LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 26 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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March 21, 2011

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
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From: Patricia Curry, Chair
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

RE: AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 OF 03/08/11 (STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION THROUGH COUNTY DEPARTMENT CLUSTER RECONFIGURATION)

At the March 8, 2011 meeting held by your Honorable Board (Board), Commissioner Adelina Sorkin and I testified, under agenda Item No. 6, with concerns and recommendations on behalf of the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families.

In light of Mayor Antonovich's motion regarding a "review of the cluster and governance structure," and as supplement to our testimony, enclosed is a letter from the Commission originally sent to you in August 2008 expressing our concerns and recommendations on the governance structure. The Commission believes much of the information contained in the letter is still relevant today, and contains recommendations that could be helpful in your review.

If you have any questions, or if we can be helpful in participating in any meetings involving the review, please let me know.

c: Chief Executive Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Acting Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Board Children's Deputies
Board Chief Deputies
County Counsel

Enclosure

Recs to BOS Re Agn 6 of 3-8-11_Final

500 West Temple Street, Hall of Administration, Room B-22, Los Angeles, CA 90012
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LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

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August 4, 2008

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 383
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: COMMISSION REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CHILD SAFETY

Dear Supervisors:

On August 4, 2008, the Commission for Children and Families (CCF) adopted the following report and its recommendations. The Commission for Children and Families continues to be concerned about three key issues related to children in Los Angeles County:

1. Child Safety
2. Achieving the 5 outcomes developed by Children's Planning Council and adopted by the Board of Supervisors
3. Providing a seamless integrated service system for children and families which develop partnerships among county departments, and between the county departments and community stakeholders.

The Commission's ad hoc Committee was formed to review recommendations made by Dr. David Sanders, Executive Vice President of Systems Improvement for Casey Family Programs regarding child safety and outcomes for children and families as they relate to

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the new county Governance structure. In light of the recent publicized case of torture and abuse of the 5 year old boy, and the 6 deaths in the last few months of probation youth who previously had contact with the foster care system, we respectfully request the Board of Supervisors to review Dr. Sanders' report again and determine whether the recommendations he made could help in preventing future incidents like this horrible abuse case and the deaths, four of which were suicides, of "crossover" youth.

One sentence in the summary of Dr. Sanders' report stands out and concerns us "assuming child safety remains one of the BOS's top priorities, the new Chief Executive Officer's structure falls short in providing a foundation for improving child safety".

The important role structure can have on child safety is often overlooked by government agencies at all levels. Dr. Sanders' observations remind us of the impact county structure can have on children and families. We urge the Board of Supervisors to review his report and recommendations in terms of child safety and determine what changes to the interim structure could be made that would provide solutions to the cross departmental and cross cluster child safety issues raised by Dr. Sanders. The Commission is aware that the CEO indicates in the June 10th status report to the Board of Supervisors that "much of what Dr. Sanders describes in his letter is well underway". However, it is difficult to read the July 2008 report from the Economy and Efficiency (E & E) Commission and get the impression that major structural changes like this are underway or have been resolved. The distinction needs to be made between departments' attempt to collaborate and work issues out across clusters, as indicated in the CEO report, and the underlying issues of structure that Dr. Sanders points out. The CEO's status report seems to be citing "collaboration" examples, while Dr. Sanders' report speaks to crucial Governance structural elements. Some of the structural issues include accountability, roles, responsibilities, designing and implementation of plans, supervision of integrated projects, resolution of cross department cluster conflicts, and how these elements are incorporated into the interim county structure so that child safety will not continue to be comprised.

Integration Challenges and Opportunities

The Commission for Children & Families has worked with the BOS and county departments for almost 25 years in its oversight and advisory role on these same issues. The June 2008 Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury report, the E & E Commission report, and Dr. Sanders' report bring to mind the attempts over the years made by the Board of Supervisors and county departments to integrate service delivery across county departments. In each effort, while progress and success have been made, many of these multi-department county programs have struggled with the same structural elements. Lessons learned from those efforts should guide decision making now since recent failures have many of the same structural limitations in common:

1. Accountability

When multiple departments are involved (and they usually are in complex matters related to children and families), Department Heads and DCEOs have no clear point of authority or accountability. Instead, each department/cluster has a person in charge that can only make decisions for that department/cluster. Since there are several Department Heads and Deputy CEOs who are "collaborating", it is difficult to hold one Department Head or Deputy CEO accountable. This is compounded by the fact that Department Heads do not have authority over other departments and the Deputy CEO does not have authority over other Deputy CEOs or clusters. As an example, the 2007/2008 L.A. County Civil Grand Jury cites a number of system failures in their report, "Helping Probation and Foster Youth Prepare for Adulthood and Independence". While many in the county view the Department of Children and Family Services as the department charged with the responsibility for successfully emancipating foster and probation youth, the reality is that the services fall across ten county departments which cross over into three clusters. Although DCFS and Probation have key roles, the youth cannot emancipate successfully unless affordable housing, jobs, health and mental health services are available. All of these services are supplied by departments other than DCFS and by multiple clusters. With so many departments in charge, who is responsible and held accountable for the development of a plan which includes defining roles, implementation, oversight, evaluation, analysis and holding all partners accountable for performance?

2. Cross Department Personnel

Because of the range and the complexity of the problems that arise for children and families, their service needs often cross several departments and at least three of the five clusters. Some of the challenges that the multi-disciplinary teams face are:

a) **Supervision of Multi-Department Team**

There is no county mechanism for supervision and accountability of multi-department team members. If there are, as an example, five team members from five different departments, each team member is supervised by a different person from a different department. No one person supervises the team or how the individuals perform within the team. Therefore, no one is held accountable for the planning, performance and evaluation of the overall team and its individual members. In fact, individual team members may feel that they are reporting to at least two different people – their home department supervisor and their team leader. Differences between the multiple team "bosses" (including all of the home department supervisors) can seriously cloud decision making and compromise the quality of the team, as well as make it difficult to expand any achievements made by the team into larger-scale practice by departments. Very rarely is an evaluation done with an analysis of the outcomes achieved, the quality of service, what the strengths and weaknesses of the team are and how team practice differs from practice "as usual". Important decisions on how to

improve services and on how to assess if services are working cannot be made without this analysis.

b) **Inter-Cluster Problem Solver**
There is no mechanism in the county to solve problems that inevitably arise across clusters. While the Deputy CEO can assist in solving problems for the departments in their cluster, no Deputy CEO has authority across clusters or over other Deputy CEOs. This leaves as the only recourse for the CEO to be the one to intervene in all differences, no matter how big or small, between clusters since the CEO is the only one with that authority. This diminishes their ability and effectiveness, not to mention drawing on the time of the CEO for questions that may not require his attention.

c) **Funding Streams Specialist**
There is a need for a position in the CEO that can facilitate the blending of funds across departments/clusters. This person can assist departments with identifying funds for multi-department projects and problems that arise. Some of the problem areas are due to restricted funding sources, funding sources that are decreasing or disappearing and disputes between departments about who will fund what. Sometimes a service improvement depends on finding "glue money" (a relatively small investment that could leverage several funding streams) that is prohibited by the county's ongoing funding streams. In this case, a funding specialist who is also familiar with private philanthropic funding could help to raise a small increment that could make a big difference in the long run. Sometimes the programs and services of the multi-disciplinary team are changed and/or compromised, not because different services are needed to enhance the program but because the funding stream requires a particular focus or approach. We end up with programs based on funding requirements instead of on clients' needs. The changes made by one department can completely undermine the whole team. Suddenly, we find that a project we thought was successful is no longer getting the intended results. One example was the Start Taking Action Responsibly Today (S.T.A.R.T.) units, which were praised for their innovations by the Productivity Commission. Later, a change in the funding stream caused the project to completely change its focus, and it failed in delivering its intended services to the target population. The youth that were in most need of the services were excluded by the new funding source.

3. Evaluation and Analysis
There is no central point for evaluation and analysis of cross department/cluster projects. In addition, once data is collected and an evaluation completed, we should analyze the information to determine both program performance and financial performance. Performance Counts! provides an important mechanism to allow departments to highlight their performance over time, but new measures should also be incorporated based on in-depth evaluation of promising program approaches. Successes and failures of programs should be reported to the CEO

and BOS. This would ideally be accomplished by an objective outsider. For example, the CEO should hire external consultants to review PC! measures based on the best available research in the field, so that departments have regular input on updating and improving measures from an objective analyst with no vested interests in a particular direction.

Solving these service integration, service delivery and child safety issues are crucial to the success of some current projects like the Prevention Initiative, MHSA implementation, Linkages, Magnolia Place, and the 8300 S. Vermont projects. If we do not learn from past experiences and solve these structural problems, we will repeat failures. An example of repeating failures is MacLaren Children's Center which was riddled with structural problems, including lack of clear accountability, poor integration of services, unclear roles and responsibilities, supervision from multiple county departments, conflicting viewpoints on confidentiality requirements (from different departments and different County Counsels), and the lack of a county mechanism to effectively identify and solve problems across departments despite the fact they were all co-located on the same campus. This resulted in a lawsuit. The implementation of the settlement of that lawsuit has been plagued with some of the same cross departmental problems.

Title IV-E Waiver

Dr. Sanders' report describes Title IV-E (IV-E) as the largest federal funding stream supporting children. He cites the "challenges" of the IV-E Waiver with DCFS and Probation being in different clusters and recommends one Deputy CEO be assigned to the IV-E Waiver. The CEO's Status Report (Attachment B) indicates feedback from Ms. Ploehn to "having one Deputy CEO responsible for participating in programming and fiscal decision making of both departments would help to streamline coordination among two large departments that are sharing a large and complex funding package". However, there is no mention of whether this will be done or not in the status report.

The youth in DCFS and Probation in fact share several similar funding, service and treatment needs particularly those youth in the probation halls and camps. Some common needs include health, mental health, education, emancipation, housing, jobs, and mentoring. The two departments currently share additional funding streams as well as IV-E. (i.e. EPSDT, ILP and MHSA). In addition, they use a common contract for group homes. The two departments work closely on issues like emancipation, adoptions, family preservation and wraparound. In other areas the departments face similar concerns, but have not developed coordinated strategies for addressing major problems, such as the disproportionate numbers of African American children who are served by DCFS, Probation and often by both systems. Treating these as two separate sets of problems leads, for example, to hiring separate sets of consultants on disproportionality who may not coordinate with each other, or leverage the lessons learned from DCFS's work on this issue to inform Probation's plan for Enhanced

Technical Assistance around Disproportionate Minority contacts. Besides the youth who enter directly into the DCFS or Probation systems, there are the "crossover" youth. These include youth who start as foster children and move to the Probation system, as well as youth who are under dual jurisdiction. While the probation department has been unable to provide meaningful data, some staff anecdotally from that department have quoted figures of 40% and as high as 70% crossover in a particular probation camp. The tragedy of the "crossover" youth is apparent in the recent 6 deaths of crossover youth, four of them from suicide.

It should also be noted that there are common resources and services needed by at-risk families of these youth. In fact, some families have children in both the foster and probation systems. They require services from DPSS, DCFS, DMH and DHS. It seems important to look at these crossover families' children and youth and determine how we can best coordinate the services across three clusters to achieve outcomes for the families. It seems that with the common funding needs and services that there would be benefits to moving the IV-E Waiver under one Deputy CEO as suggested by Dr. Sanders.

Building Blocks

The county departments, community stakeholders, advocates, and the BOS have made numerous efforts over the years to improve systems and create change. Many of these initiatives have been approved or adopted. If we start tying some of these initiatives together they become building blocks for establishing a system with one shared vision, outcomes, policy evaluation and analysis. By weaving what work has already been done together we can develop an overarching, interlocking map of services and gaps in services. Some of the building blocks are:

1. Five outcome areas developed by the CPC and adopted by the BOS
2. Performance Counts!
3. County Vision
4. Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer in his report on restructuring regarding monthly BOS Policy Reports
5. Service Integration Branch (SIB)
6. Homeless Initiative
7. Prevention Initiative
8. Title IV-E Waiver
9. Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Support and Services (CSS) Plan
10. Magnolia Place
11. Vermont Corridor

The previous work done by individuals and departments on these items should not be lost. Some of the above have been designed but not implemented, while others may be partially implemented. All need to be reviewed.

SIB was instrumental in several multi-department county projects and SIB staff gained valuable experience in identifying and solving problems across county departments. One of the underlying problems with SIB was its lack of authority since it only worked in a "facilitator role". This experience could be the basis for CEO cross department personnel mentioned previously. SIB however, needs to be incorporated into the interim county structure and have a clear role.

Performance Counts! needs to be fully implemented and monitored. Evaluations need to be conducted to validate and refine measures and to make any needed improvements to data collection and analysis. The performance measures need to be updated regularly based on success in meeting key benchmarks, so that departments don't continue to turn in reports that focus primarily on compliance, but "stretch" to make new break-throughs and improvements in outcomes for children and families. Measures also should be updated when lessons are learned from smaller evaluation studies. For example, if a multidisciplinary pilot project is successful in achieving outcomes for youth, the affected departments should adopt that same standard for "regular services".

An analysis of data, outcomes, budget/financial, and performance needs to be done. The financial analysis needs to include how much money we are spending and what are the results we are getting. The analysis should include what if any money was saved through efficiencies of integrated services and blended funding, as well as stakeholder/client feedback. This analysis would best be done by an independent objective outsider and could be used by the BOS to make important decisions about policy and change.

The Homeless Initiative, MHSA CSS Plan, Prevention Initiative and IV-E Waiver should be woven together as a Continuum of Care (FC4) instead of individual initiatives. The Commission sent (FC4) to the BOS in their 2005-2006 Annual Report (see Attachment A). The BOS has supported several meaningful initiatives and projects but, if they are not pulled together in a cohesive continuum that families can access when they need help, the services will be ineffective.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The Commission for Children and Families is concerned that the current interim Governance Structure does not provide for the integration of services that will improve the quality of life for L.A. County children and families. The Commission would like to suggest the following principles be included as we move forward with the interim structure and it evolves as a "work in progress".

1. The County should start with Prevention.
2. The model should start with the needs of families.
3. The County should provide services in the community.

4. Providers should view the family as a whole in providing service.
5. The County should partner with community stakeholders.
6. The County should recognize the shared service, treatment, and funding needs of those youth in the foster care system and those youth who have crossed over to the probation system.
7. The CEO should develop an interlocking overarching objective to serve families with a continuum of care across all clusters. This overarching plan should include the roles and responsibilities of each cluster and department defined to establish clear points of authority. MAPP Goals for Department Heads and DCEOs should be tied to these interlocking overarching plans. It should also include an evaluation and analysis component with feedback from the families and stakeholders.

   The words "collaboration" and "partnership" often get used interchangeably in the County. There is an important distinction between the two. Collaboration is working together while in a partnership, each partner has equal status and responsibility. It is critical that departments/clusters are not just working together. Each has a different role and is responsible for service to at-risk families. If the structure provides for departments "collaborating" and DCEOs "facilitating" who is responsible and accountable for the overall planning, service delivery, and evaluations? This distinction is what has hindered success in several previous initiatives.

   Departments/clusters cannot serve families alone. New initiatives depend on partnerships between County Departments and the community, while we have called community providers partners in the past, rarely do they have equal status. Frequently they are not ever included in key discussions.

   Without a structure that includes these elements, the Commission is concerned that the County will end up with initiatives that are not connected to each other, or to the families and their communities.

Economy & Efficiency Commission Report

The Commission would like to thank the E & E Commission for its outstanding report. Clearly there was critical information in the report. We appreciate the time and energy required to conduct the interviews and compiling the report.

The BOS should note that the report from the E & E Commission was based on its interviews with county employees. While we agree that this is essential, our Commission believes it to be equally important to have feedback from the stakeholders, advocates and clients who access services in the community on how successful the new structure is. We encourage the BOS to solicit input on the interim Governance Structure from the stakeholders and advocates through focus groups, monthly public

policy meetings and public hearings. We would also encourage the CEO to include stakeholders and advocates in the design process.

The Commission agrees with the E & E Commission that a more definitive follow-up evaluation be done. However, we would like to request it be done now and not wait a year. If the new structure is a "work in progress" then an independent assessment and evaluation needs to be made as we move forward. In addition, future evaluations should include input from community stakeholders and advocates. If the interim structure is indeed "a work in progress", key changes need to be made to ineffective procedures before they become set in place or we spend years trying to make a structure or elements of a structure work that is not designed to move toward a seamless delivery of services for families in L.A. County.

Summary and Recommendations

The Commission would like to thank Dr. Sanders, Casey Family Programs, The Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, and the Economy & Efficiency Commission for their important work on behalf of the children and families in Los Angeles County. The E&E Commission, in their report on the implementation of the New Governance Structure points out several problems with this new structure. Dr. Sanders, from Casey Family Programs, in response to a board motion, also points out problematic areas of the structure related to child safety and outcomes and structural challenges related to the fiscal and programmatic oversight of the IV-E waiver. In light of recent deaths of "crossover" youth and the recent abuse case, we believe it important that the BOS review Dr. Sanders' recommendations again; to determine what changes need to be made to the interim Governance Structure to ensure one point of accountability so that the five outcome areas, including safety, are achieved for all families particularly "at risk" families.

Recommendations

1. Review Dr. Sanders' report for possible strategies on how to address the lack of DCEO authority and accountability across clusters and its effect on safety for children and other problems identified in the interim structure.

2. Implement Dr. Sanders' recommendation to assign Title IV-E resources to one DCEO.

3. Conduct an independent evaluation of the interim structure and make changes needed to ensure the structure is moving toward a seamless delivery of service for families in Los Angeles County.

4. Solicit input from stakeholders, clients and advocates in the community as a part of the evaluation process.

5. Develop a plan to solve cross departmental and cross cluster issues, such as roles, supervision, planning and blending of funds.

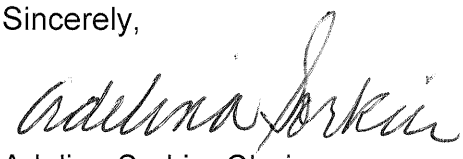
6. Fully implement and monitor Performance Counts!, evaluate the data and have an outside independent analysis complete with recommendations to the BOS.

7. Weave ongoing initiatives together into a seamless continuum of care for children and families.

We urge your Board to adopt the above recommendations and review the report from Dr. Sanders in terms of child safety and in conjunction with the report on the New County Governance Structure recently completed by the E & E Commission.

In addition to Commissioners, we received input from ECC, CPC, Casey Family Programs, Public Counsel, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Miguel Santana, E & E Commission and the 2007-2008 Civil Grand Jury Report, the E&E Commission Report, the report from Dr. David Sanders, and the status report from the CEO to the BOS.

Sincerely,



Adelina Sorkin, Chair
Commission for Children and Families

c: CEO
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