

Northern California Multi-County Meeting
October 22, 2008

Multi-county meeting host:

The transition from CPYP organizing and hosting the multicounty meeting to having participants do so was discussed. Contra Costa County volunteered to host the subsequent meetings but could not provide food. We accepted their offer, at least for the next time and will continue to move the responsibility for the meetings to the participants. For this meeting, Mardi Louisell will take the confirmations. Sonoma County volunteered to host the April meeting.

Updates:

Sonoma: At division meetings, a permanency success story is told each time. Sonoma is starting to print success stories on large poster board rather than using trees.

Monterey: Has contracted with Aspiranet as their WRAP provider. They will also do family finding.

Solano: Just joined CPYP. They had two kick-offs with Mary Stone Smith and Pat O'Brien, and the first training in Family Finding and Engagement. They had an CPYP implementation meeting with partners. Almost every provider they contacted came, which was a great success. This happened because the project liaison called them individually and invited them.

Alameda: Have many partnerships including Family Builders, and several projects working family finding and connections. They have a youth-adult partnership program and also have current and former foster youth training staff on permanency. In the early stages of the CPYP work, they hired some clerks to do the searching on the internet. Alameda is trying to do family finding at the front end, also working on making sure that the information found is preserved.

Contra Costa: Keeps information on family located in an envelope with the youth's social security card and birth certificate. IN fact, they have a CD that they give to the youth that contains all the material gathered for the youth. They scan all items onto the CD.

Casey Family Programs: Ashna from Casey told about a success story where she had searched for the father of a 15 year old woman who was deaf/hard of hearing. Ashna went to Seattle for a meeting and decided to drive to Vancouver Washington, site of the father's last known address, to see if she could find him. She had sent letters and received no response. She went to the address, no one was home. Then she went to the VA hospital since the father was a vet. She asked them if the address was current and told them why she wanted to know. They confirmed the address. She went back and knocked and the father's wife answered. She said he wasn't home but Ashna could return. She waited and came back two hours later. Talked to the father and showed him the picture of the teenage girl. He wanted a paternity test. He gave Ashna a picture of him to show her

but because he had lung cancer and was quite emaciated, he gave her a picture of him when he was younger. Ashna returned to the Bay Area and worked on the paternity test but the next time she called him, he said his wife had said to him, "Look at that picture, she's yours!" And he said he didn't need the test. The girl met her father several times. He died recently but she was able to get to know him and he gave his blessing on her adoption by a teacher.

Seneca Center: also reported on a youth who was able to find the paternal side, after the mother had been reluctant to share information.

Issues:

Tracking found family: How to use CWS-CMS for tracking the information? This issue comes up regularly and so far there isn't a clear solution. The following answers were given: Alameda: mentioned relative area and a collateral notebook, but it wasn't consistent. They needed a place to store what relatives have been assessed for placement. Sonoma: Uses Stanislaus's Access database.

Confidentiality in youth perm. meetings: Soma mentioned that the MDT (Multidisciplinary Team) guidelines explicitly state that when a person is a member of an MDT, one can share confidential information. A youth permanency team is an MDT so is treated the same.

Youth moving out of state: Sonoma brought up how to handle situations where a youth moves to another state to be with family and have attachment issues but other states may not have services to address this. This is an issue for everyone and there was no answer, just a good discussion. CCC mentioned that one can do family therapy by telephone. However, there may be ICPC issues – the state to which a youth is moving may not agree with the current county's plan. Family Builders sometimes contacts a partner agency in the state if one is available. Of course, sometimes kids will decide to live with an out of state family after emancipation. One could possibly do a contract with an out of state agency but financial considerations are an issue. It was suggested that Casey Family Services take on this issue. Perhaps there are other non-profit national networking sources to help?

Adoption Records (*N.B. some details and form numbers may not be correct. We will review at next meeting.*) AB 714: allows caseworker to access information about bio family in case of failed adoptions. Once the TPR is done but the adoption not finalized, then what? What about an organization who is working with a youth and wants information (an FFA, for instance) but is not within the public child welfare system? **Code 827** allows a person to request information. **Form JV 570** is used but this is only for court records.

AB 2488 not required until July 2010. Funding issues .

AB 908 addresses persons who want to contact siblings who have been adopted. The law passed but there was no funding. The law stipulates that one uses an intermediary. CCC has been using this process and it has worked. Sometimes, however, an adoptive family is not willing to allow contact with the person requesting contact.

CCC may have some forms that they will share at our next meeting.
Youth and adults both have been using MySpace when formal avenues fail.

As a preventive measure, it would be best if agencies worked with adoptive siblings from the beginning. With older siblings who aren't adopted and younger siblings who are, some counties use a mediated agreement with the adoptive parents for allowing contact with siblings. This is a good idea, but it is not binding. Recommendation: when there is a potential adoption, involve other siblings in the planning process.

Partner Resistance: Therapists/MH staff: Some people have fun into therapists who are fearful of a youth reuniting with family. There are sometimes attachment issues between the long-term therapist and the youth. The therapist says "The youth isn't ready" for permanence or a move or to meet family. Fred Jones in Sonoma has made presentation to therapists, MH staff and group homes and found community outreach on site effective. Be prepared for resistance from the clinical staff at group homes. Alameda meets regularly with group home directors – this is a venue where permanency could be discussed as an ongoing issue on the agenda. How to give basic training about permanency to MH and therapists? How to get them to a training? Do outreach, then invite them to trainings and invite them to staffings on permanency. MH staff weigh disruption against well-being: if the youth has a history of multiple placements, then, finally, the social worker has found a table placement, do we want to risk this? CCC found resistance from courts and child's attorney, in one case who wouldn't allow change from group home placements. They get more resistance from courts than from MH. CASA volunteers can be a help or hindrance depending on the relationship between CASA and social services. Solano is involving CASA in the project from the start.

Resources:

- Debbie Riley trained Family Builders. Nancy McDonald of FB reported that she gets to the core of what kids are feeling. Her philosophy is that the grief and loss work can only happen when the kid has permanency.
- Seneca Center provides free training on family finding and engagement, as well as other training.. See www.senecacenter.org
- Mary Stone Smith of Catholic Community Services of Western Washington (CCSWW), a co-founder of the 6 Step Model of Family Finding and Engagement, uses video cameras to film family members who are interested in the youth.
- Nancy McDonald discussed the teen permanency group they do, adapted from Bob Lewis's *Family Bound Curriculum*. It's very success with transportation being a big issue. The social workers pick up the youth. the group is for ages 13-17 and meet once a month. Contact Nancy for information: nmcdonald@familybuilders.org

Future meetings:

N. California CPYP Multi-county Meeting: Jan. 28, Martinez.

Case consultation phone call: Monthly with every fourth month in person, usually in SF. Please contact Mardi Louisell for call in number.