

Northern California Multi-County Meeting  
January 28, 2009  
Contra Costa County

**Present:** CPYP: Eileen Johnson, Mardi Louisell; CC25I: Jim Anderson, Lyssa Trujillo; Sonoma County: Fred Jones, Karen McClure, Jeanne Oliver; Aspiranet: Odessa Caton, Meredith Smith; San Mateo: Shalinda Roan; Stanislaus: Karla Self, Naomi Jimenez; Foster a Dream: Lori Cohee, Tamara Earl; Humboldt: Carolyn Albee, Barbara Lahaie; Family Builders: Nancy McDonald, Amy Sample; Monterey: Jinny Meyers, Tammy Witham, Seneca Center: Kelly Anderson, Steven Kinsman, Marlene Christensen; Casey Family Programs: Gregory Evans, Ilyade Elliott; Edgewood: Mary Bedford-Carter, Paula Miller; Alameda: Jon Pettigrew; Solano: Veronica Piper-Jefferson; Sonoma Cty Foster Parent Asso.: Sherri Justice Cook; Glenn: Cheryl Harrison, Elizabeth Kelly, Lisa Permann; Families First: Ruby Garcia

**GenoPro Demonstration**

Mia Estrada showed the software, explained the purpose and standard symbols used for health, medical, emotional relationships, social entities, agencies and photos shown. A user can cut and paste program itself into word report generator and can create family narratives that can be shared on the web.

Mia doesn't bring the computer to the interview but has the conversation in which she asks about family. Then back in the office, she enters the data and can see what important facts are still missing. She then returns to get answers for the added questions.

Seneca has a site license that is ~ \$1300 per site.

**N. California Multi-County Meetings:** As of December, 2009, CPYP will not be available to facilitate these meetings. In the near future, Mardi will be asking people think about facilitating the group at that time. Discussion was had about whether to split this group into a north and south locations but this was voted down.

**Issues:**

**Out of county and out of country searches:** How do counties handle this?

Department of Social Services in Mexico is contacted and some counties have a list of people there they call. Also have used them home studies. In El Salvador and Guatemala, counties have ended up sending its SWs there.

- Alameda: tries to partner with a local agency for home studies. Has an SW who specialize in ICPC

- Sonoma: Uses court investigator. See website for story about how Sonoma County found permanency for a teenager in Montana and the financial and attitude barriers it had to surmount to make it happen.

- Stanislaus: Uses ancestry.com, even though it costs money. Stanislaus is now adding new information on Mexico, Canada, border crossing. County uses FF money to access birth/marriage indexes for CA through 1995. Uses Google translator for phone book searches; uses Facebook and MySpace; has a "Search angel" a person who lives locally and is willing to go and search the physical records

- Family Builders: If ICPC won't approve, have family do home study for stranger adoption, that is, a back door adoption. Use national database posting, have family select child.
- Glenn County: Found family in Oregon, family wasn't legally documented but Glenn could do the process in California, even though not in Oregon.

### **Accessing Adoption Records:**

- F Jones, Sonoma: when adoption ahs failed, public agency is able to go back and access records for purpose of placement. In one case, the sibling was in WA State and Sonoma tried to find the county. Finally, with a lot of work of calling social workers in the county, found the private agency that had done the adoption and was able to contact the adoptive mother.
- Use Mediator. The child can get mediator to go to adoptive family of sibling to ask if sibling is interested in contact. CCC is doing this; San Mateo has designated a person to do it, and SF is also doing this. Alameda is working on a protocol on how to handle this.

### **Family Finding & Engagement Practice with partners, FFAs, Groups Homes**

Common issues:

- Youth finds permanency in the group home
- Group home/FFA want to work on permanency but county SW says not to rock the boat;
- Funding issues.
  - Alameda: Now have SWs working with group homes but there is often conflict with the case carrying SW.
  - Seneca: Usually gets referrals because the county SW wants the FFE work done. Has a clear contract with Alameda referring kids to the Dumisha project. Even so, there are sometimes issues with FFAs or therapist, who feels that moving a child into a home that "may not" work would be too harmful.
  - General: Sometimes there are conflicts with the CASA. A youth told CASA he didn't want to find his father but he told the FFE SW he wanted to find him.
- Suggestions:
  - Have a meeting with all partners *before* the youth is present to try to get everyone on board, explain what permanency is, have the case-carrying SW vet the FFE SW, etc.
    - If everyone is on board, a SW and attorney might overrule the CASA.
    - Face-to-face meetings help overcome barriers, FFE must constantly educate and have patience. In a team meeting, everyone has a chance to share and the FFE SW can clarify. Can emphasize that each person is territorial in a positive way.
    - SW has the responsibility to find family whether the youth wants it or not – one can keep the information on file so that, if the youth wants it eventually, it is available.
    - Sonoma has a Lifelong Connections Collaborative Meeting: CASA director, FFAs, attorneys, and others attend.
    - Everyone must communicate with foster parents about the change in practice on permanency. Include foster parents as team members from the start

- Become part of the CASA training program. Have CASA workers share their success stories.
- Have a champion from MH or CASA or FFA, group home, etc., and have that person talk to their own group about permanency and family finding, etc.
- Humboldt: Had a young woman with an adoptive family who wanted her as long as she didn't have MH issues but when she had serious MH issues and suicide attempts, didn't want her. Her worst behavior and suicide attempts occurred when she was in a secure setting. After she was removed from the family, the county connected her bio grandmother and bio mom, and found dad in prison. The attempts at placement haven't worked but she now knows there are people who love her. Although she didn't have a home, she has a story of her life. Some children will have MH issues throughout their lives but there are steps one can take to help them cope. In working on this case, it was important that many administrative levels were involved in buy-in due to the suicide attempts. The higher the administrative level from which you can get buy-in, the better.
  - If a county isn't initiating family finding, a partners needs to take the initiative in beginning family finding and engagement and Youth Permanent Team meetings
  - Flag early on what partners are involved so there isn't duplication of efforts.

## County and Partner Reports

**General:** In some counties, the courts won't allow a youth to be emancipated from foster care unless there is a plan or a permanent connection found.

**SF:** Has an random assignment, experimental project to research the results of family finding for children detained for the first time in the courts. Seneca does the family finding. In December invited all FFAs, group homes, some foster parents and other partners to a meeting where the county explained the direction it was going regarding permanency.

**Family Builders:** Is doing recruitment events for older youth with a pizza party and basketball game so that the event includes activities.

**Glenn:** Co-located with and partners with ILP

**Humboldt:** expanded their partners to include MH, public health, state adoption, probation. Now co-located with ILS, MH, CA. Still issues with probation.

**Monterey:** had kick-off event on FFE and Grief and Loss.

**Aspiranet:** IN beginning states of FFE with six youth in several counties. SWs are contacting the county SWS.

**Humboldt:** Is writing agency policies and procedures for FFE, especially at the front end. Some resistance from ER supervisors, who are worried that it would mean looking at permanency too soon and ruling out the family. They are explaining that it is also about supporting the family as they reunify. Just began ILS one-stop shop on site, hoping that additional partners will be co-located, including THP and THPPlus. Also began transitional youth project, a 5 year collaboration with CYC that addresses MH issues for youth.

Assistant Director gave a presentation to the directors with data and outcomes regarding its permanency work. Every month, every county should be examining a list of all kids without permanency.

**Sonoma:** Does family finding for all children who enter the system who are 12 and over. Uses MS Access 2007 run-time version for documenting connections.

**Stanislaus:** Does family finding for every child. Is getting court orders to find specific family members. Uses Business Objects report to show connections.

**Next Meeting: April 29, 2009, Alameda County**

**July Meeting: July 29, Sonoma County.**