

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services – SPA IV/Metro North Office

In Partnership with



Presents the

Metro North Permanency Project Plan

Dedicated to assuring that no youth will leave our child welfare system without a permanent lifelong connection to a caring adult

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METRO NORTH PERMANENCY PROJECT PLAN 2007 – 2008 UPDATE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: In August 2005, the DCFS Metro North office partnered with the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) to implement strategies to achieve permanency for older youth. This plan reviews the first year's work completed as a result of our partnership with CPYP and serves to provide direction and guidelines to successfully enter into the project's second year.

Need and Definition of Permanency: Outcomes for older youth in out-of-home care are poor. In Los Angeles County, statistics show that of the 1,000 foster children who annually "age out" of the system, half never finish high school, one-third spend their early adult years on welfare, one-fourth land in jail, one-fourth become homeless, and three-fifths of the girls leaving foster care are pregnant within four years. These numbers reflect the need to redesign our services for these youth to ensure that the basic elements to achieve successful permanency, important to their future well being as adults, are provided. These elements include:

- ❖ the involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in the process;
- ❖ a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, lifelong support, a legal relationship if possible; and
- ❖ the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including siblings.

Target Population: A recent survey of office youth found there to be approximately 180 High-Need Youth in the Metro North office. A High-Need Youth is defined as a youth placed in "stranger" care, receiving Permanent Placement Services, and who suffers from one or more of the following:

- ❖ no or limited connections
- ❖ multiple recent replacements
- ❖ heavy substance abuse
- ❖ recent psychiatric hospitalization
- ❖ repeat AWOL

All 180 youth will become part of the target population during this second year and will be tracked for outcomes.

Goals: To achieve permanency and connectedness for the 180 High-Need Youth currently being served by the office, Metro North will achieve the following goals and objectives by April 1, 2008:

1. Youth will be a participant or leader in their permanency planning.
2. Youth will have increased connectedness and will be placed with siblings, have visits with siblings, have visits with parents, and have visits with other relatives and non-relative extended family.
3. Youth will be returned to the home of a parent if possible.
4. Youth will be assessed and prepared for adoption if unable to return home.
5. Youth will be assessed and prepared for the appointment of a legal guardian if unable to return home or be adopted.
6. Youth will be placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs).
7. Youth who emancipate will have a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support.
8. Youth will reside in the lowest level of care possible.

Training: To achieve our goals, a variety of permanency training sessions have been provided or are currently planned for internal and external DCFS staff.

- ❖ **Kevin Campbell's Family Finding** model provided staff with methods and web based tools to identify and engage relatives who are not currently known and/or involved in a child's life, with the goal of securing meaningful, permanent connections with the youth.
- ❖ **Bob Lewis' Training**, designed in collaboration with Metro North Administration, provided staff with new approaches to assist older youth overcome challenges to achieve meaningful permanency plans for themselves.
- ❖ **Dr. Darla Henry's Training**, "Concepts in Preparing Youth for Permanency," stressed that the core work in achieving permanency should be centered on the youth's loss, safety, attachments/relationships and resilience.
- ❖ **SCSW Y.O.U.T.H. Training**, conducted by former foster youth, addressed clinical supervision issues that commonly arise in working with youth.
- ❖ **Training on US Search**, a commercial, Internet-based search engine (www.ussearch.com) used to identify extended family through public records was provided to all Permanency Team members.
- ❖ **Future training** includes Family Finding and US Search training for new supervisors and staff. Training on grief and loss issues for staff and community partners, and the development of a youth panel are planned.

Methods and Staffing: Metro North will fully utilize resources and integrate existing programs to successfully restructure its permanency work, especially as it relates to the High-Need Youth target population. Fundamental work and staffing shifts will ensure completion of good permanency assessments, thorough and easy searches for relatives/connections, and the creation of solid Permanency Teams, as outlined below:

- ❖ **Concurrent Planning Redesign** - Metro North Regional CSWs will partner with Adoption workers to engage youth in the planning process and to conduct appropriate permanency assessments. Where adoption is identified as the permanency plan, the Adoption CSW will complete the permanency work.
- ❖ **Specializing the Permanency Unit** - Many High-Need Youth have suffered significant trauma, left disconnected and suffering extreme impairment in their functioning. Metro North proposes to specialize the Permanency Unit to include six Generic CSWs who will carry a caseload of fifteen youth. These youth will be the most challenged youth within the identified High-Need target population. CSWs will utilize intensive Family Finding and engagement strategies, and collaborate with internal and external resources as outlined in this plan.
- ❖ **Secondary Permanency Coordinators** - Secondary Permanency Coordinators are assigned to lead and carry out the permanency work for the youth who are not assigned an Adoption worker. Their specific role will be to ensure completion of tasks necessary for the youth to achieve permanency. Secondary Permanency Coordinators will be staff from: Family Group Decision-Making, FGDM, Five Acres for those High-Need Youth placed at Five Acres, Hollygrove Family Finding Project, Permanency Partners Program (P3), and additional Secondary Permanency Coordinators to be developed.
- ❖ **US Search Project and Due Diligence** - In November 2006, Metro North partnered with the P3 program to permit its staff unlimited use of its contract with US Search. Metro North implemented procedures to ensure a US Search is conducted with every due diligence report. Due diligence clerks will continue to automatically send letters to all parents, relatives and neighbors found through US Search to contact the case-carrying CSW.

- ❖ **Teaming with Other Permanency Resources for High-Need Youth** - A number of other internal and external resources exist and will be utilized by Metro North CSWs in their work to achieve the goals and outcomes for High-Need Youth. In addition to an Adoption or Secondary Permanency Coordinator, other resources may be very effective in helping CSWs to complete much of the permanency work. CSWs, in consultation with their SCSW, should schedule a TDM (Team Decision Making meeting) to coordinate appropriate services for the High-Need Youth on their caseload, taking special note to consider one or more of the following resources as appropriate: Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS), Alternative Services for Youth (ASFY), Interagency Consultation Assessment Team (ICAT), Emancipation Transition Resource Coordinator, Mentoring Program, MSW Interns, Runaway Outreach Unit, Wraparound Programs.

Building Champions and Partnerships: Having strong youth permanency champions and partnerships with other agency staff will have a significant impact in changing the philosophy, attitude and practices within our office, department and the child welfare league. The Leadership Team has a variety of plans for how to acknowledge and build our champions and partnerships.

Tracking Outcomes: Two logs and a quarterly questionnaire have been designed to track the following outcomes for the identified 180 High-Risk youth:

- ❖ Youth is a participant or leader in the permanency process
- ❖ Youth who previously was not placed with siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously was not visiting siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously had no contact with parents, relatives or adult mentors and is now connected
- ❖ Youth has moved to a lower level of care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has moved from non-relative to relative care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and jurisdiction has terminated
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and case remains open under FM
- ❖ Youth is moving towards reunification with parent
- ❖ Youth has been adoptively placed and adoption has been finalized
- ❖ Youth has been placed in an adoptive home
- ❖ Youth was previously opposed to adoption and is now in active adoptive planning
- ❖ LG has been granted and case closed under Kin-Gap
- ❖ LG has been granted and case remains open with or without court
- ❖ LG is the plan and case is moving towards that goal
- ❖ Youth has emancipated with lifelong connection(s) in place

INTRODUCTION

CPYP PARTNERSHIP

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), a project of the Public Health Institute, started in January 2003 as a result of a five-year grant awarded by the Stuart Foundation that has now been extended through 2009. CPYP's vision is that every youth who enters foster care in California will return home safely or find an alternative lifelong family. Their focus is on older children and youth due to the fact that children eleven and older in the foster care system have a poor chance of finding a permanent family. When children are not provided with permanency before they leave the foster care system at age 18, research shows foster youth often become homeless, unemployed, and disconnected. One of CPYP's primary objectives is to assist fourteen specific California counties and the private agencies with which they work to implement new practices to achieve permanency for older children and youth.

In August 2005, the Metro North Office (herein referred to as "Metro North") was selected as the office with which CPYP would partner within the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Metro North modified its operations in numerous ways over the last 1 ½ years as a result of the partnership with CPYP. In October 2005, a Permanency Unit was formed in an effort to target older youth who were without a realizable permanent plan. The effort to train and implement the CPYP strategies began with the Permanency Unit and subsequently moved outward to the rest of the office and is discussed in this report. Under the direction and guidance of CPYP, this permanency plan for children and older youth was developed with input from the Metro North Permanency Unit, the Metro North Permanency Task Force, the Metro North Permanency Leadership Team and other internal and external DCFS managers and staff. This second-year plan is designed to cover the work period from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008.

NEED AND VALUE – WHY PERMANENCY IS SO IMPORTANT ¹

All people, especially children and older youth, need permanent, lasting human connectedness for their emotional and physical well being. Healthy development of the human brain depends on committed human relationships. Metro North recognizes the challenges children and young people experience when attempting to maintain and develop consistent relationships. For the approximately 1,600 children in foster care served by Metro North (as of March 2007) maintaining permanent connections with their parents is the primary permanency option sought. However, 930 of the children or youth in placement are unlikely to return to their parents as Family Reunification Services have been terminated. For these youth, it is critical that family connections be sustained, preferably through placement with relatives through legal guardianship or adoption.

Metro North's Permanency Project focuses on those youth in out-of-home care, who have become the most disconnected and who typically experience significant mental health issues demonstrate maladaptive behaviors, experience multiple placements, and spend extended time in foster care.

¹ Five Acres. *Permanency Initiative – Proposal to Anneberg Foundation*. 2007

Hopelessness felt by these youth often leads to their self-destructive and self-defeating behaviors, and an increased likelihood that they will linger in care if special attention and focus is not given to them.

A recent report, “Hardwired to Connect,” was released by the *Commission on Children at Risk*, a panel of 33 leading children’s doctors, neuroscientists, research scholars and youth services professionals. The report is based on well-established theories of attachment, which recognize that healthy development of the human brain depends on consistent relationships. The report discusses how children must have “connectedness,” through familial relationships and other social supports in order to thrive emotionally, behaviorally and spiritually. Though not focused on youth in foster care, the report attributes high and still rising rates of mental health issues, suicide and other behavioral problems among youth and adolescents to a lack of connectedness.

Many youth who emancipate or “age-out” of the foster care system when they turn 18 years old leave without a permanent connection to an adult. They often have few, if any, meaningful, supportive, lifelong connections. Emancipated youth are expected to go from a life in the foster care system to living independently. It is no wonder that the outcomes for these young people are bleak. The Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles report of May 17, 2003, found that 50% of children emancipating from the foster care system are unemployed, 40% go on welfare or are incarcerated, and 25% become homeless. In Los Angeles County - home to about one-fifth of the foster youth in the nation - statistics show that of the 1,000 foster children who “age out” of the system yearly, half never finish high school, one-third spend their early adult years on welfare, one-fourth land in jail, another one-fourth become homeless, and three-fifths of the girls leaving foster care are pregnant within four years.

DEFINING PERMANENCY AND OUR VISION

The following, extracted from *A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood*, provides a sound definition of youth permanency Metro North strives to achieve:

While permanency planning was initially intended as a process to limit entry into and time spent in out-of-home placement, achieving “permanency” is not the same as having a permanent plan, a permanency planning process, a permanency goal or a permanency placement. According to literature prevalent in the field of permanency planning today, achieving “permanency” means having an enduring family relationship that

- ❖ is safe and meant to last a lifetime;
- ❖ offers the legal rights and social status of full family membership;
- ❖ provides for physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well-being; and
- ❖ assures lifelong connections to extended family, siblings, other significant adults, family history and traditions, race and ethnic heritage, culture, religion and language.

Over the past four years, the California Permanency for Youth Project has hosted national youth permanency convenings where participants (including child welfare professionals, advocates, youth and young adults who have experienced the foster care system) reached collective agreement about the specific elements of permanency that are important to older youth. Those elements include:

- ❖ the involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in the process;
- ❖ a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, lifelong support, a legal relationship if possible; and
- ❖ the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including siblings.²

Metro North is redefining the way services are delivered to children and older youth in foster care in order to promote permanency. We join CPYP in their vision that every youth in out-of-home care served by the Metro North office will return home safely or find an alternative lifelong family. But, more than that, our vision is that youth will be prepared when they emancipate to pursue meaningful lives with personal and professional success.

² Frey, Laren L. *A Call to Action: An Integrated Approach to Youth Permanency and Preparation for Adulthood*. Casey Family Services, 2005

REVIEW OF FIRST YEAR PLAN

The following provides a general overview of what was accomplished and the lessons learned at Metro North after 1 ½ years since implementation of the Permanency Project.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Permanency Unit

Unit Description - The Permanency Unit was implemented in October 2005 and consists of 5 Children's Social Workers (CSWs), 1 Supervising Children's Social Worker (SCSW), and 1 Unit Assistant. Additionally, the unit has 2 full-time CSWs who are not currently carrying a caseload, but who are assigned to the unit to assist with search efforts, administrative needs, and resolving emergencies. Each case-carrying CSW in the unit has a caseload of approximately 30 - 35 youth (yardstick for a Generic CSW), who are primarily age 12 and older and without a realizable permanent plan (at the time of assignment).

Case Log - A log was created to track the youth being served by the unit, the placement type, the number of connections for the youth, and the permanent plan. A total of 80 children/youth were targeted and, with their siblings, assigned to a CSW in this unit.

Family Finding Training - The unit received Family Finding training from Kevin Campbell, national Family Finding leader, consultant and trainer. The training was provided for one full day, every month, for six months. This hands-on training reviewed social work methods and available technology developed to find and engage relatives and significant others to provide youth in care with durable connections and a permanent plan. Essentially, the training's foundation was that youth placed in "stranger" care feel very lonely and unloved resulting in severe psychological, emotional and behavioral problems. Mr. Campbell's premise is that youth will not stabilize until we begin to help fill an unmet need of feeling connected to their "roots."

Connections Tree - The supervisor from the Permanency Partners Program (P3) (described in detail below) created a quilt depicting a tree to represent the increased connectedness established for youth in the Permanency Unit. The quilt is striking in its symbolism for the life and beauty that can be achieved through finding permanent connections for children and youth.

Office-Wide Planning Activities

Permanency Collaborative - In April 2006, the Metro North office held its first annual permanency collaborative. The event was held for DCFS staff and community providers to review the work in the permanency unit and further develop our partnerships to achieve increased permanency for youth.

Countywide Steering Committee - In June 2006, Metro North partnered with P3 and the training section to advocate for a Family Finding steering committee to develop and implement Family Finding policy and procedures department-wide. The committee formed several workgroups, one of which is to improve the due diligence search process (efforts to locate absent parents) department-wide and has provided analysis and recommendations to the executive team for consideration on its plan to implement Family Finding strategies through the Title IV-E Waiver.

Metro North and Agency Training - From July 2006 - November 2006, Metro North and CPYP partnered to provide 20 community agency staff and 40 additional Metro North line staff with Family Finding training to focus on increased connectedness and permanency for 27 youth outside of the permanency unit. This training was very unique in its design as it focused on enhancing partnerships with outside agency staff to include them in the DCFS permanency work. In attendance were staff from foster family agencies, group homes, residential treatment centers, the Children's Law Center, and court appointed special advocates (CASA).

Metro North Staff Training - At the October 2006 Metro North General Staff Meeting, Assistant Regional Administrator, Adrienne Olson, provided staff with a detailed presentation on the importance of youth permanency. The presentation included youth permanency digital stories produced by CPYP and honored the successful Family Finding work performed by Hollygrove's Family Finding Specialist, Linda Librizzi, CASA, Judy Smith; and DCFS CSW, Elizabeth Nava.

U. S. Search - In November 2006, Metro North partnered with the P3 program to permit Metro North staff unlimited use of its contract with US Search, an advanced public records search engine. Metro North implemented procedures to ensure a US Search is run in conjunction with every due diligence report. Due diligence clerks are automatically sending letters to all parents, relatives and neighbors identified via the search requesting them to contact the case-carrying CSW.

Expansion Involving Adoptions, FGDM, Interns - Metro North Regional and Adoption administrators partnered to allow Adoption staff to conduct the Family Finding and connection work for approximately 28 "unattached" youth in the placement and recruitment unit (PRU). Additionally, the Metro North Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) facilitator began to provide "Emancipation Conferences with Life-Long Connections" for older youth exiting DCFS supervision. For youth without adequate permanent plan in place, the FGDM facilitator is completing the Family Finding and connection work on behalf of the youth. The FGDM facilitator is also acting as a liaison or consultant to staff needing to travel out of state to conduct family meetings. The Metro North office also arranged for its five undergraduate and sixteen graduate social work interns to assist line-staff with completing its Family Finding and connection work.

Permanency Planning Task Force - On November 21, 2006, the Metro North Permanency Planning Task Force was formed, and meetings held monthly through March 2006. The Task Force was comprised of staff from CPYP, Metro North Region, Metro North Adoption and Permanency Resources Division (APRD), MSW Intern Section, Metro North Clerical Section, Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Emancipation Services Division, P3, Five Acres, Hollygrove, Star View, and Vista Del Mar. The Task Force reviewed the permanency work completed thus far and determined its next steps and strategies to move forward. The Task Force furthered our understanding of the importance of collaboration and coordination of permanency efforts/programs. The Permanency Unit log was expanded to include youth in the office served by the various Secondary Permanency Coordinators, and centralized identifying youth in need of connection and assign our Secondary Permanency Coordinators.

U.S. Search Training - On November 29, 2006 all Metro North supervisors, adoptions staff, interns, and others significantly involved with Family Finding were provided with US Search training.

Permanency Unit Feedback – In March 2007, the Permanency Unit provided anecdotal evidence of improved casework practice and outcomes for older youth assigned to the social workers in the Permanency Unit. Staff estimated that they had helped identify and forge connections on at least 30-50% of their caseload. This is significant because many of the Permanency Unit CSWs were concerned whether this result could be achieved through their efforts. Additionally, the unit identified many other improved practices and successes since being in the Permanency Unit. For example, CSWs feel they have a much better understanding and ability to tap into the tools and/or resources available to assist older youth in maintaining connections (i.e., search tools and methods, Emancipation and ILP Services such as transitional housing, mental health services, placement resources, etc.). Despite some initial implementation difficulties (discussed below), all unit members feel that being in the Permanency Unit has helped them refine their skills and improved their practice in working with older youth.

Permanency Leadership Team - On March 14, 2007 the Metro North Permanency Leadership Team (Leadership Team) was formed as a result of the Task Force’s need for a smaller, more decisive group. The members were identified by their involvement in the permanency project and/or their position of influence within the office. The group was formed to provide input on this Project Plan and to help coordinate/carry out the tasks identified in the plan.

Outcomes

At the end of March 2007, Metro North compiled the outcome data for the High-Need Youth assigned to the Permanency Unit. A High-Need Youth is defined as a youth placed in “stranger” care, receiving Permanent Placement Services, and who suffers from one or more of the following:

- ❖ no or limited connections
- ❖ multiple recent replacements
- ❖ heavy substance abuse
- ❖ recent psychiatric hospitalization
- ❖ repeat AWOL

The following outcomes were achieved for the eighty High-Need Youth served by the Metro North Permanency Unit from October 2005 to March 2007.

- ❖ 62 youth have increased connectedness
 - 8 youth are now placed with siblings who were previously not placed together
 - 6 youth are now visiting with siblings who they did not previously visit
 - 8 youth are now visiting or having contact with parents with whom they previously had no contact
 - 40 youth are now having contact with other relatives and non-relative extended family members with whom they previously had no contact.
- ❖ 20 youth have returned to the home of a parent or are in the process of reunification
 - 16 youth have been returned to the home of a parent and exited the Child Welfare System.
 - 4 youth are moving towards reunification with a parent.
- ❖ 2 youth have been adoptively placed

- ❖ 17 youth have been appointed a legal guardian or are close to having a legal guardian appointed
 - 5 youth have had legal guardianship granted to a relative and exited the child welfare system through Kin-Gap.
 - 9 youth have had legal guardianship granted and continue to receive services within the child welfare system.
 - 3 youth have a plan of legal guardianship identified and are proceeding through the court process.

- ❖ 9 youth are residing in a reduced level of care
 - 3 youth (age 16) are currently placed in a D-rate level foster home from a Level 12 Group Home
 - 2 youth (age 16) are currently placed in a D-rate level relative home from a Level 12 Group Home
 - 2 youth exited to THPP from a Level 12 Group Home
 - 2 youth exited to THP from a Level 12 Group Home

CHALLENGES/SURPRISES/LESSONS LEARNED

The introduction of any new program involving a mass implementation effort, problems and struggles arise throughout the process. Outlined, below, are some of the implementation challenges faced by the Metro North office:

- ❖ The transfer of cases into the unit was premature and the assignment of cases was likely one of the biggest challenges to the initial success of the unit. The cases were transferred and assigned to the CSWs all at one time, preventing them from being able to do any thing else but determine the most basic information about the youth, let alone take on the additional task of having to learn and implement new permanency strategies.

- ❖ A good screening process for selection of the cases transferred to the unit was not put in place and the cases transferred were considered by the unit to be the “worst cases in the office.” Subsequently, the unit became demoralized as they felt “dumped on” from the rest of the office.

- ❖ Program development and training should have been provided to all staff long before a unit was formed and/or any cases were moved. Training for all supervisors and the creation of common expectations for the work and the supervision of the work should have been laid out better in the beginning. Simply put, everyone was unprepared for how challenging the cases would be to handle.

- ❖ A team should have been formed, like the Leadership Team, from the start to move the project forward so that the workload related to the implementation of the various strategies was shared. There should be a project leader to oversee the number of people required not only to complete all of the logistical tasks related to implementation, but also to convey the vision and achieve necessary buy-in by the rest of the office.

- ❖ Maintaining staff and achieving stability within the unit was a challenge initially, although in the last several months, there has been a significant improvement. Only two of the five original CSWs

remain in the unit. There has been significant turnover in the P3 staff, and due to mandates from the Board of Supervisors, they have been pulled to focus solely on AWOL youth throughout the office. The BASW interns were not a significant support to the unit and were not utilized as was hoped. Due to time and program constraints, the interns were not able to accomplish substantial permanency tasks. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) Liaison assigned to the unit is no longer assigned to the office. The FGDM facilitator was pulled to fill in as a TDM facilitator for the entire office.

- ❖ Whenever Secondary Permanency Coordinators (such as P3 workers) could be maintained, the lack of clarity as to their role and responsibilities continued to be a source of confusion and conflict.
- ❖ With the high turnover, maintaining cases in the unit was difficult. Further, transfer of cases to another office also delayed the process for engagement of family members.
- ❖ Measuring outcomes and success for the youth served was time-consuming and the method of outcome measurement was unclear. The log to track the cases, what was important to track, and how to define success was not well developed until recently.
- ❖ The Permanency Unit CSWs felt they were always in crisis mode due to the high numbers of placement disruptions, AWOLs, hospitalizations, etc. As a result, Permanency Unit members stated they were often unable to make the phone calls or in-person contact necessary to follow-up on prospective connections for youth.
- ❖ The Permanency Unit CSWs felt unsupported by therapists, placement agencies, Juvenile Court staff and other service providers regarding the focus of treatment and/or the case plan for youth. For example, many service providers argued to keep youth in higher level placements and/or residential treatment to “stabilize” youth despite the fact that most youth deteriorate further in higher level placements. Further, service providers fought CSWs about maintaining connection with family members or passively resisted such efforts.
- ❖ Secondary Permanency Coordinators, such as P3, Agency Family Finding Specialists, or FGDM staff also faced frustration in not being able to complete work they felt was important to youth permanency. They noted challenges that included a lack of understanding and appreciation for Family Finding and engagement from either CSWs or agency providers who feared that renewed or newly acquired contact with family members was not in the child’s best interest (although these CSWs were mostly those outside of the Permanency Unit). Lack of returned phone calls and quick responsiveness to family members by DCFS staff was also noted as a problem by the Secondary Permanency Coordinators.
- ❖ The lack of a formal process to address obstacles encountered by the various Secondary Permanency Coordinators (i.e., lack of information for searches, discussion of next step in the process) was another hindrance. Although there was a formal monthly meeting during the Family Finding training, in retrospect, there should have been a mid-month follow-up to address any problems and obstacles. Unfortunately, time was lost during this process.
- ❖ We have recently noted that as CSWs and community agency partners are trained and experiencing success in this work, they are more responsive to the process. Often a partnership between the

social worker and the Permanency Coordinator has been effective in engaging others in the process. Social workers need to feel empowered to engage the various providers in permanency work and to hold them accountable.

- ❖ The selection, training and coordination of Secondary Permanency Coordinators is another very crucial aspect affecting success of this project. It is clear that the primary CSW, no matter how low the caseload, should not be the only service provider working to ensure permanency. It takes a team and if the team is not well staffed, trained, or coordinated, then permanency is that much less likely to be achieved. For example, the original Permanency Unit was not well supported by the secondary Permanency Coordinators, primarily two P3 workers and 4 BASW interns, assigned to help complete Family Finding, engagement and training. As discussed above, the P3 staff suffered high turnover and were pulled in many directions. Moreover, the BASW interns were neither consistently available nor adequately trained to provide the support needed.
- ❖ The DMH Liaison originally assigned to the unit was noted as being extremely helpful to the CSWs in carrying out their mission. The DMH Liaison was an individual trained by Kevin Campbell at an earlier time, and helped to find permanency for youth placed at MacLaren Hall and Hollygrove Residential Treatment Center after their closures. The Permanency Unit CSWs noted that the DMH Liaison thoroughly reviewed their cases and helped them advocate for the most appropriate services for their youth. The lesson learned here is that DMH can and should play a significant role in helping DCFS staff achieve permanency for older, high-risk youth.
- ❖ Finally, the creation of a single unit to implement Family Finding created an unintended separation between the work of the Permanency Unit and the work of the rest of the backend staff (i.e., “the permanency unit does Family Finding”). Thus, a second Kevin Campbell training was needed to help get all staff on board, which should have been done before any staff or cases were moved. Metro North recommends all staff be trained to address the issues of the older youth on current caseloads and that the formation of a permanency unit be completed after line , support , and agency partner staff are sufficiently trained and know what to expect.

TARGET POPULATION

HIGH-NEED YOUTH

In the first year eighty youth, primarily age eleven to eighteen, placed in out-of-home care, without a realizable permanent plan were targeted for services and tracked for outcomes by the Permanency Unit. In an effort to bring the rest of the office on board with Family Finding and other youth permanency strategies, the target population was expanded to additional twenty-seven High-Need Youth in the rest of the office, which were included in the second Family Finding training. The twenty-seven additional cases are being served by Hollygrove, Five Acres, the FGDM staff person - Carol Griffin, and P3. The outcomes for these twenty-seven youth will be tracked during this second year.

For the second year of the project, the Task Force broadened the target population criteria to include youth in out-of-home care, who have certain circumstances or demonstrate behaviors categorized as “High-Need” (defined below). In further refining the target population, the Task Force intends to include youth to be in most need of secondary services. The Task Force identified several reasons for redefining the target population, which are:

- ❖ We want to prioritize the coordination of services for those youth most in need and prevent youth who appear to be in high-need of permanency services from falling through the cracks.
- ❖ We want to design services based on need so that staff will not wait until a certain criteria is met (i.e., age or legal status) before the appropriate intervention is developed. For example, we used to wait for youth to “stabilize” before considering them for a lower level of care, and now know that youth are not likely to stabilize without feeling connected.
- ❖ We want to have a large pool of youth we can consider for existing secondary Permanency Coordinators or other resources. For example, some youth may be able to be referred to Wraparound and some youth may be able to be referred to P3.

The Task Force defined High-Need Youth as a youth placed in “stranger” care, receiving Permanent Placement Services, and who suffer from one or more of the following:

- ❖ no or limited connections
- ❖ multiple recent replacements
- ❖ heavy substance abuse
- ❖ recent psychiatric hospitalization
- ❖ repeat AWOL

A recent survey of the office youth was completed and found there to be approximately 180 High-Need Youth in the Metro North office. All 180 youth will become part of the target population during this second year and will be tracked for outcomes.

All 180 youth will not receive the same level of intervention. Assignment of resources will be based on a variety of factors depending on need of the youth and constraints of the resource. For example, Five Acres is a strong secondary Permanency Coordinator, but only those youth placed at Five Acres will receive their services due to the design of their program.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To achieve permanency and connectedness for the more than 180 High-Need Youth currently being served by the office, Metro North will achieve the following goals and objectives by April 1, 2008:

- Goal: Youth will be a participant or leader in their permanency planning
Objective: All High-Need Youth will be actively engaged in individual planning and become increasingly responsible in decision-making
- Goal: Youth will have increased connectedness
Objective: 135 High-Need Youth will be placed with siblings, visiting with siblings, having contact/visits with parents, and/or contact/visits with other relatives and non-relative extended family members who they previously were not placed with or with whom they previously had no contact
- Goal: Youth will be returned to the home of a parent if possible
Objective: 70 High-Need Youth will be returned to the home of a parent or will be moving towards reunification with a parent.
- Goal: Youth will be assessed and prepared for adoption if unable to return home
Objective: 5 High-Need Youth previously opposed to adoption will now be involved in adoption planning as a result of improved permanency assessments, the integration of staff training, and better teamwork related to the implementation of Concurrent Planning Redesign.
- Goal: Youth will be assessed and prepared for the appointment of a legal guardian if unable to return home or be adopted
Objective: 40 High-Need Youth will be appointed a relative or non-relative legal guardian or will have been identified a prospective legal guardian and proceeding through the court process.
- Goal: Youth will be placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members (NREFMs).
Objective: 22 High-Need Youth will be replaced from non-relative care to relative/NREFM care.
- Goal: Youth who emancipate will have a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support.
Objective: All High-Need Youth who emancipate from the Metro North office will have a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who provides a safe, stable and secure parenting relationship, love, unconditional commitment, and lifelong support.
- Goal: Youth will reside in the lowest level of care possible
Objective: 35 High-Need Youth will be placed in a lower level of care (age and rate will be tracked).

TRAINING PLAN

Staff training is one of the key components in making the youth permanency vision a reality. Training on a variety of older youth permanency strategies has already been provided or is planned for the upcoming year. Training is geared for Metro North staff in all program types (ER, FM/R, PP), staff in support roles, and for community partners and providers.

FAMILY FINDING

Family Finding is a key strategy developed to help achieve older youth permanency. Metro North recognizes that too many of the children in its care do not have sufficient connections with extended family or other committed adults, particularly with permanent placement resources. Research has shown that family information is usually only available for 5 to 10 family members of a child in foster care, but that most children have up to 100 living relatives. Through Family Finding, Metro North seeks to identify and engage relatives who are not currently known and/or involved in a child's life, with the goal of promoting meaningful, permanent connections with the youth. In some cases, the process will be used to find other "non-relatives" who, nevertheless, are potentially meaningful adult connections for a youth. These may include godparents, former teachers, family friends, etc. Family Finding has three primary steps:

1. *Discovery*: From a list of a child's known family members, a commercial, Internet-based search engine, www.ussearch.com, will be used to identify a list of other extended family. Experience in other areas has shown that up to 40 extended family members and their contact information are identified through this process.
2. *Exploration and Initial Engagement*: Staff will contact the identified family members and assess which might have interest and be appropriate for contact with the youth.
3. *Connection*: Staff will promote the interaction between the youth and the newly found family members. The interaction will be supported through telephone calls, emails and visitation between the youth and family members. It is expected that in many cases newly found family members will become active in the youth treatment process, and that some family members will become a potential permanent placement option.

At the beginning of our project in October 2005, Permanency Unit members received Family Finding training from November 2005 through April 2006 from Kevin Campbell, national Family Finding leader, consultant and trainer.

Mr. Campbell has helped implement Family Finding in 25 jurisdictions throughout the country. Public and private agency staff find his methods to be very successful and efficient. For example, in Orange County last year Mr. Campbell helped one agency go from an average of 0.58 connections to 7.5 connections per child. For each relative that was found and engaged, staff spent an average of just five and one half hours over a six-month period, a minimal amount of time for such important and successful outcomes. So as not to boost children's hopes prematurely, it is a general rule that staff must first find at least three family members who desire to be a part of the child's life before children are told.

Mr. Campbell usually conducts six all day Family Finding trainings, over six months. The training includes how to search, locate, screen and engage family members of youth. In addition, Mr.

Campbell teaches staff how to prepare youth to meet their families and take an active part in choosing the relative or other connection with whom they would like to live.

From July 2006 to November 2006, Metro North and CPYP partnered to provide 20 community agency staff and 40 additional Metro North line staff with Mr. Campbell's Family Finding training. This training was very unique in its design and was focused to provide increased connectedness and permanency to 27 children identified within Metro North, but whose cases were assigned to CSWs outside of the Permanency Unit. Permanency Teams were created with outside agency staff that included foster family agencies, group homes, residential treatment centers, the Children's Law Center, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

BOB LEWIS

On February 22, 2007, at the USC Davidson Center, twenty-two Metro North CSW, SCSW, and ARA staff received specialized training from Bob Lewis, M.Ed., M.S.W., L.I.C.S.W. Eighty DCFS staff were selected from the following sections/offices to attend: P3, Metro North, Pasadena, Pomona, and Torrance. The training was designed, in collaboration with Metro North Administration, to help staff learn new approaches to working through challenges most often faced in working to develop permanency plans for older youth. For example, resolution to the following statements most commonly presented by staff in their effort to achieve permanency for older youth was provided:

- ❖ "I have found family but the youth has no interest in knowing his/her family;"
- ❖ "The youth has family but does not want to go home;"
- ❖ "There is family but the family does not want to have any thing to do with the youth;"
- ❖ "The youth is so out-of-control, disruptive, difficult to manage, and/or lazy that no one wants him/her;"
- ❖ "I can't get the therapist, the worker, the P3 worker, the other grandmother, the parent, the service provider, the Court on board with what the youth needs most, wants most, etc."

The training focused on two goals in particular: making permanence as intuitive as safety and ensuring that no child will age out without a permanent family connection.

Mr. Lewis stressed the importance of staff changing their perspective and doing away with "mind walls," utilizing things we know and being open to things we don't know. He stressed that "aging out" is a failure and that the promise of providing permanence to all youth in foster care must be kept. He provided the attendees with the "3LT model" of connecting with teens: (a) love, (b) listen, (c) learn and (d) touch. He emphasized the use of teams, the group model versus caseworker model, as well as the concept of "shared parenting."

DR. DARLA HENRY

On March 6, 2007, at the USC Davidson Center, approximately sixty-eight DCFS staff, primarily from Metro North, attended an introductory training by Dr. Darla Henry, co-founder of Family Design Resources, Inc., and a Best Practice and Policy Specialist for the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Network. DCFS staff and thirty-four community agency partner staff attended. The training focused on "Concepts in Preparing Youth for Permanency." Dr. Henry stressed that the core work in achieving permanency should be centered on the youth's loss, safety, attachments/relationships and

resilience. She taught the “3-5-7 model” which provided a framework of reconciling losses, rebuilding relationships through attachments and claiming/belonging to “permanent” families. The 3-5-7 model is based on:

- ❖ 3 Tasks:
 - Clarification
 - Integration
 - Actualization

- ❖ 5 Questions
 - Who Am I-identity
 - What Happened to me-loss
 - Where am I going-attachment
 - How will I get there-relationships
 - When will I know I belong-claiming/safety

- ❖ 7 Critical Elements
 - Engagement
 - Listening
 - Truthfulness
 - Validation
 - Creating Safety
 - Going back in time
 - Recognizing pain as part of the process

Dr. Henry provided the attendees with activities/exercises that the staff can utilize to engage youth such as life books and life maps.

Three follow-up sessions with Dr. Henry is being arranged for staff and service providers on April 4, 2007, May 2, 2007 and June 6, 2007 at the Metro North office. Each session will focus on a particular subject area, and the day will include case consultation with staff. The particular subject areas to be covered are as follows:

- ❖ First session: Understanding losses and the grief process
- ❖ Second session: Understanding Attachment and relationship building
- ❖ Third Session: Identity formation and resilience.

At each training session, case consultations are scheduled from 9:00-9:55am and 10:05-11:00am. Dr. Henry will then address the themes and further teach implementation of the model in relation to the identified subject matter from 11:00am-12:00pm. The afternoon will proceed similarly with case presentations from 1:00-1:55pm, 2:05-3:00pm and discussion from 3:00-4:00pm.

A total of twelve cases will be presented, all of which are currently being serviced by the Metro North office. For each case selected, Dr. Henry has requested a brief written summary be provided to her at least one week in advance with the following information:

- ❖ Basic Demographics

- ❖ Reason why the youth was brought into care, placement history and court status
- ❖ Birth Family contact and status
- ❖ History of Diagnoses, services that the youth is currently receiving
- ❖ Services the youth previously received, treatment modalities (individual, group or conjoint), and dates of service
- ❖ A summary of grief and loss work that has been accomplished
- ❖ Any help/questions they wish to obtain

Cases were chosen based on need and services provided. Some had previously been utilized as focus cases during the Family Finding training provided by Kevin Campbell. And, in the majority of the cases, connections had been found, yet the youth is either resistant to the connection found, or the family is resistant and the service providers are now finding themselves having difficulties engaging the youth and/or the connections found. These cases have also been utilized under the Family Finding model; most of them have various involvement of service providers, including APSS, DMH, ICAT, ILP, and Wraparound. These service providers, along with the CSW and SCSW will be invited to attend this training in an effort to further provide permanency services to the youth. The Permanency Leadership Team will arrange for the attendance of all involved service providers for each case. An invitation will also be extended to other community partners and service providers. The Leadership Team is requesting that the attendees be able to obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for licensure purposes.

SCSW YOUTH OFFERING UNIQUE TANGIBLE HELP (Y.O.U.T.H.) TRAINING

Started in the year 2000, the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project has empowered more than 30 current and former foster youth to develop curricula and deliver professional trainings to approximately 3,000 child welfare workers throughout California and the greater United States. In 2005, the project received one of six federal grants from the Administration of Children and Families to develop a curriculum aimed at reaching SCSWs previously trained by the Y.O.U.T. H. Training Project.

This one-day conference, departing from traditional conference modes, will focus on the needs of SCSWs working with CSWs who provide services to youth in care. It will address clinical supervision issues that commonly arise in work with youth. The topics that will be covered in this training are: Foster Youth Culture; Positive Youth Development Skills and ILP Readiness; Brokering on Clients behalf; Identifying Crisis and Supporting Youth Through Change; Connections Between Permanency, Grief and Loss; Case Consultation.

Metro North SCSWs and one Metro North manager are planning to attend.

US SEARCH TRAINING

In conjunction with the US Search Project, Tiffany Collins, P3 Manager, provided a separate US Search Training on Wednesday, November 29th, 2006, 9:30 am to 11:00 am, in the 9th Floor Conference Room of the Borax Building. This training was provided to Metro North SCSWs, Interns, Adoptions Staff, and others significantly involved at Metro North with Family Finding. The training was mandatory for all Metro North SCSWs. Additional US Search training has been requested by staff.

PLAN FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING

The Leadership Team will continue to meet on a monthly basis to review its progress and plan the project's next steps. Training will continue to be a focal point of the Leadership Team's work. Currently, the Leadership Team is developing this Project Plan and organizing the follow-up training sessions with Dr. Henry. After Dr. Henry's training is complete, the Leadership Team will begin to organize other training events. A possible next step identified by the Leadership Team is the need to have more Family Finding and US Search training. Further, Metro North is considering training new supervisors and staff on the implementation of Family Finding and the grief and loss issues that accompany lonely and unattached foster youth. Planning Training to additional external partners, and developing a youth panel are also being explored.

METHODS/ STAFFING / WORK EXPECTATIONS

YOUTH PERMANENCY TEAMS

It is clear that CSWs are unlikely to succeed achieving the permanency goals and objectives outlined for our High-Need Youth without assistance and systemic change. Currently, all High-Need Youth are assigned to a Metro North CSW who is responsible for carrying-out all DCFS policies and procedures for the children/youth on their caseload in addition to any crises that arise with High-Need Youth. Due to high caseloads and competing priorities, CSWs are unable to simultaneously complete all of the basic casework responsibilities and the various tasks necessary to achieve permanency for High-Need Youth. Metro North will fully utilize every available resource and integrate existing programs to successfully restructure its permanency work, especially as it relates to older youth, in several ways. Fundamental work and staffing shifts will ensure completion of good permanency assessments, thorough and easy searches for relatives/connections, and the creation of solid Permanency Teams, as outlined below:

- ❖ Concurrent Planning Redesign and Older Youth Adoption
 - Metro North Regional CSWs will partner with Adoption CSWs early on in cases to properly engage youth in the process and conduct appropriate permanency assessments. On cases where adoption is identified as the permanency plan, Adoption CSWs will complete the permanency work.

- ❖ Specializing the Permanency Unit
 - Some High-Need Youth have suffered so much trauma, are so disconnected and are suffering such extreme impairment in their functioning, that they require special attention. Currently, Metro North is proposing to specialize the Permanency Unit to include six Generic CSWs who will carry a reduced caseload of fifteen youth. The youth will be the most challenging youth from the High-Need target population. The CSWs will utilize intensive Family Finding, employ learned engagement strategies, and collaborate with internal and external resources as outlined in this plan.

- ❖ Secondary Permanency Coordinators
 - Secondary Permanency Coordinators will be those staff, available through internal and external resources, assigned to lead and carry out the permanency work for the High-Need Youth who are not assigned an Adoption worker. Their specific role will be to ensure completion of the needed tasks determined by the team necessary in helping the youth achieve permanency.
 - FGDM, Carol Griffin
 - Five Acres for those High-Need Youth placed at Five Acres
 - Hollygrove Family Finding Project, Linda Librizzi
 - Permanency Partners Program (P3)
 - Additional Secondary Permanency Coordinators to be developed

- ❖ US Search Project and Due Diligence
 - In November 2006, Metro North partnered with the P3 program to permit its staff unlimited use of its contract with US Search. Metro North implemented procedures to ensure a US Search is run in conjunction with every De Diligence report. Due diligence clerks will continue to

automatically send letters to all parents, relatives and neighbors requesting them to contact the case-carrying CSW.

- ❖ Teaming with Other Permanency Resources for High-Need Youth
 - A number of other internal and external resources exist and will be utilized by Metro North CSWs; these resources may be very effective in helping CSWs to complete much of the permanency work. CSWs, in consultation with their SCSW, should schedule a TDM (Team Decision Making meeting) to coordinate appropriate services for the High-Need Youth on their caseload, taking special note to consider one or more of the following resources as appropriate:
 - Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS)
 - Alternative Services for Youth (ASFY)
 - Interagency Consultation Assessment Team (ICAT)
 - Emancipation Transition Resource Coordinator
 - Mentoring Program
 - MSW Interns
 - Runaway Outreach Unit
 - Wraparound Programs

ADOPTION CSWs AND CONCURRENT PLANNING REDESIGN (CPR)

The Department's focus on achieving timely permanence for children in out-of-home care provided an opportunity to approach the ongoing challenge of enhancing concurrent planning (CP) services in new ways. While CP policies had been in place in DCFS since becoming law in 1997, the Department was falling short of reaching its outcome goals as children were continuing to remain in care far too long. Instead of looking only at what social workers could do differently, it was time to look at how the system could change to support an environment committed to achieving safe and timely permanence for children from the first day children enter into care.

In Spring 2004, a labor/management collaborative was established by the DCFS executive team and charged with implementing systemic changes which became known as the CP Redesign Pilot or CPR. The systemic work-shift changes include:

- ❖ The use of new family background information gathering strategies and forms with a focus on identification of relatives, siblings and ensuring child well being.
- ❖ Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) becomes the responsibility of the Dependency Investigator and support clerical team.
- ❖ Adoption social workers enter the case earlier and assume full responsibility for all adoption-related activities.
- ❖ The Family Maintenance & Reunification (otherwise known as Generic, Treatment, and Services) social worker would continue to provide case management through adoption finalization and termination of jurisdiction.

- ❖ This model includes full integration with Point of Engagement (POE) and Team Decision Making (TDM)/Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) strategies in each office.
- ❖ ER will enhance their permanency planning at the time of initial detention, making a concerted effort to ensure that initial placements will also provide permanency to children in placement if reunification is unsuccessful.

CP Redesign will be implemented in the Metro North Office on May 7, 2007. The specific shifts in work tasks for each assignment are outlined in Appendix A. However, what is more important than the specific work tasks and who will complete them is the team approach inherent in CP Redesign.

With the implementation of CP Redesign, Adoption CSWs will be assigned to all children and youth, including High-Need Youth, to help complete a Concurrent Planning Adoption Assessment (Permanency Assessments). For those youth with adoption identified as the permanent plan, Adoption CSWs will receive full case credit, in addition to the Regional CSW, to lead and carry out the work necessary to ensure permanency for attached and unattached youth.

A joint Permanency Assessment is required to be completed for all youth in out-of-home care every six months. It is planned that Adoption CSWs will be trained on the best methods for engaging and assessing older youth for adoption, which will help enhance the adoption assessment and preparation practices utilized in past years by staff. Once a youth has an identified plan of adoption, the Adoption CSW will complete or help coordinate the following tasks:

- ❖ Visit the youth to develop a relationship, assess their situation and awareness of the plan, start discussing the concept of adoption depending on their developmental level and feelings;
- ❖ Review the case file and consult with assigned staff and additional service providers;
- ❖ Maintain communication with primary worker and participate in staffings as needed when there are barriers or concerns regarding the prospective adoptive placement;
- ❖ Provide information regarding adoptive planning/recruitment efforts in court reports;
- ❖ Gather information for recruitment purposes and presentation to prospective adoptive family;
- ❖ Identify and coordinate person(s) to complete loss, grief, and attachment work with/for youth to include the completion of a Lifebook;
- ❖ Maintain communication with the assigned PRU recruiter;
- ❖ Transport child to recruitment events;
- ❖ Conduct adoptive home study on prospective adoptive parents;
- ❖ Participate in TDMs;
- ❖ Participate in preplacement conferences;
- ❖ Present child information during presentation to prospective adoptive parents;
- ❖ Set up necessary evaluations or referrals for services such as APSS;
- ❖ Ensure proper documentation with regard to establishing the appropriate rate of adoption assistance funding;
- ❖ Initiate and facilitate placement steps with the family and their social worker;
- ❖ Prepare all paperwork related to adoptive placement and finalization.

SPECIALIZING THE PERMANENCY UNIT

Metro North is currently working on a proposal to specialize the Permanency Unit to include six Generic CSWs who will carry a reduced caseload of fifteen youth. These youth will be the most challenging youth from the identified High-Need target population. CSWs will utilize intensive Family Finding and engagement strategies, and collaborate with internal and external resources as outlined in this plan.

Accepting only High-Need Youth with measurable criteria will eliminate any confusion about the type of cases assigned to the Unit. Additionally, staff will see the need for and support the Permanency Unit to have a reduced caseload of 15 youth if all of the youth in the specialized unit meet the High-Need criteria.

Specializing the Permanency Unit requires approval from the executive team and the union. Metro North administration is currently pursuing this approval.

SECONDARY PERMANENCY COORDINATORS

Adoption CSWs will receive full case credit to lead and carry out the work necessary to ensure permanency for attached and unattached youth with an identified permanent plan of adoption. Secondary Permanency Coordinators are assigned to lead and carry out the permanency work for the youth who are not assigned an Adoption worker. Their specific role will be to ensure completion of tasks necessary for the youth to achieve permanency. Secondary Permanency Coordinators will be staff from:

- ❖ Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) CSW, Carol Griffin
- ❖ Five Acres staff for those High-Need Youth placed at Five Acres
- ❖ Hollygrove Family Finding Specialist, Linda Librizzi
- ❖ Permanency Partners Program (P3) CSWs
- ❖ Resources to be developed in the upcoming year

Their specific role will be to maintain focus and ensure completion of the needed tasks or next steps believed by the Permanency Team to be necessary in helping the youth to achieve permanency.

In May 2006, DCFS created a workgroup to recommend an expansion plan to implement Family Finding activities and make them available to all children across DCFS. The Small Family Finding Workgroup (as it was coined) recommended that the most effective plan would be to establish the position of a “Family Finding Coordinator.” Essentially, Metro North Secondary Permanency Coordinators fulfill the role envisioned by the small workgroup, with just a different name.

The Secondary Permanency Coordinator will perform the following activities:

- ❖ Identify the members of the High-Need Youth Permanency Team (i.e., youth, relative and non-relative extended family members, mentor, Regional CSW, Adoption CSW, placement agency staff, foster parent, therapeutic service provider(s), Court Appointed Special Advocate, attorney,

Emancipation Services staff, Runaway Outreach Unit staff, Interagency Consultation Assessment Team, MSW or BASW intern, etc.).

- ❖ Set initial Family Finding (FF) Staffing³.
- ❖ Oversee development of Family Finding (FF) Action Plan⁴.
- ❖ Mine case record.
- ❖ Review case record for current Due Diligence and determine if an updated Due Diligence is necessary.
- ❖ Access US Search.
- ❖ Interview and engage youth.
- ❖ Identify and coordinate staff or service person(s) to complete loss, grief, and attachment work with/for youth to include the completion of a Lifebook (could be the Permanency Coordinator or could be an intern – team to determine).
- ❖ Interview and engage parents.
- ❖ Interview and engage identified relatives and non-related extended family members (NREFMs).
- ❖ Coordinate and initiate the scheduling of FF Staffings, TDMs, FGDM, etc.
- ❖ Data enter Family Tree information.
- ❖ Designate or delegate clerical support as it is available.
- ❖ Interface with case carrying worker to assist in the development of contact and/or visitation plans for identified children, families and relatives or NREFMs.
- ❖ Lead and implement the discovery, engagement and planning.

The CSW will perform the following activities:

- ❖ Contact youth and family to introduce the Secondary Permanency Coordinator to them and inform them of the Secondary Permanency Coordinator's responsibility and future activity on the case.
- ❖ Coordinate and support efforts of the Secondary Permanency Coordinator.
- ❖ Make child case information available to the Secondary Permanency Coordinator for review.
- ❖ Attend meetings set up by Secondary Permanency Coordinator.
- ❖ Carry out all case management responsibilities and activities designated to the CSW in the Permanency Action Plan.

The SCSW will perform the following activities:

- ❖ SCSWs will fulfill the managerial role by doing the following:
 - Establish and maintain healthy boundaries
 - Create and maintain a team-based atmosphere
 - Communicate what is best for the child (first) the family (second) and the CSW (third).

³ Family Finding Staffing: A team meeting where team members include CSW/SCSW, FFA/GH social workers, and any other professional associated at the time with the child's case including a service provider with significant knowledge of the child/family. The goal of Family Finding Staffing is to develop an Action Plan that defines team roles and clarifies team member responsibilities. Responsibilities of the secondary permanency coordinator may include:

⁴ Action Plan: A time delineated plan that specifically outlines the tasks/activities needed to search, locate, contact and engage a child's family and names the team member who will perform each activity.

- Establish and maintain an effective communication system
 - Balance support and discipline
 - Distribute and share the work-load evenly
 - Protect and maintain a collaborative relationship with resource providers
 - Work within effective timeframes
 - Model good work habits
 - Know how and when to assist workers with assignments/tasks
 - Utilize effective auditing tools
- ❖ SCSWs will fulfill an educational role by doing the following:
 - Teach values and belief system of the agency
 - Teach CSWs how to prioritize workload
 - Utilize own experiences to transfer knowledge
 - Provide critical and constructive guidelines
 - Model professionalism in working with clients
 - Provide coaching and mentoring to promote staff development
- ❖ SCSWs will fulfill a service and support role by doing the following:
 - Nurture staff's physical and personal well-being
 - Respect staff members
 - Resolve conflict among staff
 - Support all staff consistently in the way most suited to each person
 - Demonstrate empathy and concern for staff
 - Communicate with staff
 - Be proactive and solution-focused
 - Be confident, approachable and maintain a conscious use of self

The Manager will perform the following activities:

- ❖ Take responsibility for own training and development; champion the work
- ❖ Continuously communicate the vision, goals and objectives
- ❖ Build and encourage strong team work
- ❖ Organize and assign staff to develop and carry out plan
- ❖ Provide clarification when necessary
- ❖ Allow for creativity and diversity of style
- ❖ Develop resources
- ❖ Provide oversight and accountability
- ❖ Track outcomes and monitor progress
- ❖ Take necessary action to correct barriers in system
- ❖ Communicate needs upward as appropriate
- ❖ Acknowledge work and celebrate success

Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM)

Metro North is currently allocated one Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) CSW item. The item is currently filled by CSW, Carol Griffin (phone 213/639-4742 & e-mail griffc@dcfs.lacounty.gov).

Ms. Griffin currently conducts emancipation-conferences (e-conferences) for our office's 20, 19, and 18 year-olds. Ms. Griffin is assigned to Metro North's transitional age youth closest to exiting the system in an effort to ensure those youth have not fallen through the cracks and that every effort for them to succeed is made. Ms. Griffin will do the footwork to ensure all youth assigned to her have solid emancipation plans to include their long-term plan for living arrangements, career/education, income, and support/connections.

Ms. Griffin will pay special attention to ensuring every one of these youth have life-long connections in place prior to emancipation. Ms. Griffin is using CPYP's "Intent to Maintain Contact" form, which is essentially an informal contract to be signed by adults committed to "being there" for emancipated youth and delineates the ways in which the youth can count on the adult to "be there" for them in the future. Ms. Griffin is implementing the strategies of Family Finding to find and engage relatives or NREFMs for youth at the point of an e-conference who do not already have life-long connections in place.

The most current plan is for Ms. Griffin to report to the Permanency Unit Supervisor and serve Permanency Unit cases only. Ms. Griffin will provide a weekly log of the cases on which she is working and will document her work in CWS/CMS.

Recently, Metro North Administration was informed about a new Departmental program being initiated to respond to and coordinate youth at high-risk of entering the delinquency system, called the Interagency Delinquency Prevention Program (IDPP). The Draft program suggests that Ms. Griffin may be pulled to perform other duties. Metro North Administration will work to give input into the Draft program and to integrate the IDPP into Metro North's Permanency Project Plan to whatever extent possible.

Five Acres

In 2005 and 2006, the Five Acres strategic vision was enhanced to emphasize permanency for all children served by the agency. By 2007, Five Acres formally committed to finding a "permanent, safe and empowered 'family member' for every child it serves. This vision is part of the broader "Permanency Initiative" which has the goal of permanency for children in Five Acres' out-of-home care programs either through family reunification or through permanent connections and placements. The Permanency Initiative was formally approved by the Five Acres Board of Directors on February 1, 2006.

The Permanency Initiative has several key goals:

1. Permanent Persons: Every child served by Five Acres will have a permanent, safe and empowered 'family member' that will remain an ongoing support to the child. This "connectedness" is key to the well being and stability of all children. As of the last Five Acres strategic planning retreat in 2006, over 90% of children served by the agency had permanent persons.
2. Permanent Plans: Children in Five Acres' out-of-home care programs will have viable, realistic plans for discharge from foster care into a permanent living situation, which may include reunification with family, adoption or legal guardianship. Often, children in out-of-home care have not had realistic plans for permanency, and thus have not had *hope* for a life

outside of foster care. By the last retreat, Five Acres increased from 28% to 57% of children with permanent plans.

3. Permanent Placements: By working with children, families, public and private providers, the permanent plans for children in out-of-care will become reality. Children will move from out-of-home care to permanent, “forever” families. We are beginning to look at program data to determine the success of the initiative in achieving this goal.

A key component of the Permanency Initiative is “Family Finding.” Five Acres has established itself as a leader in its efforts towards permanency for children in out-of-care and is involved in efforts at the state and county level to promote systems changes to better achieve permanency for youth.

Hollygrove

Through Hollygrove’s Family Finding Project, Linda Librizzi, LCSW (323/463-2119 ext. 1801; e-mail LLibrizzi@hollygrove.org) acts as a Secondary Permanency Coordinator for as many of Metro North’s High-Need Youth as she can take at any given time.

Hollygrove’s Family Finding Project focuses on foster youth who have no permanent connections and few or no identified family members. Under the direction of Ms. Librizzi, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who uses state of the art internet search technology such as US Search, the program identifies and develops relationships with healthy adults who can offer support and love throughout the life of the youth. The goal is to identify members of the child’s extended biological (and non-related) family who can have an ongoing, meaningful presence in the child’s life and/or lead to a permanent plan for the child.

The Family Finding Project begins with **discovery**, an information gathering process that is completed with the cooperation and collaboration of the Children’s Social Worker. Once an action plan is approved, Hollygrove works diligently to contact extended family members and other significant adults in the child’s life and to assess the adult’s willingness and ability to make a lifetime commitment to the child. During the **engagement** process, Hollygrove will continue its involvement with family members through phone calls, meetings and written communication to provide assistance and support to the family in reconnecting/connecting with the child.

During this process Hollygrove assists DCFS obtain any required clearances to ensure the child’s safety. Hollygrove also helps to coordinate and prepare family members for a **planning** meeting to determine the role that identified members will play in the child’s life (visitation, placement, adoption). Resources for the child and family are also identified during this stage.

Once the child is placed, Hollygrove remains involved to ensure the timeliness of resources and to continue to identify the child and family’s needs. The **follow up** process may continue even after permanence has been achieved to continue ensuring success.

Throughout the process, the CSW is provided with all of the information gathered and is consulted before moving to the next step of the process. The ultimate goal of permanence is defined as either family reunification or adoption and Hollygrove is committed to this goal.

Hollygrove is also providing youth in the project with a family tree, photo albums and information that all youth should have including cultural heritage, medical information, family skills, talents and professions and family geographical information.

Permanency Partners Program (P3)

Background

In October 2004, the Permanency Partners Program (P3) was begun specifically to address the need for permanent families for the 8,000 older youth under long term foster care (AKA Planned Permanent Living Arrangement or PPLA) in Los Angeles County. The P3 program pairs the youth with a Permanency Partner, (primarily retired social workers with extensive experience with foster youth), who know how to navigate our internal records and systems. These Permanency Partners are not the youth's primary social worker, but are instead an additional resource focused on finding family for these children.

The P3 program follows an emerging trend to assign a support person to a youth, whose primary focus is on finding family connections. The P3 program utilizes the unique experience of employing 80 retired or former DCFS CSWs and 12 retired SCSWs to perform this work. Preparing a child to move toward permanence is often a complex task, requiring the skill set of experienced workers that has been one of the critical factors making the program successful. Permanency Workers must help youth deal with issues of family loyalty, feelings of rejection, and the challenges of integrating into a new household. These challenges are amplified when dealing with older youth, as their personalities are more defined, their opinions are often stronger, and they have definite feelings and ideas about what they want their future to resemble.

As P3 workers continue to demonstrate that with focused effort, permanent families can be located for these older youth.

Results

According to the P3 Program Management, since its inception date (10/2004), P3 Services have been provided to approximately 1326 youth as of February 2007.

- 1) Number of youth who have returned to the home of a parent
 - a) 25 Youth have been returned to the home of a parent and exited the Child Welfare System.
 - b) 69 Youth are moving towards reunification with a parent.

- 2) Number of youth who were adopted:
 - a) 6 Youth were adopted and exited the Child Welfare System.
 - b) 2 Youth are currently adoptively placed
 - c) 117 Youth that were previously opposed to adoption are now involved in adoption planning.

- 3) Number of youth who have a legal guardian appointed by the court:
 - a) 23 Youth have had legal guardianship granted to a relative and exited the Child Welfare System through Kin-Gap.

- b) 44 Youth have had legal guardianship granted and continue to receive services within the Child Welfare System.
- c) 140 Youth have a plan of legal guardianship identified and are proceeding through the court process.

Since the inception of the program, P3 has identified a legally permanent plan for 32% (426) of the youth involved in the program.

Additionally, over 200 youth who are involved with the program now have contact with siblings, parents, other relatives and adults who care and are committed to supporting them beyond their time in the foster care system.

P3 Program Description

- ❖ Permanency Partners Program (P3) - The Department of Children and Family Services mission is based on the notion that every young person is entitled to a legally permanent home and permanent family relationship. To this end, P3 Staff provides support to the social workers and help to identify possible connections for youth ages 12 to 18 who are lingering in Long Term Foster Care. The following provides an outline of the Job Performance Expectations for P3 staff :
 - P3 Permanency Partners Staff are part-time as-needed employees and are hired at the will of Los Angeles County. This employee can be discharged at any time from County of Los Angeles.
 - P3 Permanency Partners Staff are expected to work on average not less than 12 hours per week, and/or no more than 960 hours per fiscal year, according to Los Angeles County guidelines for retirement.
 - P3 Permanency Partners Staff are to adhere to the same DCFS guidelines and policies as fulltime employees.
 - These policies and procedures include the reporting of child safety related issues, maintaining professional standards with the general public and staff at all times, and being a mandated reporter.
 - P3 Permanency Partners Staff are required to document all case information on CWS/CMS and provide case related information to the regional Children's Service Worker and Supervising Children's Service Workers.

P3 Program in Metro North

- ❖ The Metro North office has been given a total of 4 P3 CSW items and 1 P3 SCSW item. The office has had difficulty maintaining the same P3 CSW staff. Currently, Metro North has 3 P3 CSW staff and 1 P3 SCSW who is working to fill the 4th CSW item.
- ❖ The P3 CSW staff have been pulled in many directions. Currently, the P3 staff are focusing on Metro North's AWOL population under 200 days missing which is approximately 47 youth in addition to providing services to other high risk youth.

❖ The following is an outline of the P3 CSW staff's basic work expectations:

➤ **Building Relationships:**

- Permanency Partners Staff are responsible for reading the entire case record (mining the case), and meeting with the Regional Staff. This collaboration between the P3 Staff and the Regional Staff provides valuable information leading to building a relationship with the youth, and his or her connections.
- P3 Staff must meet with the youth in person, to develop a plan for finding connections leading to permanency. These meetings will help identify important people in the youth's life, past and present, which could be a potential resource and or connection for the youth.

➤ **Communication:**

- Permanency Partners Staff are required to provide written documentation to the Regional Staff and P3 Administration on all casework activities. This will include documentation on CWS/CMS, providing monthly reports, and may include providing verbal reports pending the completion of written reports.
- P3 Staff are required to communicate with the regional staff (CSW & SCSW) on all case related activities. This includes any contacts made with potential connections, communication with missing parents or relatives, and any contact with run away youth.

➤ **Executing a plan:**

- Permanency Partners Staff are responsible for making contact with all parties. This will include visits to the youth's current or past placements, in person or on the phone. P3 Staff will use Internet search engine tools to find potential connections for the youth. Potential connections will include family, friends and relationships made throughout their lives. This will require follow-up on leads while adhering to departmental guidelines and confidentiality policy.
- In addition, P3 Staff will utilize the resources from other initiatives in executing a plan for permanency. This will be done, by making referrals to and/or participating in the Department's other programs including Team Decision Making, Family Group Decision Making, Family Preservation, and our Kinship Program.

Additional Secondary Permanency Coordinators to be Developed

During the upcoming year, Metro North Administration will identify and develop additional Secondary Permanency Coordinators to the extent possible. There are currently two organizations that may be able to fulfill this role. Metro North Administration is currently in the process of setting up meetings with the team leaders for these organizations and plans to fully explore the possibility of developing a partnership with them.

US SEARCH PROJECT AND DUE DILIGENCE

In November 2006, Metro North partnered with the P3 program to permit its staff unlimited use of its contract with US Search, a web-based tool that often enables child welfare workers to quickly locate parents and relatives. Metro North implemented procedures to ensure a US Search is run in conjunction with every due diligence report. Due diligence clerks are automatically sending letters to all parents, relatives and neighbors requesting them to contact the case-carrying CSW. Additionally, clerical staff automatically send letters to prospective connections identified through a US Search report requesting contact.

A Due Diligence clerk, Trenisha McGee, became the primary clerk to run all US Search reports. Staff directions (Appendix B) are attached to all US Search reports run in conjunction with Due Diligence requests. The letter and the US Search report are forwarded to the CSW immediately upon completion of the US Search report for the CSW to be able to make contact with parents and relatives as soon as possible. Another copy is also forwarded to the Due Diligence Clerk or Dependency Investigator Assistant (DIA) to use in completing their portion of the Due Diligence Report.

A format letter (Appendix C) in Spanish and English is automatically sent by the Due Diligence Clerks or the DIA to all potential relatives and/or neighbors. Staff are directed to follow all Family Finding procedural and policy guidelines when making contact with any relative and/or NREFM such as a neighbor to a parent and possibly the child/youth. Staff are reminded to accept any information and inform contacts that any information regarding the child's family is important, but not to provide information to any one regarding a child unless it meets confidentiality law and policy. Staff are directed to consult with their supervisor on all matters related to this project.

Tiffany Collins, P3 Manager, provided US Search Training on Wednesday, November 29th, 2006, 9:30 am to 11:00 am, in the 9th Floor Conference Room of the Borax Building. The training was provided to Metro North SCSWs, Interns, Adoptions Staff, and others significantly involved at Metro North with Family Finding at the time. The training was mandatory for all Metro North SCSWs and effort was made to train as many staff as possible at that time. Additional US Search training has been requested by staff and will be planned.

TEAMING WITH OTHER PERMANENCY RESOURCES FOR HIGH-NEED YOUTH

A number of other internal and external resources exist and will be utilized by Metro North CSWs in their work to achieve the goals and outcomes for High-Need Youth. In addition to an Adoption or Secondary Permanency Coordinator, other resources may be very effective in helping CSWs to complete much of the permanency work. CSWs, in consultation with their SCSW, should schedule a TDM to coordinate appropriate services for the High-Need Youth on their caseload, taking special note to consider one or more of the following resources as appropriate:

- ❖ The Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS)
- ❖ Alternative Services for Youth (ASFY)
- ❖ Interagency Consultation Assessment Team (ICAT)
- ❖ Wraparound Program
- ❖ Mentoring Program

- ❖ MSW Interns
- ❖ Runaway Outreach Unit

Adoption Promotion and Support Services

Adoption Promotion and Support Services (APSS) is federally funded through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act. (PSSF). The specific goal of the APSS Program is to increase permanency for children in Los Angeles County. This is a resource available to all children’s social workers where the issue is permanence. Adoption from foster care is promoted when it is in the best interest of the child.

Community-based agencies located in each Service Planning Area (SPA) provide coordinated services. These APSS service providers have adoption expertise and are trained to focus on adoption-related issues. The specific services are individual, group or family therapy, mentors, and support groups for children and/or adults. Services are available when the primary focus or concern of the child or family is adoption related. The referring children’s social worker need not be an Adoption Division staff member. The family can be considering adoption, be in the process of adopting or a finalized adoptive family with Medi-Cal benefits.

Contracted APSS agencies provide support to children and adoptive families to nurture lifetime commitments, ensure permanency for children, expedite the adoption process, and reduce disruption of adoption. Case management services ensure a service plan is designed to strengthen and preserve the child and/or the family.

The expected outcome of APSS services is a decrease in the number of children remaining in out-of-home care and an increase in the number of finalized adoptions. Parents and children are empowered through information, support and skills to be involved partners in directing their own permanency planning and decision making.

APSS agencies, in addition to case management and specified services, can provide referrals for services that can include childcare, health care, mental health; physical and developmental services, Regional Center Services, educational, special education, substitute adult role model, income support and transportation services.

The targeted Population is:

- ❖ Children with an alternative permanent plan of adoption for whom adoption recruitment efforts are underway.
- ❖ Children in long term foster care and could benefit from a more permanent plan of adoption.
- ❖ Children who are hesitant about being adopted.
- ❖ Families pursuing adoptions by becoming a resource family through participation in Partnering for Safety and Permanence- Model Approach for Partnership in Parenting (PS-MAPP).
- ❖ Families involved in the adoption process including pre-adoption activities and the adoption home study.
- ❖ Children and families in need of support and services before, during and following adoptive placement.
- ❖ Families in need of support services due to risk of adoption disruption after adoption finalization.
- ❖ Families adopting a sibling group

Children must be less than eighteen years of age. All therapy services require Medi-Cal. Therapy is only provided to families who are in a match or placement with a child. Finalized adoptive families

receive support group services from DCFS Post Adoption Section (PAS) and they are eligible to receive other APSS services. The family must be referred by their Children's Social Worker to the APSS Program Manager or, once they are receiving APSS services, are referred by another APSS service provider. A continuum of service is created and the Children's Social Worker receives quarterly progress reports. The Adoption Promotion and Support Services Referral – Service Authorization form and instructions are found on LAKids under Adoption Forms. Referrals are faxed to Elma Forrest Stewart, APSS Program Manager at 213-639-1691 or mail to her attention at 3075 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA. 90010. For questions the telephone number is 213-639-4032.

Alternative Services for Youth (ASFY)

The Alternative Services for Youth program is a county-wide effort to prepare adolescents ages 14-18 in foster care to meet the challenges of emancipation and become responsible, productive, and healthy adults by assisting them through the transition from childhood to adulthood. The program goals include:

- ❖ Encourage the foster child's growth and development.
- ❖ Improve school attendance and performance.
- ❖ Advocate for appropriate education program.
- ❖ Establish educational and career goals.
- ❖ Stabilize the child in foster care to reduce replacements.
- ❖ Raise the level of self-esteem, create positive values and empower children in foster care.
- ❖ Decrease inappropriate behavior.
- ❖ Prepare youth to meet the challenges of emancipation.
- ❖ Assist youth to obtain job skills.
- ❖ Develop support networks.
- ❖ Assist youth to enter college.

The Alternative Services for Youth program provides critically needed services to foster youth ages 14-18 in preparation for emancipation and to assist them to develop into healthy, happy productive citizens. DCFS has collaborated with New Directions for Youth (NDFY) to provide these services for our youth.

Children's Social Workers can refer foster youth to this program by following these steps.

- ❖ Complete the referred youth and referring CSW sections of the referral form.
- ❖ Send referrals to NDFY via E-mail ASFY@mail.ndfy.org, or Fax (818) 786-7019, or call (818) 375-1000 for questions.
- ❖ A NDFY staff person will contact the CSW within 48 hours either by phone, fax or e-mail to confirm receipt of referral.
- ❖ NDFY staff will set up and complete the assessment and orientation. Youth progress updates will be forwarded monthly to CSW.

Activities offered include:

- ❖ Assessment of the needs of youth

- ❖ Orientation for caregiver and youth
- ❖ Development of “Youth Success Plan”
- ❖ Mentoring
- ❖ Life Skills Workshops
- ❖ Tutoring and Homework Assistance
- ❖ GED Prep, CAHSEE Prep
- ❖ Field Trips
- ❖ Snacks
- ❖ Support Services
- ❖ Home Visits

New Directions for Youth
 7400 Van Nuys Blvd. #203
 Van Nuys, CA 91405
 Tel: (818) 375-1000
 Fax: (818) 786-7019
 E-mail: ASFY@mail.ndfy.org

Interagency Consultation Assessment Team (ICAT)

The Metro North ICAT Unit is co-located in the Metro North Office. Currently, the Metro North ICAT Unit is staffed with 3 psychologists (Lisa Althen, Daniel Kim, and Ida Rivera) and 1 senior psychologist (Brad Bryant). The program head is Janel Jones. The ICAT staff have attended the first two trainings by Dr. Darla Henry and have attended several Leadership Team meetings. ICAT staff are currently attending TDM meetings and, at this time, it is hoped that the specialized older youth training provided to them by Dr. Henry and others will help them provide more effective assessments and linkages to mental health services designed to address the needs of our High-Need Youth. Additionally, apart from the Leadership Team, Metro North Administration is meeting with SPA 4 DMH staff to revisit our partnership and further improve our service delivery system.

Background

- ❖ The Interagency Consultation & Assessment Team (ICAT) was established in response to the legislative mandates of Senate Bill No. 933 (Thompson). SB 933 requires counties receiving full system of care funding to provide mental health screening, assessment, and treatment services for children in foster care who meet the definition of medical necessity.
- ❖ SB 933 further requires that pilot projects be conducted to test the effectiveness of “best practice standards” for the assessment of children and families receiving child welfare and foster care services.

Program Goals

- ❖ To identify qualifying foster children who can be referred for multidisciplinary assessments due to health/medical, developmental, educational, and/or psychosocial needs.
- ❖ To provide culturally competent assessments and consultations for foster children/youth and their families who require mental health services.
- ❖ To implement “best practice” guidelines for mental health screening/assessment of children/youth served by the Department of Children & Family Services.

Outcomes

- ❖ The rate of placement failure for foster children/youth at risk will be reduced as a result of timely multidisciplinary assessments and provision of corresponding support services
- ❖ Specific gaps in the network of existing mental health services for foster children/youth and their families will be identified and addressed.
- ❖ Multidisciplinary team building, education, cross-training, and staff development will promote collaboration among participating agencies/departments with a significantly greater focus on the health, mental health, and educational needs of foster children/youth
- ❖ Systemic change will be promoted by family/parent-professional partnerships in the development, monitoring, and evaluation of service plans.

Staff and Administration

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) provides administrative leadership and direction for the program. A DMH Mental Health Clinical District Chief assumes primary countywide responsibility for administration of the ICAT program. ICAT units are managed by a DMH Program Head.

Each ICAT program works in collaboration with other partners located at the DCFS office including Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, and Educational Liaisons. Shared case planning, assessment and follow-up are provided in consultation with DCFS CSWs and SCSWs.

A DMH Senior Community Mental Health Psychologist provides the primary clinical supervision and training for the DMH staff psychologists as well as the clinical support, joint supervision, and training for all other staff in each ICAT team.

The program is fully funded through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. Staff from each participating County department are expected to comply with all Medi-Cal requirements and related DMH policies and procedures.

Emancipation Services Transition Resource Coordinator

Metro North has one Transition Resource Coordinator, Francisco Torres, and one assistant, Bobbie Ewell, who are co-located in the Metro North office. The primary responsibilities of the Transition Resource Coordinator are:

- ❖ Disseminate information and provide consultation to CSWs related to emancipation planning for ILP eligible youth. Request funds for ILP allowable expenses and other resources/incentives. Provide transportation for youth to and from events.
- ❖ Assist staff in improving TILP compliance. Refer and link youth to Community Based Skills Centers, Employment Development and Transitional Housing Programs. Provide post-emancipated services at TRCs (Transitional Resource Centers) throughout Los Angeles County.
- ❖ Liaison between DCFS staff, Employment Development and Transitional Housing Programs, CCF United Friends of the Children and other agencies that serve ILP eligible pre and post emancipated youth.
- ❖ Participate in permanency teams and coordinates emancipation group decision-making meetings for youth who are 17 and not on target for emancipation.
- ❖ Present ILP orientation sessions at designated CCF sites during evenings and weekends.

- ❖ Advise and facilitate arrangements for admission into college and vocational schools.

Mr. Torres has been a participant on the Metro North Permanency Planning Task Force and has attended the Introductory Training provided by Dr. Darla Henry and the SCSW Y.O.U.T.H Training Project training. Mr. Torres' attendance to Metro North's targeted training for High-Need Youth enables him to provide effective assessments and linkages to services needed to meet Permanency goals and objectives. Mr. Torres plans to provide emancipation conferences that include prospective lifelong connections, starting with youth age 17 years old.

Mentoring Program

Mentoring can be the key to a youth's future. Mentoring has been shown to improve placement stability, increase school attendance, reduce delinquent behavior and improve self-esteem. The programs listed below are referral agencies for mentoring programs in Los Angeles County. For information youth, caregivers, or social workers/Probation Officers may contact Bill Gay, DCFS Mentoring Specialist, at (213) 351-0106, or Suzy Morales, Probation Mentoring Coordinator, at (213) 351-0222.

- ❖ Los Angeles Mentoring Partnership (LAMP) operates the Mentoring Referral Line and convenes the Los Angeles Mentoring Coalition, a collaboration of diverse mentoring programs in the greater Los Angeles area. Contact LAMP at (213) 630-2141 or visit their website at www.la.mentoring.org.
- ❖ Mentoring Partnership for Los Angeles County Youth (mPLAY) provides mentors for youth in group homes and transitional housing. Contact mPLAY at (310) 203-0500.
- ❖ Bridges to the Future provides mentors from the Los Angeles Bar Association for transitioning youth who are seniors in high school. Contact Connie Rex at (626) 938-1827.

The DCFS Office in Torrance is developing a mentoring pilot project targeting foster teens placed in the South Bay area, matching youth who want a mentor, with existing mentoring programs in SPA 8 (Carson, Catalina, El Segundo, Gardena, Harbor City, Harbor Gateway, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lennox, Lomita, Long Beach, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, San Pedro, Torrance and Wilmington), and/or community organizations interested in starting mentoring programs. Both DCFS and Probation teenagers can participate in this pilot project

Master of Social Work Interns

Through a partnership between the University of Southern California (USC) and DCFS, 15 MSW interns are co-located in the same building where Metro North is housed. The 15 interns are each assigned two to three children or youth. The MSW Interns were introduced to last year's Permanency Project and their role in the project has become more defined. This year, Metro North and the MSW Field Instructors will select cases for the Interns and coordinate permanency activities and training from the onset of the Internship.

The DCFS Children's Social Worker Interns will receive cases from Adoption and Metro North units. In order to facilitate overall learning it is important that the Interns do as much of the casework and paperwork as possible. However, since Interns are not DCFS employees, they cannot legally sign

required documents. This necessitates that the case-carrying CSW sign such documents. Unfortunately, this situation lends itself to role confusion and ambiguity. To provide clarification, the following guidelines have been established:

❖ **Case Assignment And Transition**

- The Unit Supervisor together with each CSW will submit cases for review. These should be cases that require and/or would benefit from intensive casework services. The Field Instructor will review the submitted cases. Ideally, the cases will provide a variety of learning experiences for the Intern. All reviewed cases will be returned to the unit supervisor or CSW with a memo indicating which cases have been selected for intern assignment. The selected cases may be newly opened or ongoing. Cases whose court dates fall between January and mid-May are preferred. However, cases with other court dates will be discussed on a case by case basis. The goal of case selection will be to provide each Intern with as broad a learning experience as possible, including ethnic diversity, presenting problems, type of family configuration, age range, etc.
- The case-carrying CSW will notify the clients that a CSW Intern will be working with them and their families. The CSW will explain to the client that the CSW Intern will be providing enriched services, such as visiting the client more frequently, providing intensive in-home supervision, facilitating sibling visits, completing homestudies, etc. If possible, the CSW will accompany the Intern on the Intern's first home visit to introduce the client and the Intern to each other. The Intern will be introduced as a Children's Social Worker Intern with DCFS. The Intern may work independently of the CSW, or make some conjoint homecalls (particularly in the beginning). The decision on what and how the Intern will be working on a case will be done will be made jointly between the CSW, the SCSW and the field instructor.

The Intern (with or without the CSW) is responsible for making the initial visit within 10 working days of receiving the case.

❖ **File location and tracking system**

- When a case is assigned to an Intern, he/she will receive a case history sheet which will contain the basic case information. The CSW will be given the name and phone number of the Intern as well as the Field Instructor's name and phone number. Cases will be retained in the CSW's desk and "borrowed" on field days by the Intern.
- If the case needs to be removed from the CSW's or Intern's desk (i.e. audit, CSW needs it, Field Instructor review, etc.) **AN OUTCARD** should be filled out and placed in the file from which it is removed.
- When the case is returned, the date of return should be recorded on the outcard and it should be retained by the Intern for record keeping purposes.

❖ **Maintaining Files**

- The Intern must understand that **the client's entire case file (legal & service folders) is considered to be legal documentation** by the court and the DCFS. It is extremely important that it be treated as such. Therefore, the Intern should:
 - Follow the model case format.
 - Keep the various folders of the case file together, using a rubberband.

- Immediately file all documentation in the appropriate folder--do not leave anything loose.
- Make every effort to protect and preserve all documents!

❖ **General Case Documentation**

- 1950s and 1950Vs - The Interns are responsible for visits to clients, relatives, potentially licensable adults, foster parents and other collateral contacts, (including all appropriate referral resources). **The Intern is responsible for writing up all contacts as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the following field day.** Documentation includes:
 - Actual face to face client visits (Form DCFS 1950V or CWS/CMS).
 - All other attempted and completed contacts (Form DCFS 1950 or CWS/CMS)
 - Telephone calls (Form DCFS 1950 or CWS/CMS)
 - As soon as the 1950 or 1950V is completed, the Intern will make 2 copies. One copy of the 1950/1950V will be given to the case carrying CSW for information sharing purposes. Each field instructor will give their intern instructions as to how to handle the original and second copy. If the CSW has any questions or concerns, she/he will immediately notify the Field Instructor. Once the Field Instructor has signed off on the original copy, it will be filed in the case by the Intern.

If the CSW or SCSW does anything on the case, they will document it using CWS/CMS or the 1950 or 1950V. The CSW will keep one copy for the cases give one copy to the Intern as soon as possible for information sharing. The SCSW should add the Intern as a secondary on CWS/CMS for assigned cases. When the interns are trained on CWS/CMS, they will also be able to input information obtained during their contacts.

Runaway Outreach Unit

The Runaway Outreach Unit (ROU) under the Bureau of Specialized Programs is responsible for assisting with the location of youth missing over 200 days. The P3 Program is responsible for assisting with the location of youth missing less than 200 days until another departmental entity is identified to provide these services.

Currently in Metro North, Julie Hildreth of BSP is assigned to the runaway youth under 18 years of age missing over 200 days. Until AWOL responsibility has been transferred to another section, P3 Supervisor Susan Wiebusch will assign youth missing less than 200 days to P3 CSWs. When a youth assigned to a P3 CSW has been missing over 200 180 days, SCSW Wiebusch will send the P3 AWOL case file to Julie Hildreth.

CSW Hildreth will contact the assigned CSW to inform the CSW of her assignment and work with the CSW toward a positive outcome in locating the missing/AWOL youth. Once the youth is found, CSW Hildreth will engage the Metro North CSW & SCSW, a Metro North P3 CSW, and initiate a TDM in order to compose a case plan that will aid the youth into permanence and stability.

On December 6, 2005, the Board of Supervisors directed DCFS to reconvene the “Missing Children Task Force” in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways. The Task Force was to report back on a monthly basis about planned and implemented practices to better serve youth who have run away, or have the potential to run away from out-of-home care.

This proposal will aggressively attempt to locate runaway and AWOL children, manage their safety concerns and transition them into permanency. Out of an approximate total of 370 AWOL youth countywide, as of February 15th, 2007 there were 228 dependent children missing for more than 200 days. Of these 228 children, 164 are under the age of 18 years.

The current assigned CSW holds the primary case management responsibility under its policy (Runaway Youth 0100-570.11). AWOL and Runaway children present case management challenges beyond the capacity of a typical CSW. The AWOL child specifically requires search efforts, location, intervention knowledge and training. These challenges are further exacerbated by the time constraints of their caseload responsibilities. On March 1, 2006, the P3 program was tasked to assign a P3 worker to every runaway child under DCFS care. In addition, the P3 program has maintained the responsibility of the monthly Board report.

Proposal

For the last 20 years, the Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) and Street Outreach Services (SOS) have provided specialized services through DCFS that address more specific subgroups within the Runaway and AWOL population. Child Welfare Redesign tenets and the goals of the Department suggest a program redesign that addresses the most crucial needs of the Runaway and AWOL population: permanency, safety and well-being.

This proposal calls for a synthesis of the current RAP and SOS programs. It is proposed that this unit be renamed the Runaway Outreach Unit (ROU). The RAP and SOS workers would convert to Runaway Outreach workers, beginning with an initial group of 6 support workers, with the following responsibilities. The initial focus would be on children less than 18 years of age, missing for more than 200 days.

- ❖ ROU workers would mine the case for all pertinent information
- ❖ Actively look for the children in the community
- ❖ List all contacts in a Contact Log and in CWS/CMS
- ❖ Update ARKS on search efforts, at least monthly
- ❖ Utilize "US Search"
- ❖ Maintain contact and partnership with case-carrying CSW; include information on search efforts in Judicial Review reports
- ❖ Intensive search efforts continue until a resolution is determined, such as "detained at large," residing in another country, reached emancipation age and no longer desires services, etc.

When a child is located:

- ❖ A P3 SCSW or P3 CSW will attend a TDM to determine if the case is appropriate for P3 services.
- ❖ ROU worker will:
- ❖ Maintain daily contact with the child until TDM has convened
- ❖ Address issues raised by the runaway child and suggest related corrections or modifications to current DCFS policy
- ❖ Arrange a TDM with a CSW, SCSW, P3 and other appropriate resources such as ICAT, Mental Health and Educational Liaisons

- ❖ Remain associated with case as necessary for stabilization purposes. The ROU worker will be removed from the case within 2 months if the child remains in placement (this time period is subject to extension, if needed).

If a child is not located after 6 months, the ROU worker will:

- ❖ Initiate a FGDM/Permanency meeting to engage/empower the family toward resolution
- ❖ Inform the Court on the efforts and the outcome of those efforts
- ❖ Update or initiate a missing person reports as needed
- ❖ Evaluate the challenges and continue with efforts to locate the child if appropriate

If a child runs again the ROU worker stays on or is reassigned if past the 2-month time period.

Wraparound

Wraparound is a collaboration between DCFS, DMH, Probation, and community-based contracted service providers. Wraparound is a strength-based, family and community centered planning approach designed to stabilize children in long-term, permanent settings with the support of specialized comprehensive services. A Child and Family Team is assembled of which the child and family being served are a part. This team does not provide direct services but develops, implements, monitors and revises a “Plan of Care” which includes the strategies, services, and supports that will address the unique needs of that child and family. The team meets regularly to provide support, insure linkages are made to identified resources, and monitor progress.

Wraparound is a program that will be utilized for any High-Need Youth who has an identified connection to ensure the youth’s successful transition and placement with a lifelong connection or return home. Part of the 2007-2008 plan is to ensure all High-Need Youth who meet the eligibility criteria are referred to Wraparound. Staff may consult with Metro North’s Wraparound Liaison, Karmen Pena, who is co-located in the Metro North office to access this service and to initiate the referral process. Metro North Administration is working closely with the various Wraparound Agency Administrators to facilitate a strong and effective collaboration. Monthly meetings are held to address issues regarding utilization and service delivery.

Funding sources include redirected DCFS Foster Care funds and The Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. The target population is children/youth who are 17½ years of age or younger* who have an identified and approved potential family or caregiver and fall into any of at least one (1) of the following categories:

- ❖ Are in a probation camp where there are extensive mental health treatment services, or
- ❖ Have been adjudicated as either dependents or wards of the Juvenile Court (pursuant to the Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 300, 601, or 602) or are qualified under Chapter 26.5 of the Government Code (AB 3632) and who are currently placed in or are at imminent risk of placement within the next thirty (30) days in a group home at a Rate Classification Level of twelve (12) or above, or
- ❖ Are currently in placement at Metropolitan State Hospital (pursuant to Government Code Section, 7572.5), Dorothy Kirby Center, or a Community Treatment Facility (CTF), or

- ❖ Are former residents of MacLaren Children’s Center and present with any of the risk factors described above that have prevented them from achieving success and/or a stabilized status in a community setting.

All Wraparound children/youth must be willing to participate in the program along with their family/caregiver.

It is noteworthy that a group of Wraparound providers, identifying themselves as the Los Angeles Training Consortium (LATC), completed a Family Finding & Engagement Project in May, 2006 – January, 2007. This project provided Family Finding & Engagement services to 29 children identified by the four partner agencies in the LATC (Hathaway-Sycamores, San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, Star View and Vista Del Mar.)

- ❖ Youth identified for the Project were primarily in the referring agency’s residential centers (Level 12, 14 or CTF); all of the youth were described as being “isolated” from family or as “not having family;” each youth had an identified staff member (wraparound team member or residential worker) who participated in the project on a regular basis and carried out the assigned tasks of identifying, contacting, and engaging family members of each youth identified for the project. The name of each youth enrolled in the project was submitted to DCFS (Tiffany Collins) to cross reference with other existing permanency initiatives.
- ❖ The Project lasted 8 months. Over the course of the 8 months, 29 children had teams for Family Finding and Engagement.
- ❖ Through the course of the 8 months, the teams were able to complete Family Search and Discovery and Family Engagement with Sustainability Plans. There were 388 family members discovered. Of these, 102 family members were successfully contacted and engaged with staff. Thus far, 80 of the 102 have been connected to the children either via telephone, letters, or visit. This was a 70 % increase of family engagement for the 29 children since the start of the project. Three youth have left residential treatment and been placed with family or significant others.

Unfortunately, all High-Need Youth cannot be referred to Wraparound for “Family Finding.” Still, for those youth who have already completed enough of the preparation work and are at a realizable point of placement or return home, Wraparound should be considered.

OTHER INITIATIVES PROMOTING PERMANENCY

Point Of Engagement (POE)

In 1999, The Price Waterhouse Coopers audit recommended that the Department of Children and Family Services streamline and revise its case flow process to provide a faster response for services. It further recommended that the Department provide an emphasis on more thorough case evaluations and investigations through the use of a team approach.

In response to the above recommendation, the Department developed the Point of Engagement (POE) service delivery system. POE is characterized by a seamless and timely transfer of responsibility from front end investigations to actual service delivery in order to provide more thorough investigations and needed services to children and families within their homes and communities. This new system utilizes

a multi-disciplinary approach that includes the family, if possible, avoiding the removal of children from their homes.

Departmental Goals

POE was designed to achieve the Department's mission of ensuring safety, permanency, and well being for each child and, specifically to:

- ❖ Reduce the number of child detentions
- ❖ Reduce the median length of stay in placement
- ❖ Reduce the rate of abuse in foster care

Target Group

All Children and their families referred to the Department that are at risk of child abuse and neglect as identified through the use of Structured Decision Making Safety, Risk and Family Strength and Needs Assessment Tools.

Introduction

Point of Engagement is a collaborative public and private initiative that provides a community safety net for our children and families. Point of Engagement provides a faster response for the provision of services and, through the use of teams, an emphasis is placed on shared decision-making and comprehensive case evaluations and investigations. Point of Engagement utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach that includes the family in the process of selecting and planning for the delivery of needed services. POE engages resources within the Department and other County Departments such as the Departments of Mental Health, Health, Probation, Parole, Public Social Services and the Sheriff's department. We also engage community-based agencies who work in the areas of domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, mental health and health. We also engage the Faith-based community to assist in providing support services to our families.

Key Elements

- ❖ Well-staffed and trained emergency response child abuse investigations units to provide more thorough investigations and Intensive Services Workers to provide timely provision of services.
- ❖ Use of other professionals within and outside of the Department to assess medical, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and other issues that place children at risk.
- ❖ Utilize a team decision-making approach to eliminate bias, promote cultural sensitivity and to encourage collaboration between social workers, families and the community to develop an appropriate safety and service plan that allow children to remain safely at home and in their own communities.
- ❖ Inclusion of families, relatives, and community providers in the decision-making process for the development of the family's service plan and to identify relative resources for respite or temporary placement.
- ❖ Timely collaboration and communication among social workers that investigate referrals and those that provide services to ensure a smooth transition from front-end investigations to services.
- ❖ Community outreach to identify collaborative community partners.
- ❖ Cultivation of change in established ways of thinking and providing services among all levels of staff from administration to clerical.
- ❖ Provide a seamless delivery of services for our children and families.

POE Components

- ❖ **Differential (Community) response:** provision of a community-based network of formal and informal support services for children and families with an inconclusive child abuse and neglect referral to divert families from entering the child protective system.
- ❖ **Alternative Response:** provision of a community-based network of formal and informal support and services for children and families with multiple inconclusive child abuse and neglect referrals to divert families from entering the child protective system.
- ❖ **Voluntary Services:** provision of voluntary family maintenance/reunification and family preservation services to families that have been assessed to be at moderate to high risk where a child protective case is opened.
- ❖ **Intensive Services Workers:** conduct child safety conferences shortly after detention to review for possible return of children and/to connect children and families to services immediately following detention.
- ❖ **Team-Decision-making/Child Safety Conferences:** provides a forum for the family, relatives, friends, social workers and community service providers to share information, observations, concerns and identify family strengths and resources to assist in the development of an appropriate service plan for the family.
- ❖ **Emergency Response Investigations of referrals on open cases:** provides consistency of emergency response investigations to reduce reabuse.

Summary

Point of Engagement offers a service delivery system that focuses on the family's needs, immediate provision of services and engaging the community to assist the family in developing their own strengths to maintain a safe home for their children. The partnership between the family, child protective services and community providers builds a strong community safety net that ensures the safety and well being for children and families.

Team Decision-Making (TDM) Program

Team Decision-Making (TDM) is a way to involve family and community in the decision-making process that affects the outcome of a child's placement by strengthening the partnership between caregivers, providers and neighborhood stakeholders. The goal is to reach consensus on a decision regarding a child's placement and to create a Child Safety/Action Plan that protects the child and preserves or reunifies the family. Reaching consensus does not necessarily mean that each participant totally agrees with every one, however each participant can support the plan made by the team.

The TDM model convenes a TDM conference for every key child welfare decision around placement including removal, replacement (change of placement), reunification and other permanent plans. TDM also provides a gate-keeping mechanism for the public child welfare system, originally driven by the need to improve the quality and consistency of decisions around placement. Safety and risk issues are always considered and central to the TDM process.

The CSW convenes the TDM conference to assist in making critical decisions before the child is removed and before the initial court hearing on cases of removal. If the child has been removed/detained from the home, the TDM is usually held by the end of business day, or within 24 hours prior to the court detention hearing. For placement preservation, replacement/change of placement decisions, the CSW/SCSW will request a TDM (within 48 hours) upon notification of the caregiver's

request for removal (7-Day notice or Notice of intent to discharge). TDM requests for moves to a less restrictive setting, Family Reunification, TPR, and guardianship is scheduled within 5 business days of the request or according to the family and CSW's needs.

A typical TDM meeting usually lasts from 1.5 to 2 hours and includes the parent(s), child(ren) (age 10 and over), and an extensive range of family members, friends and other support people identified by the family. Also present are foster parents/resource families, service providers, community representatives, CSW, SCSW, and DCFS resource staff. The TDM conference is led by a skilled TDM Facilitator who is not a case-carrying social worker or line SCSW. The facilitator leads a strength-based, consensus driven, respectful process, encouraging direct and honest communication regarding the risks and concerns involved. The meeting is a sharing of all information about the family which relates to the protection of the children and functioning of the family.

TDM is a strength-based approach that believes all families have strengths and families are experts on themselves. When families are involved in decision making, outcomes can improve. Extending the circle of decision-making provides gains in both community partnership and family engagement. It also offers an opportunity for birth and foster/resource parents to interact in a safe environment. In the event that placement is decided upon, the TDM ensures that the birth parents, foster parents and the entire team begin at the onset of placement, to work cooperatively for permanency. Concurrent planning is discussed at every TDM.

Through the TDM process, the CSW is fully supported in making difficult decisions regarding placement and safety. TDM improves the relationship between DCFS and families by showing that DCFS is not the sole decision maker in a family's life. Families are present and involved and work with DCFS staff to develop a Child Safety/Action Plan and participants better understand the complexity of the process and the criteria used in decision making.

TDM is a powerful intervention early in a case and supports the department's three key goals of increased safety, increased permanency and a decrease in the reliance of out-of-home care.

BUILDING CHAMPIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Metro North is committed to developing champions in the area of youth permanence. A champion, according to the Encarta Dictionary, is defined as a “supreme victor,” a “winner,” a “defender,” a “remarkable person,” and/or a “hero or warrior.” Our youth permanency champions will be those who stand out in the effort to achieve our youth permanency goals and objectives. They are our role models for others and will have a significant impact in changing the philosophy, attitude and practices within our office, department and the child welfare community.

Recognition of our current champions is important. Currently, the Metro North champions are identified within the Metro North Permanency Unit, the Metro North Permanency Task Force, the Metro North Permanency Leadership Team and within the community agencies who are partnering with Metro North social workers to engage in Family Finding efforts for our youth.

The Leadership Team will plan a variety of events to acknowledge and highlight success stories at the General Staff Meeting and in other modalities. This could also be a time for our champions to share their experience and how they overcame obstacles, providing a learning experience for all. We especially want to acknowledge teams who are able to accomplish our goals, and include community partners who were instrumental in helping our youth achieve permanence. We recognize that collaboration is key to the success of permanency work. Therefore, we will encourage and empower CSWs to develop teams to work on permanence and hold the members of the team accountable for their role.

Metro North hopes to increase the number of champions to include other CSWs and SCSWs in Metro North through the celebration of success cases. In one-to-one supervision, current champions will be expected to encourage those individuals who are embracing the principles of youth permanency to become champions. The emerging champions will be highlighted for their work, called upon to share their success stories with their peers, and asked to provide input during case discussions. Supervisors and managers will also be expected to work with all their staff to educate them about the principles and strategies of permanency, hold them accountable for implementing those strategies, and celebrate their successes. Furthermore, we will actively seek input and feedback from SCSWs and CSWs in the ongoing process to develop effective systems for permanency. This will help them establish ownership for the permanency work throughout the office and will allow them a more direct feeling of accomplishment when the work is successful.

Metro North has recognized the role of community providers as vital champions by including them in the Leadership Team. We will continue to seek input from the current providers and work with them to develop strategies to identify other champions. One strategy has been to include community providers in the various trainings, with the recognition that community partners are essential partners with DCFS in the permanency effort. Community partners are being encouraged to share what they learn with staff at their agencies and with other community providers. Many of our community provider champions are DMH subcontractors, so DCFS will partner with DMH to expand the number of community providers who are committed to permanency work, thereby serving more youth. We have begun discussions with DMH leadership and liaisons to identify strategies to engage other DMH providers.

The Leadership Team will continue to track the success of identified cases, identify obstacles and solutions to deal with obstacles and to ensure continuance of the permanency effort. We recognize the need for ongoing support of this work in order to increase the number of children achieving permanence. We plan to do this by providing additional training and support for Family Finding work for an increased number of CSWs and Community Partners, such as in the current Darla Henry training.

We are also considering the development of a monthly forum, either through a meeting or confidential website, to provide on-going consultation and support for the teams.

We also know that the SCSW is crucial in providing support and moving our permanency work forward. SCSWs will be provided with guidelines on how to engage, empower and reward staff for their efforts while encouraging them to do the same with their collaborative teams. Finally, we need youth and family members advise us on our plan as we move forward and develop future champions. Our Leadership Team develop a Youth panel whereby Metro North staff and its community partners will have the opportunity to learn more about how to engage youth in planning. Youth and family members can be provided with opportunities to present their stories as inspiration and provide direct feedback to our staff, community partners and future permanency champions.

TRACKING OUTCOMES

METRO NORTH TRACKING SYSTEM

- ❖ There will be two logs completed manually by Metro North administration. The purpose of the logs will be to track outcomes and to measure/celebrate success.
- ❖ The first log will list the identified 190 High-Need Youth who are currently being served by all Treatment CSWs throughout the backend of the Metro North office. This will list what, if any, Secondary Permanency Coordinator is assigned to the case and the needed categories to help determine assignment of Secondary Permanency Coordinators.
- ❖ The second log will be completed to track outcomes for the High-Need Youth. A questionnaire has been developed for the current SCSW/CSW to complete for all High-Need Youth.

QUARTERLY QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaire developed to track progress on the objectives for all identified High-Need Youth (see Appendix D for sample) is a short, user-friendly form that corresponds to the goals and objectives outlined at the beginning of the document. The form will be assigned to the SCSW to assign to the most appropriate staff person, depending on who the Permanency Coordinator is, to complete and return to the Assistant Regional Administrator.

It is hoped that the questionnaire will inform the SCSW/CSW/Permanency Coordinator staff on the actions taken or need to be taken for each youth to meet the goals and objectives of the project. Completing a questionnaire can help staff take action they may not have otherwise considered. Additionally, the questionnaires will be utilized to track progress on a quarterly basis on the following objectives:

- ❖ Youth is a participant or leader in the permanency process
- ❖ Youth who previously was not placed with siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously was not visiting siblings, but is now
- ❖ Youth who previously had no contact with parents, relatives or adult mentors and is now connected
- ❖ Youth has moved to a lower level of care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has moved from non-relative to relative care (indicating the rate for the past and present placements)
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and jurisdiction has terminated
- ❖ Youth has returned to home of parent and case remains open under FM
- ❖ Youth is moving towards reunification with parent
- ❖ Youth has been adoptively placed and adoption has been finalized
- ❖ Youth has been placed in an adoptive home
- ❖ Youth was previously opposed to adoption and is now in active adoptive planning
- ❖ LG has been granted and case closed under Kin-Gap
- ❖ LG has been granted and case remains open with or without court
- ❖ LG is the plan and case is moving towards that goal
- ❖ Youth has emancipated with lifelong connection(s) in place

CPYP TRACKING SYSTEM

- ❖ Twelve youth were randomly selected at the onset of the first year of the project to be tracked. CPYP is gathering in-depth reports from workers in each county on the young people being targeted for youth permanency services. The Treatment CSW assigned to the case will need to complete the in-depth report
- ❖ Additionally, CPYP will track outcomes through CWS/CMS for the rest of the youth targeted. A special project page will be entered for each of the 180 High-Need Youth.

SUMMARY

Metro North's partnership with CPYP resulted in dramatic shifts in practice and success no one dreamed possible at the beginning of our work together one and a half years ago. Our utilization of new tools, development of resources, shifts in work assignments, and implementation of new programs has undeniably improved our approach and practice with young people. The outcomes achieved for the eighty High-Need Youth served by the Permanency Unit astounded all of us.

Yet, almost as equally shocking, was the amount and intensity of unexpected problems, frustrations and obstacles faced by staff at all levels as we persevered down an uncharted path. In looking back, we learned that we should have slowed down the process to better organize and prepare ourselves. The following are the essential lessons we learned that will guide us as we move forward:

1. The formation of the Permanency Unit was premature, as there was too much change all at once. Change needs to be well planned and thought through at all levels.
2. A clear and definitive target population needs to be developed, understood, and agreed-upon.
3. Training should be provided in advance before any cases are transferred into the unit.
4. Secondary Permanency Resources, such as P3 and BASW interns, need to be consistent in their availability to assume assigned responsibilities.
5. Tracking progress and outcomes needs to be well defined in the initial planning stage.
6. Permanency Unit CSWs are continuously in "crisis-mode" due to the population served and an adjustment needs to be planned to accommodate their workload demands
7. A strategic planning team needs to be formed from the start to develop and carryout the tasks needed to ensure communication, smooth implementation, staff buy-in, and youth/family involvement.

A considerable amount of time was given to gather input for developing a solid second year Permanency Project Plan. We specifically sought to learn from our hard-won lessons. We have clearly defined our target population, goals, training plan, methods, partnership building and outcome measurements to move forward into our second year. Our Permanency Leadership Team is a diverse group of dedicated staff focused to carryout the tasks outlined in this plan as a team. With this plan (and the clarity we hope it provides to move forward) we feel empowered and hopeful for our youth and their future.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A – CONCURRENT PLANNING REDESIGN “CHEAT SHEET”

ER CSW “Cheat Sheet” for Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR)

(For a full description of all tasks and duties, see the CPR Protocols)

WHEN	WHAT
<i>Before leaving for first contact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate FB1 Take several 4359 (ICWA Affidavits) Take several FB3 forms and prepaid return envelopes
<i>During the assessment:</i>	
<i>If referral unfounded or unsubstantiated</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop completing the FB1 Store any semi-completed FB forms in the green folder prior to closing the referral
<i>If founded</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Full Disclosure to family and FB3 forms with prepaid return envelopes Complete to the FB1 to the best of your ability Provide 4359 forms for signature File photocopies of completed FB1 form in all sibling purple folders
<i>Safe Surrender and FTP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact PRU by phone (626) 229-3775 or (626) 229-3790 for a resource family (if one is needed) Generate CPA (not CPPPAA) in CWS/CMS and submit to TPR clerk ASAP
<i>Detention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request birth certificate(s), marriage/divorce documents

DI “Cheat Sheet” for Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR)

(For a full description of all tasks and duties, see the CPR Protocols)

WHEN	WHAT
<i>During Dependency Investigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Full Disclosure to family and provide FB3 forms with prepaid return envelopes Ensure completion of the FB2 Ensure completion of FB1 information on FB Addendum¹ sheets and follow up on FB3s File copies of FB Addendum Sheets and completed FB2 forms in all sibling purple folders
<i>By PRC or within 45 days of detention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine alternative permanent plan with FM&R CSW
<i>Safe Surrender and FTP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If and when court grants FTP, request DI SCSW un-assign the PRC DI and assign a 26 DI
<i>Upon receipt of 26 DI Packet, 26 DI assumes responsibility for:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mine the case for all potential barriers to legal freeing Initiate efforts to resolve identified barriers eg., confer with other assigned CSWs and delegate activities to DI support staff Create timely & appropriate P26 notice(s) Ensure proper notice is served (including publication) Consult with Adoption CSW and co-write TPR 26 report Ensure that 26 report is copied, batched and sent out timely
<i>For continuances due to notice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct notice error Consult with Adoption CSW for possible updates s/he can add on adoption related issues.
<p>¹ Continually gathering family background is vital to obtaining a whole picture of the child. Every child has a right to know all there is to know about his/her parents and family's background as it directly effects who s/he can become.</p>	

FM&R/G CSW "Cheat Sheet" for Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR)

WHEN	WHAT
Upon receipt of case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Full Disclosure to family • Continue to gather FB1 & FB2 information on FB Addendum¹ sheets and follow up on FB3s
Before the JR21E, F or 22 hearing in which you are requesting FR services be terminated, do the following:	
90 days <i>prior</i> to the hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Request for Due Diligence Search (DCFS 136) for missing parent(s) indicating "Termination of FR" on the left side of the form by "Recommendation"²
60 days <i>prior</i> to the hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or Update CPA³ (not CPPPAA) in CWS/CMS and submit to TPR Clerk • If not recommending HOP, recommend activation of alternative plan on CPA or CPA Update • RA signature is required for recommendations other than HOP, Adoption and KinGap
30 days <i>prior</i> to the hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and mail timely & appropriate 21E, F or 22 notice(s) • if adoption is the alternative permanent plan and that plan has been activated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer with Adoption CSW assigned to case to ensure concurrence on plan • Complete status report ensuring that Adoption CSW's segments are included • Generate Application and Orders to Publish, (4376 & 4378)⁴ and attach to JR report • Attach the completed Declaration of Due Diligence Report (received from the Due Diligence Clerk) to the JR report • Create and submit 26 DI packet
<p>1 Continually gathering family background is vital to obtaining a whole picture of the child. Every child has a right to know all there is to know about his/her parents and family's background as it directly effects who s/he can become.</p> <p>2 The DIA is to follow up on leads for this Due Diligence Search.</p> <p>3 The 2 page CPA update is needed every six months for plans other than an activated adoption plan.</p> <p>4 When the signed Publication Orders are received back from Court, give them to the 26 DI to initiate timely publication.</p>	

Adoption CSW "Cheat Sheet" for Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR)

WHEN	WHAT
Upon receipt of Activated CPA	For all children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire a copy of the last minute order and start tracking case for all future court activity • Initiate the "Adoption CSW Checklist for Working with Attached & Unattached Children" For Attached children – Initiate the "Home Study Assessment Checklist"
Frequently throughout the life of the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer with team members regarding progress or concerns • Confer frequently with PRU and the FM&R/G CSW as to matching progress • Continue to complete tasks outlined in Checklist(s) initiated upon receipt of Activated CPA • Update Preplacement Conference/Presentation materials about the child as new information is obtained so information is current when needed.
Prior to writing Adoption related segments on all JR (pre & post TPR) and 26 Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer with FM&R/G (and 26 DI) assigned to case to ensure concurrence on plan for the child • Submit segments of report to SCSW with enough time for review and forwarding to redactor
For 26 Continued for Adoption issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write and submit supplemental report
Upon receipt CPA for assessment ¹ :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the CPA and, in accord with recommended plan, sign and return. If discord arises as to a permanency recommendation, pursue resolution using the chain of command.
<p>1 Current practice designates the Permanency Planning Liaison as responsible to complete the CPA. This responsibility will be shifted to the Adoption CSW at a future date.</p>	

APPENDIX B – U.S. SEARCH

Attached are the results of a U.S. Search Report automatically completed in conjunction with every due diligence search at the Metro North office.

The U.S. Search may contain:

- a) names associated with the subject
 - b) others associated with the subject's SSN
 - c) addresses found – verified and not verified
 - d) possible associates and their addresses
 - e) possible relatives and their addresses
 - f) neighbors and their addresses
- FOLLOW-UP – The attached report is being forwarded to you immediately as it may include information to allow you to immediately contact a parent or other relative. As with any results from the due diligence search, you need to follow up on any addresses that come up on the U. S. Search by either sending notices, going to the address, or by calling the phone numbers listed. The due diligence clerk or DIA will automatically send a letter to any relative, neighbor or other potential contact listed on the U.S. Search. All need to be entered in the due diligence document that is sent to court. Per county counsel instructions, the U.S. Search document itself is **not** to be attached to the due diligence sent to court.
 - TRAINING - Training is being scheduled now for the SCSWs in reading and understanding the results of the U.S. Search. Hopefully by mid-November all SCSWs will be familiar with the document and be able to assist you in understanding it. In the meantime, any SCSW who is participating in the Family Finding program is willing and able to answer any questions you may have about the document.
 - DUE DILIGENCE CLERK - U.S. Search is fairly accurate and will often result in locating a parent or relatives of the child. If you do locate the parent, please notify the due diligence clerk or DIA as soon as possible so s/he can stop conducting other searches for your parent.
 - FAMILY FINDING DOCUMENTATION - Finally, although your primary use for U.S. Search at this moment may be to locate a parent, keep in mind that we also need to locate as many relatives of the child as possible and try to involve them in planning for permanency for the child. As you contact relatives, neighbors and associates of the parent from U.S. Search, document their contact information, their interest in the child, and whether they are willing to be part of a team to plan for the future of the child.

APPENDIX C – U.S. SEARCH SAMPLE LETTER

Date

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear ***name of relative or neighbor***,

I am writing you today in an effort to locate: ***name of parent***

Additionally, your help is urgently needed to help ***name of the child*** locate his/her relatives or others who know and love him/her. I am hoping you may be able to provide names and phone numbers of relatives and/or others. This information could help ***name of child*** establish his/her identity, build his/her sense of belonging, and help raise his/her feelings of self-worth.

Please immediately contact Children's Social Worker ***name of CSW*** at ***CSW's Address and Phone #***. The Children's Social Worker does accept collect calls.

I appreciate any information you may have to offer as it could make a very big difference in the life of ***name of child***.

Sincerely,

Name of Search Clerk or DIA
Job Title

APPENDIX D - PERMANENCY PROJECT QUARTERLY PROGRESS REVIEW

SCSW:		EXT:		CSW:		EXT:		
Case Name:				Youth's Name:			DOB:	
Program Type:	FM		FR		PP		Placement Type/Name:	
Project Assignment Date:					Permanency Coordinator:			

The case was originally referred due to:

Court ordered		Recent psychiatric hospitalization	
ARA assigned		Heavy substance abuse	
No connections		Frequent AWOLs	
Frequent replacements		Other:	

Quarterly Progress Review:

Date of Review:

Type of Progress	√	Explanation (Include dates of major events, future plans, etc)
Youth is a participant or leader in the permanency process		
Youth who previously was not placed with siblings, is now		
Youth who previously was not visiting siblings, is now		
Youth who previously had no contact with parents, relatives or adult mentors, is now connected		
Youth has moved to a lower level of care (please indicate the rate for the past and present placements)		
Youth has moved from non-relative to relative care (please indicate the rate for the past and present placements)		
Youth has returned to home of parent and jurisdiction has terminated		
Youth has returned to home of parent and case remains open under FM		
Youth is moving towards reunification with parent		
Youth has been adoptively placed and adoption has been finalized		
Youth has been placed in an adoptive home		
Youth who was previously opposed to adoption is in active adoptive planning		
LG has been granted and case closed under Kin-Gap		
LG has been granted and case remains open with or without court		
LG is the plan and case is moving towards that goal		
Youth has emancipated with lifelong connection(s) in place		
Other		