been made that visitation is in the best interests of each child and has an emphasis on a team approach to visitation planning, with a view towards more structured and more frequent visitation.

If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may contact Susan Jakubowski, Manager, Board Relations Section, at (213) 351-5787.

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Attachment

Department of Children and Family Services
Incarcerated Parents/Service Component

Table 1. Number of Incarcerated Parents by Age

Parent's Age	Count
17	7
18	3
19	13
20	16
21	35
22	38
23	42
24	43
25	80
26	81
27	80
28	82
29	70
30	86
31	72
32	79
33	87
34	91
35	82
36	94
37	61
38	87
Total	**1,329**

Parent's Age	Count
39	73
40	70
41	67
42	78
43	54
44	67
45	30
46	61
47	40
48	29
49	21
50	19
51	17
52	17
53	11
54	7
55	9
56	4
57	4
58	4
59	3
60	22
Total	**707**

Grand Total Incarcerated Parents: 2, 036

2. Number of Children with Incarcerated Parents by Service Component

Service Component	Count	%
ER	38	1.22%
FM	370	11.85%
FR	896	28.71%
PP	1,817	58.22%
Total	**3,121**	**100%**

** Data source is CWS/CMS Datamart as of 9/18/2006.*