

## **Second Northern California CPYP Meeting**

June 19, 2007

10:00 am to 2:30 pm

1650 Mission Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Classroom 2, San Francisco, CA

### **Minutes**

**Next Meeting: Sonoma County will host the next meeting in October 2007 (date, time and location to be determined).**

**Mardi Louisell**, CPYP, chaired the meeting.

#### **Attendees (see attached sign-in sheet)**

**Jesús Barragán**, San Francisco County

**Anthony Barrows**, San Francisco County

**Heather Bourland**, California State Department of Social Services

**Mignon Evans**, Sonoma County

**Marilyn Franklin**, Contra Costa County

**Jan Howland**, California State Department of Social Services

**Andrea Javist**, California State Department of Social Services

**Eileen Johnson**, California Permanency for Youth Project

**Fred Jones**, Sonoma County

**Mardi Louisell**, California Permanency for Youth Project

**Sheldon Martin**, San Francisco County

**Karen McClure**, Sonoma County

**Nancy McDonald**, Alameda County

**Maria Elena Munoz**, San Francisco County

**Jamila Nightingale**, San Francisco County

**Tina Obinna**, California Permanency for Youth Project

**Katharine Odle**, San Mateo County

**Leslie Olson**, Sacramento County

**Whitney Rhodes**, Sacramento County

**Jennifer Rodriguez**, Youth Law Center

**Ellen Scharffenberg**, Contra Costa County

**Joseph Solion**, Yolo County

**Kerry Stokes**, Sonoma County

**Kathleen Sutton**, Yolo County

**David Turk**, San Francisco County

**Renee Williams**, San Francisco County

## **Agenda**

- 10:00 a.m.     Welcome, introductions
- Brief update on a key action step each county as completed. Questions counties have; challenges they wish to strategize about with other counties.
- Brief update on CPYP, new forms, Practice Guides.
- CPYP's *Intent to Maintain Contact* Form and Foster Club's *Permanency Pact*, similarities, differences, how to use to work with families.
- Set next meeting date and topics
- 1:00 p.m.     Report on Emancipated Youth Connections Project (EYCP), Jennifer Rodriguez
- 2:30 p.m.     End

## **Minutes**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Mardi Louisell welcomed the group; attendees introduced themselves. Mardi reiterated that the purpose of this meeting was to learn from each other's successes and together, to brainstorm solutions to challenges, as well as to address ongoing issues, such as data collection and forms, that counties want to discuss.

### **A Brief Update on a Key Action Step Each County has Completed**

#### **San Francisco County**

- In May 2007, Bob Lewis spent two half days training staff on permanency. In the afternoon of the first day, he worked with supervisors and in the afternoon of the second day, he facilitated a discussion on organizational development of youth permanency.
- San Francisco County contracted with Family Builders by Adoption to do a media campaign (focusing on 55 kids) which is being featured on BART and in the local newspapers.

#### **Sonoma County**

Fred Jones shared a success story about a young girl who had several failed adoptions. The young lady via MySpace was able to find family members in Florida and visited them.

#### **Family Builders by Adoption**

Five additional permanency workers have been hired to work with Alameda and San Francisco Counties and are housed in county offices alongside case workers. The Family Builders social workers have access to all records and are starting to work with younger siblings.

## **California Dept. of Social Services (CDSS)**

CDSS Adoption has implemented Kaleidoscope in Yolo County. Kaleidoscope is a project that focuses on permanency for children who have been in placements for over 18 months.

## **San Mateo County**

The county has had significant changes in administration and staff, which have affected how widely youth permanency can be implemented. Nevertheless, they have hired a permanency specialist who is proceeding with finding youth permanency. Last month the county had a big success when a youth was taken to Virginia to visit an aunt.

## **Contra Costa County**

Significant changes in administration have affected how fast youth permanency can go forward. At this point there is no project manager for the CPYP effort, because of changes in administration.

## **Yolo County**

The county was well prepared when the concept of youth permanence was introduced. The small unit was primed to do it and knew the pitfalls. One question being worked out as the county goes forward is what the balance is between the role of the county with case responsibility and the role of the permanency specialist from outside the county.

## **Questions Counties Have**

When the group was able to discuss question that arose, the discussion is documented after the question. Other questions will need to be discussed further at a later time.

## **How are counties implementing youth permanence in the front end?**

Most counties are only beginning to sort out this implementation issue.

## **How does one maintain connections with family members who cannot provide a permanent home for the youth?**

Open adoption is certainly the way to go. However, sometimes social workers are afraid that if they ask the potential adoptive family to maintain contact with the youth's family, the worker will lose the adoptive family.

## **How long do we hold on to a case once permanency has been found? We want to be there for the family and youth, but we don't know how long to hold on. Sometimes workers have difficulty cutting off the connection with the youth.**

Consider how strong the family's internal resources are and how these can be supported. This is a question of resources and needs more examination, since we all know there are not enough resources for post-adoption/post-permanency support.

## **How do we weed out non-committal adults? How do we find previously adopted siblings out of state? How do we deal with obstruction/sabotage from foster parents?**

Case example: one permanency specialist was assisting a brother and sister to locate family members. He located family members in Richmond and Discovery Bay. After the first meeting

between the youth and found family, two reunions were planned, but adult family members did not follow through. The foster parent was giving double messages. This situation has been going on for about five to six months, and now it is impossible to reach family members.

- We tend to forget about the invisible people who have resistance. Be sure to anticipate that and bring those persons onto the team. Deal with their hesitations up front, trying to find out what the issues are and then address them honestly and use your knowledge of what permanency is to help them understand the issues.
- Resistance of foster parents - again, try to involve them as a partner. State adoptions said that they have a meeting with the social worker and foster parent to find out if there is resistance and why. It's important to let the foster parents off the hook. Be honest and allow them to say, "I do not want to be an adoptive parent." Then the social worker can ask, "Can you stay connected when the youth moves to a permanent home?" The social worker helps everyone involved play a part in the youth's permanency.
- The family too needs to be let off the hook. Ask them, "What can you do? Do you know someone else who might be able to provide permanency? Can you contact them? Can you get them to help you with recruitment for someone for the youth?"
- Write a letter when calls are not being returned. Set limits – we do not have forever. Have a family meeting. Set a time line for how long you have to figure this out. Explain that you as the social worker need to know where we are within a certain period of time.
- Tell the child exactly how things are going each step of the way. Keep her/him completely informed.

**What about when foster parents want to adopt a 14-year-old child and the child says, "No"?**

- A 14-year-old child can legally say that. However, the question shouldn't be asked until a full discussion has been held of what adoption and permanency means.
- Find out why the 14-year old does not want to be adopted. It could be simple ideas that come from misinformation: for instance, the youth might believe s/he has to have her/his name changed. Explore with the youth why they don't want permanency and what it means in their minds.
- Some workers are scared of using the "A" word with either youth or potential permanent families.
- One participant mentioned that there are three types of families: biological family, adoptive family and fantasy family.

**What are effective ways to prepare youth to prevent self-sabotage when a family has been located?**

- Darla Henry's training helps social workers to prepare youth and families for permanency by addressing the youth's grief and loss. For the child and youth, it's all about loss.
- Often permanent families do not want to have contact with the biological family. Everyone must be prepared: the foster family, the parents, the permanent family, the youth.

### **Would it be better not to look for these connections because it is another potential disappointment for the youth?**

- We social workers worry a lot about disappointing youth, but the youth have already been disappointed and know and feel that things are not in good shape for them.
- We cannot guarantee to the youth what we will find, only that we are looking. Most youth are grateful someone is looking for them, regardless of what is found. Even if one doesn't find a permanent connection, one can find out about traits and talents of the youth's family that the youth did not know about before. Often, even if they don't find permanency, they have now met family members and have gained family history. Social workers can highlight the positive – that the youth knows who s/he is and where s/he comes from.
- We social workers think of unsuccessful attempts to contact family as failures – instead see them as an ongoing process. Keep trying.
- In one case, contact with the family when the youth had not known them for his entire life provided positive reinforcement for the youth and made him grateful for having had the benefits of his foster home. His behavior became better and the behavior of a found sibling, currently in jail, improved too.

### **How are you going about getting referrals for permanency specialists?**

- Announce openings in permanency specialist units.
- Demonstrate a level of success for social worker buy-in. Social workers are afraid of disruption to stability.
- Discuss temporary placement vs. permanent family ties with social workers.

### **How are counties work with undocumented youth? How do we contact others who may be undocumented to find out about a child in the system? How do we locate permanent connections?**

- San Francisco and Los Angeles have a close working relationship with the Consulate's Office.
- Maria Elena Munoz of San Francisco offered to assist other counties with undocumented youth.
- One law student at UC Davis has become familiar with the process and a booklet is being developed.
- Fred Jones from Sonoma County indicated that he has contact information for an immigration attorney.
- There seems to be some resistance from some social workers, who ask, "Why are kids sent to another country where they are not familiar with the customs, etc.? Do they think that when they are returned to Mexico, we are taking them from a better life here in the US?"

### **Additional Questions Not Discussed**

- How do we provide training and support to parents?
- At what point do we shift from trying to make a life-long connection to another focus?
- How to we assure that staff come to training on permanency with all the other job and training demands?

## **Key Summary Points**

- Be sure that the youth is the first person you talk with to find out what s/he wants from her/his family or a permanent family.
- In the first contact with the family regarding permanence, ask for information about the history of the family, sports, hobbies, etc. Examine the language of the letter: does it stress placement rather than connections and getting historical information? If so, alter the letter so it focuses on getting information and making connections.
- Case consultation with teams: Fred Jones of Sonoma County developed a confidentiality agreement to be used for persons who are not employees of the county, but who are involved in the case or in the case consultation process.
- Databases. Sonoma County adopted the database from Stanislaus, which includes: name of all found connections with birthdates, social security number, address, phone number and notes. A variety of reports can be pulled from this information.

### **Questions:**

- If a group home has information, how can it get included in the database?
- In larger counties the information gets lost if it is not tracked. It has been a struggle to keep up with the data and actually know who the kids are who don't have a permanent connection.
- Partnerships
  - Initially Family Builders permanency specialists presented themselves as non-threatening partners who could do some of the time-consuming work that county workers did not have time to do. In partnerships, check on whether roles have been clarified. Are there job descriptions? Sacramento County developed an MOU for its work with EMQ, Sierra Adoptions and the group homes.
  - In one situation with a great deal of conflict, the county and non-county partner sat down and worked it out to determine what was best for the child.
  - One county worked with a 12-year-old who was receiving WRAP services and also with the foster father. The WRAP providers were sabotaging the work and a supervisor was called in to intervene.
  - Yolo County and CDSS hold regular monthly meetings to facilitate their partnership.

## **Intent to Maintain Contact Form and the Permanency Pact**

Mardi Louisell presented the Permanency Pact as a possible alternative to the Intent to Maintain Contact Form.

- Some counties felt the Permanent Pact was friendlier and that it outlined goals and established at the end what the role of the signer would be in the youth's life. The Permanency Pact works well with emancipated youth.
- Several counties have had difficulty getting participants to complete the Intent to Maintain Contact Form
- If a social worker uses the Permanency Pact to indicate a permanent connection (level 3 on the CPYP Permanency Scale), be sure to indicate on the form how it is permanent. For the purposes of our evaluation, send it to Craig Evans, and ask if it works for Level 3 (non-legal permanency). If it doesn't, CPYP will get back to you.

## **Report on Emancipated Youth Connections Project (EYCP) - Jennifer Rodriguez**

Mardi Louisell and Nancy McDonald gave a brief report on EYCP. McDonald was one of the social workers who worked with the twenty youth, ages 18 and older, who participated in the project. The project focused on finding connections for youth who had helped CPYP but who had not found permanency for themselves. The youth developed their own goals and then worked with an assigned social worker from EYCP. Although some were more successful than others, all youth were successful in achieving their goals. The project took longer than the anticipated year, in large part because of how emotionally difficult the process was for the former foster youth and how difficult it was for the social worker and the former foster youth to meet. Cheryl Jacobson will submit a report in August 2007 which will include a large section on lessons learned.

An original member of the CPYP Task Force, Jennifer Rodriguez, formerly of CYC, soon to join the Youth Law Center in San Francisco, has worked tirelessly for CPYP and been instrumental in key foster youth state legislation. Jennifer described herself as an “advanced permanency evangelist.”

In describing her participation in EYCP, Jennifer talked about how difficult it was for her to participate in the process, believing at the beginning that she didn’t need help and, even if she did, others needed it more.

Her own foster care experience included depression, sadness and the lack of a permanent connection. Jennifer said that foster care did not give her experience with successful relationships and no experience in developing the skills to carry on the small talk that leads to and is part of ongoing relationships. She said that as foster youth are unable to find a family, they begin to believe that they are too “screwed up” to be part of a family. Often they feel completely rejected by parents and family. The skills that are taught in independent living, Jennifer felt, may all be in vain – for instance, foster youth don’t know how to balance a checkbook or open a bank account - and even when they are taught, it doesn’t take because foster youth have no money so balancing a checkbook is irrelevant.

Often former foster youth themselves have conflicts about reuniting and finding their biological families for various reasons. In many cases former foster youth have no pictures of themselves as young children. Often former foster youth distrust social workers and that made it difficult for some to trust the EYCP social workers – and, in fact, people in general.

Despite this, many of the former foster youth in the EYCP project eventually decided to try to locate family members and were successful. In Jennifer’s case, she located her father’s brother and wrote to him. It took some time for a response, but she finally received a phone call from an aunt and eventually took her child to visit the uncle and aunt, where she learned their perspectives on how she had been left in foster care. Regardless of whether the youth who found relatives will be in regular contact or not, the youth in EYCP felt that participating was a good thing. Many of them know more about their history than they did before, have met relatives, clarified their goals, and made contingency plans for their children with either relatives or other

identified permanent connections. In addition to this, the youth said that having someone concentrate on helping them in this specific way for a period of 18 months was an invaluable support to them and their self-esteem. Jennifer emphasized several times that she became even more firmly convinced that it was critical to support youth through this family finding process when they were still in the system, because it was extremely difficult to come up against the emotions of grief and loss when you're out on your own and responsible for supporting yourself and maybe a family. When you are out on your own, you can't take a month off to process these feelings, but when you are in the system, you have support to help you.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be in Sonoma County; the date, time and location will be announced at a later date.

**List of Attached Handouts**

List of Attendees

Permanency Pact

Declaration of Intent to Maintain Contact

**Northern California CPYP Meeting**  
**June 19, 2007**  
**List of Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
Jesús Barragán	San Francisco County	barrajb@cws.state.ca.us
Anthony Barrows	Family Builders by Adoption	abarrows@familybuilders.org
Heather Bourland	California State Department of Social Services	heather.bourland@dss.ca.gov
Mignon Evans	Sonoma County	evansma@schsd.org
Marilyn Franklin	Contra Costa County	frankm@ehsd.cccounty.us
Jan Howland	California State Department of Social Services	janice.howland@dss.ca.gov
Andrea Javist	California State Department of Social Services	andrea.javist@dss.ca.gov
Eileen Johnson	California Permanency for Youth Project	cpypmail@sbcglobal.net
Fred Jones	Sonoma County	jonesfb@schsd.org
Mardi Louisell	California Permanency for Youth Project	mjlouisell@gmail.com
Sheldon Martin	San Francisco County	marshel@cws.state.ca.us
Karen McClure	Sonoma County	mccluk@schsd.org
Nancy McDonald	Family Builders by Adoption	nmcdonald@familybuilders.org
Maria Elena Munoz	San Francisco County	munome@cws.state.ca.us
Jamila Nightingale	San Francisco County	nightj@cws.state.ca.us
Tina Obinna	California Permanency for Youth Project	cpypadmin@sbcglobal.net
Katharine Odle	San Mateo County	kodle@smchsa.org
Leslie Olson	Sacramento County	olsonl@sacounty.net
Whitney Rhodes	Sacramento County	rhodew@sacounty.net
Jennifer Rodriguez	Youth Law Center	jennar22@hotmail.com
Ellen Scharffenberg	Contra Costa County	schare@ehsd.cccounty.us
Joseph Solich	Yolo County	solicja@cws.state.ca.us
Kerry Stokes	Sonoma County	stokeka@schsd.org
Kathleen Sutton	Yolo County	suttok@cws.state.ca.us
David Turk	San Francisco County	turkda@cws.state.ca.us
Renee Williams	San Francisco County	willira@cws.state.ca.us