



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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MINUTES

Thursday, September 14, 2017
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration Room 739
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Please note this is a summary of the meeting not a “verbatim” transcription.

Roll Call/Commissioners Present:

Booker Pearson (Chair)
Adele Andrade-Stadler (Vice-Chair)
James Adler
Dolores Arredondo
Michael Flood

Rickey Ivie
Veronica Lewis
Lori Stein
Darick Simpson

Commissioners Excused:

Michael Bloom
Joe Brown
Frank G. De Balogh

Mary Galvan Rosas
Raúl Estrada
Egerton Forster

I. CALL TO ORDER / ESTABLISH A QUORUM

Meeting was called to order. A quorum was established at 10:40 am.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Antonia Jiménez, DPSS
La Shonda Diggs, DPSS
Lino Rios, DPSS
Gabriela Herrera, DPSS
Deon Arline, DPSS
Sonia Miramontes, DPSS
Rachel Sumekh, SOH
Sydney Kamlager, LACCD
Laura Quinonez, County Counsel

Genethia Hudley-Hayes, Third District
Noah Fleishman, Third District
Erin Cox, LAHSA
Angela Renche, LACOE
Sharon Beard, LACOE
Jared Call, CFPA
Lena Silver, NLSLA
Jessica Mark, LAFLA
Anita Garza Velasco, NLSLA

Commission Staff:

La France Toliver
Tina Phan

COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson
BOOKER PEARSON

Vice Chairperson
ADELE ANDRADE-STADLER

JAMES N. ADLER
DOLORES L. ARREDONDO
MICHAEL BLOOM
JOE BROWN
FRANK G. DE BALOGH, Ph.D.
RAUL ESTRADA
MICHAEL FLOOD
EGERTON FORSTER
MARY GALVAN ROSAS
RICKEY IVIE, Esq.
VERONICA LEWIS
LORI C. STEIN
DARICK SIMPSON

COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director
LA FRANCE TOLIVER

Commission Secretary
TINA PHAN

II. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Antonia Jiménez, Chief Deputy Director

Ms. Jiménez presented the Director's update on behalf of Director Spiller. The updates were as follow:

- CalACES – Effective September 1, 2017, Los Angeles County has officially joined CalACES, the Joint Power Authority (JPA) responsible for overseeing the new 40 County Consortia. The Federal Government is requiring that the State of California have as single Statewide Welfare Eligibility System 2023.
- DACA – The California department of Health Services (CDHS) provided counties with a fact sheet indicating there are no changes to DACA participant eligibility for Medi-Cal. All DACA participants continue to be eligible for full-scope Medi-Cal until further notice.
- Electronic Benefits Transfers (EBT) - The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) announced in early 2016 that it selected Fidelity Information Services (FIS), LLC to replace Xerox as the new State vendor to process all Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) transactions. Effective January 2018, FIS will implement a new EBT processing system called ebtEDGE; which will manage, support, and control the electronic payment of government benefits for the purchase of eligible food items, goods and services; as well as access to cash in retail, ATMs, and provider environments.
- Customer Service Center (CSC) - The July 2017 CSC statistical report highlighted that there was A:
 - 71% decrease in the monthly average wait time, from 28½ minutes to 8 minutes and 11 seconds from July 2016 to June 2017;
 - 81% decrease in call abandonment, from a July 2016 rate of 33% to June 2017's rate of 6%;
 - 66% increase in caller authentication from July 2016 through June 2017. For the same period, the percentage of callers that resolved their issue via self-service increased by 57%.

Follow up Action: Commissioner Adler asked for the percentage of calls that get authenticated and what is the process to get to a live worker? Chairperson Pearson suggested that the topic CSC be agendaized for October meeting since it is not on the agenda for discussion.

III. CONTINUED BUSINESS

DISCUSSION: CalFresh Participation Rate / CalFresh Motion Report

Commissioner Michael Flood

Commissioner Flood opened discussion speaking about Cal Fresh (CF) opportunities to increase the number of residents in LA County receiving it, how California has always lagged the nation, in terms of participation rate, and has always been around 48-50th in nation. He spoke of the great opportunity for the department and community partners to come together to reach more people who are struggling with the issue of hunger to get the CF benefits that can help them. There may be those that do not want the benefit, but clearly there are many who need and want CF benefits. He also shared about a report that will come out before the end of this year, from the Department of Public Health, talking about the food insecurity rate locally, and while it is going down nationally, it is not going down locally. The reason is due to housing costs and other costs related to people living in LA County. There is an opportunity today as the Commission discusses homelessness, student hunger and that having a more effective CF Program can make the difference of people losing their housing. If they get the average of \$300 a month, that may make the difference of meeting their rental payments and keeping themselves in a housing situation. The monthly DPSS at a Glance is very helpful to see from a trend stand point. If you look at the CF participation, it shows "Persons Eligible/Persons Served" was 1.8 million in June 2015, and it has decreased to 1.087 million two years later. We only have 2/3 of those who are eligible receiving the benefits, clearly not all of the remaining 1/3 are not interested. There is clearly an opportunity there, and as we look at things over the last two years. There is a large increase in the Medi-Cal enrollment. There are also many undocumented immigrants who are now eligible to Medi-Cal but not to CF. There are many in the collective system that we can reach to determine eligibility for CF.

Commissioner Flood spoke of the Board's motion in May, which asked the department to do many things, including increasing the CF participation rate. He spoke of leveraging the interest of CDSS, who is also interested in increasing CF enrollment statewide. Adding that the State Director of CDSS, who oversees all programs, hired a consultant to transform CF, and asked the consultant to run the state bureau for CF to see how enrollments can be increased throughout California. This tells us there is a lot of interest at the State level.

There is partnership and funding going on between the county and the State to help determine ways to increase county enrollment. Due to LA County's diversity and the many languages spoken here, including the literacy rates, there will always be the need for some people to walk in the door to get help in that way or get help through community based organizations to get through the application process. But there is a growing number of people who want to do this electronically or through the call center and never touch an office. These folks have a smart phone and are ready to go. What is San Bernardino County, who has 90% participation rates, doing for SNAP and CF that we are not doing? They are leveraging technology extremely well.

They have a state of the art call center, standards and measuring those standards. They are also realizing that a large segment of their population can do everything electronically and never come into an office. Many of those individuals are working and don't have time to come into an office, and this is their preference.

Commissioner Flood appreciated the opportunity to meet with Ms. Jiménez and other DPSS representatives who provided an update on the CF Report as provided to the Board. This is the beginning and based on the report there is more to come. Chairperson Pearson recommended and encouraged collaborative meetings with advocates and the department.

Antonia Jiménez, Chief Deputy - DPSS

Ms. Jiménez provided a high-level overview of the July CalFresh Participation report submitted to the Board. The report addresses three components.

1. Customer service Center -

Increasing Enrollments – The department has begun its efforts to increase enrollment with two pilots at two separate Call Centers. At the first, anyone that expresses interest in applying, the CSC worker will logon to our YBN website to initiate the CF application. The CSC obtains the client's authorization through telephonic signature and the application is forwarded to one of the district offices for processing.

The second pilot is where the Eligibility Worker (EW) is taking the CF application from beginning to end over the phone. The difference between the two is that the first CSC pilot spends a short period of time initiating this process, whereas, the second pilot spends as much as 45 minutes from beginning to end on the phone with this application process. Through this process we are evaluating the impact of call wait time. If this pilot is successful we will look to turn one of the CSCs into a full CF intake processing center. We may need to change our staffing models to make this change and we are willing to do what works and streamline across the board.

Effective December 1, 2017, clients will be able to do recertifications and Medi-Cal renewals online. The department is looking holistically at what we can do to improve processes for the customer without having to come into the office. For the customers that need to come in, they can have a good customer experience as well.

Follow up Action: Vice-Chair Andrade-Stadler, Commissioners Adler and Flood suggested using texting to notify customers that SAR-7s are due. People are responding more to texts than emails these days. Commissioner Adler recommended Robo Calling to Medi-Cal customers as potential CF customers. Ms. Jiménez responded that texting requires permission from the customer. Currently we are not texting with CF, however we will explore. Commissioner Adler recommended that the department work with the State to include an opt out clause as part of the written application process. Permission for texting could be built in to the application process as an opt out for the client. Otherwise, if they do not opt out they are automatically opting in.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System – Ms. Jiménez continued by sharing that the department has expanded its IVR options so that customers who have received marketing material can quickly select the option to apply for CF and be directed to a CSC EW who will initiate their CF application.

CalFresh (CF) Outreach – In June, the department sent 215,073 mailers/flyers to potential CF eligible in the Medi-Cal population. Later we will send customized flyers telling the amount they may be eligible based on information in LEADER Replacement System (LRS).

Follow up Action: Commissioner Lewis asked if there is an electronic version of the flyer, suggesting that the department send flyers electronically to the potentially eligible population maybe more effective. Ms. Jiménez stated we will look into this.

Commissioner Flood commented that Community Based Organizations (CBO), local agencies and the department need to meet more so that all can be in sync and ready to assist with the CF outreach efforts. Frequent meetings would be helpful.

Ms. Jiménez added that Semi-Annual Reports (SARs) can be submitted by uploading electronically. There will be a marketing campaign regarding this. Most of our CF customers are working and they do not have time to come into the offices. We are seeing how we can get our customers to utilize the system more.

The department is looking at Geocoding to target geographic locations where we know that households may be potentially eligible but the CF participation rates are low. In our report, there are some samples of focused areas where participation is below 50%.

Follow up Action: Commissioner Lewis requested the list of zip codes for South LA targeted and a breakout of participation rates by SPA.

Vice Chair Andrade-Stadler commented on the department's strategic partnerships and the training being provided to Local Education Agencies, Nonprofits and Community Colleges about YBN, and the application process for students. Ms. Sydney Kamlager-Dove, President of the Los Angeles Community Colleges District Board of Trustees commented on the Community College participation. Ms. Kamlager-Dove stated in their Board meetings many students have stated they are struggling to access benefits and what role can the school and County collectively do to make access better in a timely fashion.

Follow up Action: Genethia Hudley-Hayes, 3rd District stated DPSS is working hard with WDACS and LAHSA through Rapid Rehousing, and asked if the department is reaching out to share the CF program through county initiatives like Rapid Rehousing for potential CF customers. Are linkages being made to catch the individuals who normally DPSS would not catch? She believes that this is another way to reach potential customers. Commissioner Lewis stated it is not formally happening. Ms. Jiménez stated we will make it formally happen.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 8, 2017

MOTION: Chairperson Pearson moved to approve the minutes with no changes. Commissioner Flood approved and Commissioner Lewis second the approval.

ACTION: The June 8, 2017 PSS Commission Minutes were approved unanimously.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Food Insecurity Among Community College Students

Los Angeles Community College District (Board of Trustees)

Sydney Kamlager-Dove, President/District Director for Senator Holly Mitchell

Ms. Kamlager-Dove shared about a survey conducted by LACCD of community college students in Los Angeles. The survey's purpose was to assess the prevalence of and factors associated with food insecurity among LACCD students. It was part of a larger needs assessment that also investigated housing insecurity, mental health, and transportation issues. A total of 5,925 student participated in the survey. The proportion of surveys returned generally reflects the proportion of students enrolled at LACCD colleges. The survey revealed that 62.7% of students surveyed are experiencing food insecurity. Most of the students (38.3%) were in the Very Low Food Security category Los Angeles Southwest (LASC) and Los Angeles Trade-Technical (LATTC) Colleges had the highest proportion of food insecure students in the District (69%). A recent study reported prevalence rates of 39% for food insecurity among community college students and 13% in U.S. households.

Populations at greater risk for food insecurity include students who reported being African American, Native American, more than one race, ever in foster care, divorced, or widowed were disproportionately affected. Gender and citizen status did not appear to impact insecurity rates. Protective factors included age (being under 21), being a dependent, having a parent with a Bachelor's or Graduate degree, and being married. Food insecurity (62.7%) among LACCD students was particularly high, when compared to the general population and other reports of food insecurity rates among community college students (39%). Studies show that students experiencing food insecurity have significantly lower GPAs than students in food secure households and the lack of basic needs impacts students' ability to engage academically.

Follow up Action: Ms. Jiménez asked if the department is working with LA Southwest College and LA Trade Technical Colleges. Ms. Kamlager said yes, but she preferred more engagement from social services side and suggested training for counselors and admin staff on campuses; adding that she works more closely with LAHSA and DCFS. Ms. Jiménez committed to follow up with Ms. Kamlager.

Food Insecurity Among Community College Students

Swipe Out Hunger

Rachel Sumekh, Founder & Executive Director

Ms. Sumekh shared that one in four students struggle with hunger. Of those students, 52% skip class because they are food insecure. At the same time, millions of dollars in student meal credits go unused. Born under the name "Swipes for the Homeless" in 2009, a few friends at UCLA went into the dining hall, used their meal cards to take away some sandwiches and then delivered them around town. This is how our system works: (1) Students donate excess meal points at the end of the semester; (2) University administration reaches out to students struggling with hunger; (3) Points are used to issues dining hall credits or stock on campus food banks to support students in need. In a single week, 300 meals were collected. A few months later, the team partnered with UCLA's Dining Services to allow students to donate their extra meal funds to provide 1,087 meals to community members. By the fall of 2014, the team collected over 15,000 donated meals in a single week.

In 2015, our movement was renamed to Swipe Out Hunger, but the objectives to end hunger, raise awareness about this issue, and foster student leadership have remained central to our mission. The response to our program is changing and we have grown to meet it. In 2010, a UCLA administrator stated, "Get this program the hell off my campus" to 2017, "Would you work with us to pass legislation to take your program on to every college in the state?" This was from the Office of California Assemblywoman, Monique Limón. We have served 1.3 million meals across 30 Universities nationwide. Governor Brown approved \$7.5 million for "Hunger-Free College Campuses. Our program has received press recognition from LA Times, New York Times, Forbes and Chicago Tribune.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jared Call, CFPA / Lena Silver, NLSLA

Mr. Call thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak before them. CFPA/NLSLA prepared a written response to the overall CalFresh Report released by DPSS. The CFPA/NLSLA response also included recommendations which Mr. Call described in his public comment. (Copies of their response/recommendations was distributed to Commissioners). Mr. Call/Ms. Silver commented on State level policy changes for certain seniors. There are incentives for them to get on CalFresh effective October 1. The population emphasis is important. Different messaging is required. Mr. Call invited Commissioners to listen to a webinar hosted by the Alliance to Transform CalFresh on Tuesday, October 19th, at 12 noon.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Pearson announced the Commission's Holiday Gala coming up on December 14, 2017. More information is coming from our Executive Director.

VIII. COMMISSIONERS REPORT

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.