COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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March 4, 2013

TO: Audit Committee

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SUNSET REVIEW FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

RECOMMENDATION

The Audit Committee recommend to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to extend the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families' (Commission) sunset review date to September 30, 2017.

BACKGROUND

The Board established and has continued the Commission pursuant to County Code Chapter 3.68. The Board approved the most recent sunset review date extension in September 2006.

The Commission's duties are as follows:

- Monitor, evaluate, and report to the Board on the implementation of Board-adopted recommendations for improving the delivery of children's services, and when necessary, recommend changes to ensure compliance with the adopted recommendations.

- Review County programs that provide services for children at risk.

- Receive input from community groups and individuals concerning County children's services programs.

- Review and make recommendations to the Board regarding children's services legislation.

- Make recommendations to the Board and various department heads to improve children's services.

- Report to the Board annually concerning the status of children's services, and make recommendations for improvement.

The Commission has 15 members, three appointed by each Supervisor. The Commission meets at least monthly, and commissioners receive $25 per meeting, not to exceed 24 meetings per year. The Executive Office of the Board estimates that they spent approximately $147,439 for Commission staff support, stipends, services/supplies, and parking passes during Fiscal Year 2010-11.

JUSTIFICATION

From January 2009 to December 2011, the Commission met 59 times (approximately 20 times per year) with an average attendance of 11.3 (75%) members.

During this review period, the Commission's accomplishments included:

- Participating in the Prevention Workgroup (Workgroup) to provide oversight to the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP), to reduce child abuse and neglect by utilizing community-based prevention networks. The Workgroup contributed to eight Board-approved contracts to evaluate the management of child abuse and neglect prevention strategies through PIDP agencies and community-based organizations.

- Advising DCFS to conduct a study to identify factors contributing to the increased rate of children re-entering foster care after family reunification. The study identified issues that DCFS should address to improve the family reunification process.

- Recommending strategies to the Board to address childhood obesity. As a result, the Board directed the Chief Executive Office to develop a Child Wellness Policy (Policy). The Policy, later approved by the Board, identified ways to enhance information on nutrition and physical activity for parents, caregivers, and County staff; ensuring nutritional guidelines for children in out-of-home care and child care settings are followed; and providing public education and training.

- Collaborating with DCFS, the Department of Public Health, the City of Pasadena, and First 5 LA to host six Community Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles trainings

for relative caregivers. The trainings educated participants about healthy lifestyles, and ways to improve diet and physical activities.

- Serving on an oversight committee to monitor the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act spending plan for transitional age youth (TAY) (individuals from 16 to 25 years old). The committee worked with the Department of Mental Health to address issues including the funding disparity for the TAY population, limited housing, and staffing support.

- Participating with numerous governmental and planning agencies to coordinate efforts to improve services for children and families.

The Commission's objectives for the coming period are to work towards integrating services among County departments, and provide continuous care for children and families. The Commission will focus on areas such as preventive measures, family reunification, TAY population, mental health services for children and families, training, and research development.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Robert Smythe at (213) 253-0101.

WLW:JLS:RS:TK

Attachment

c: Genevra Berger, Chair, Commission for Children and Families
Philip L. Browning, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Angie Johnson, Chief, Commission Services

COMMISSION SUNSET REVIEW
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
REVIEW COMMENTS

Mission. (Does the mission statement agree with the Board of Supervisors' (Board) purpose and expectations?)

The stated mission is as set forth in the Board order creating the Commission for Children and Families (Commission). **CONCUR.**

Section 1. Relevance. (Is the mission still relevant and in agreement with the Board's purpose and expectations?)

The Commission reviews County department programs that provide services for children and families at risk; receives input from the community concerning child welfare services; and makes recommendations to the Board and various department heads to improve services for children and families.

The Commission's mission appears to be **RELEVANT**.

Section 2. Meetings and Attendance. (Are required meetings held and is attendance satisfactory?)

The Commission is required to meet at least once a month. Between January 2009 and December 2011, the Commission met 59 times with an average attendance of 11.3 (75%) members.

The Commission's meeting frequency and attendance are **SATISFACTORY**.

Sections 3 and 4. Accomplishments and Results. (Are listed accomplishments and results significant?)

During this evaluation period, the Commission's accomplishments included the following:

- Participating in the Prevention Workgroup (Workgroup) to provide oversight to the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP), to reduce child abuse and neglect by utilizing community-based prevention networks. The Workgroup contributed to eight Board-approved contracts to evaluate the management of child abuse and neglect prevention strategies through PIDP agencies and community-based organizations.

- Advising DCFS to conduct a study to identify factors contributing to the increased rate of children re-entering foster care after family reunification. The study identified issues that DCFS should address to improve the family reunification process.

- Recommending strategies to the Board to address childhood obesity. As a result, the Board directed the Chief Executive Office to develop a Policy. The Policy, later approved by the Board, identified ways to enhance information on nutrition and physical activity for parents, caregivers, and County staff; ensuring nutritional guidelines for children in out-of-home care and child care settings are followed; and providing public education and training.

- Collaborating with DCFS, Department of Public Health, the City of Pasadena, and First 5 LA to host six Community Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles trainings for relative caregivers. The trainings educated participants about healthy lifestyles, and ways to improve diet and physical activities.

- Serving on an oversight committee to monitor the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act spending plan for transitional age youth (TAY). The committee worked with the Department of Mental Health to address issues including the funding disparity for the TAY population, limited housing, and staffing support.

- Participating with numerous governmental and planning agencies to coordinate efforts to improve services for children and families.

The Commission's accomplishments and results are **SIGNIFICANT**.

Section 5. Objectives. (Are the objectives compatible with the mission and goals and relevant within the current County environment?)

The Commission's objectives for the coming period are to integrate services among County departments, and provide continuous care for children and families. The Commission will focus on areas such as preventive measures, family reunification, TAY population, mental health services for children and families, training, and research development.

The Commission's future objectives appear **RELEVANT**.

Section 6. Resources. (Are the resources utilized by the entity in support of the entity's activities warranted in terms of the accomplishments and results?)

Commissioners receive $25 for each meeting attended, not to exceed 24 meetings per year. The Executive Office of the Board estimates that they spent approximately $147,439 for Commission staff support, stipends, services/supplies, and parking passes in Fiscal Year 2010-11.

The Commission's expenses appear to be **WARRANTED**.

Section 7. Recommendation.

EXTEND THE SUNSET REVIEW DATE FOR THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2017.