

- I. **Introductions** – see Roster (attendees from Five Acres, Hollygrove, LAC DCFS and Probation, OC CYS and SSA, OC CASA program and Canyon Acres)

- II. **What Projects are in progress?**
 - a. *Bob Malmberg, from Orange County Social Services*, outlined their programs that include 5 cohorts and 225 youth.
 - i. Contract with Canyon Acres for 50 youth, that also includes up to 24 emergency searches for front-end services
 - ii. New agreement for 20 more youth in Long Term Foster Care w/ no relatives and close to emancipation.
 - iii. Group Homes – 14 youth under Jeff Griffin
 - iv. CASA has 20 youth
 - v. Orangewood Children's Home – goal is to keep youth < 30 days and do searches for family members when no other placements are found.
 - vi. (Bob Malmberg said they added an extra 20 support staff in OC to help with progress??).

 - b. *Jill McQuade-Hutchinson, from Canyon Acres*, described their first year experience with 26 kids.
 - i. At the end of the first year, every child had one good contact. Of those, 6 families said they wanted kids to unite with no (no mention of cases finalized at this point?).
 - ii. Discussed the ideal family finding staff for discovery are people who like the detective/investigator aspect. Engagement staff are generally Masters level.
 - iii. Pass-back to county social workers after the engagement process has been started.

 - c. *Jeff Griffin, from OC Group Homes*, discussed initial skepticism about project, then enthusiasm as they saw it work. Now many more staff recognize it's part of the larger process (a tactic towards permanent outcomes).
 - i. They initially selected kids in Group Homes for Family Finding who had long term Foster Care as Discharge Plan and little or no family involvement. This was a good launching point and easy to get buy-in.

 - d. *Tawny Crane, OC CFS*, found it was easier to get buy-in if the case worker was doing the work.
 - i. She started with 20 kids who had an average of 4 connections and through family finding, this increased to 17 family members per client, and nine good connections per client.
 - ii. They are expanding to 30 kids in the program.

 - e. General discussion on Union Issues encountered in the process.

 - f. General discussion on results demonstration – looking for increase in function in: 1) personal 2) self care 3) school. Jeff handed out pages with progress charts for 13 kids in the program, showing significant improvements (decrease) in Brief Impairment Scales, placements, AWOLs and drug use.

 - g. *Marylou McGuirk, clinician with Five Acres Group Homes*, discussed how she found the group/team approach really helpful to keep up the motivation.
 - i. Team approach helped to delegate responsibilities and discuss overcoming obstacles. Time-frame was difficult – largely because client felt pushed. Need to balance the needs of the client with the demands of measuring family finding and placement outcomes. She also suggests having a non-clinical/admin person on the team so therapist doesn't have to do everything.

- h. *Monique Ambrester, clinician Five Acres residential treatment program*, has 12 clients. Her team has mostly left the agency – fortunately most of the initial searches were done before they left. Now she faces challenges of time management and being the sole member of a once productive team.
- i. *Tiffany Collins (from DCFS P3 program)* shared an overview of the P3 program. It started with the consortium for children. Originally they had a state contract that covered the total cost that originally used mediators (at different locations than DCFS offices) that were unknown to social workers. There wasn't a high level of trust in the beginning. They then decided to bring in retired social workers – 80 part-time staff that did sibling and family connections (using US Search contract) for 1300 cases. They originally focused on AWOL populations (400 youth) and cases where Long Term Foster Care was the only plan.
 - i. They were tracking Legally Permanent Outcomes (i.e. adoption, LG), rather than connections.
 - ii. About 1/3 success rate, mostly Legal Guardianship.
 - iii. Lots of demand for services that quickly got spread thin.
 - iv. Some early funding from the closing of the McClarren Receiving Center and also from several different departments.
 - v. Challenges with Legal Status of Family Finding – a delicate balance.
 - vi. Bob M. from Orange County said they that wait until after Delinquency Hearings to start the Family Finding process.
 - vii. Ideal P3 caseload on a full time basis – 20 cases
- j. *Bob Friend from CPYP* in Oakland introduced the program. Goal is Permanency – Family Finding is a tactic.
 - i. CPYP was started with a grant from the Stuart Foundation, trying to integrate permanency efforts throughout the state.
 - ii. Until 3 months ago, they didn't even have office space – Bob is the only full-time staff.
 - iii. CPYP started with 4 counties 3 years ago (Alameda, Monterey, Stanislaus and ?) and then added 10 additional counties, including LA and Orange.
 - iv. The CPYP regional groups do meet periodically.
 - v. Bob asks for input on what type of legislation will be helpful in this process, to overcome barriers, that can be introduced next year (meeting day was the last day for introduction of legislation this year).
- k. *Adrienne Olson – LAC DCFS Metro North* has a partnership with CPYP.
 - i. Has 2 people assisting, Jerry Clyde and Carol Griffin, that lead efforts with 200 social workers, 35 supervisors and 700 foster kids at the Metro North office.
 - ii. Metro North formed a unit (Permanency Unit) of 5-6 social workers and moved 100 cases (12-18 year olds, Long Term Foster Care/limited connection kids). Two P3 workers were connected with unit and they also used BA interns.
 - iii. Tried bringing in Agency partners to do training w/ supervisors and P3 workers.
 - iv. CHALLENGE – struggle to define, measure, and track success.
 - v. FIRST STEP – train and inspire.
 - vi. Carol works with Emancipation Services to establish lifelong connections.
 - vii. Here's how the process works for Metro North:
 1. Front end due diligence work – a US Search is run and letters automatically sent to all relatives and potential relatives, and even neighbors when kids entered the system.
 2. Metro North uses P3's US Search contract. – also uses Lexus Nexus, parent locator. Researching Intellius – may provide better information.
 3. Specific response rates are not yet measurable, but they are getting some good anecdotal evidence that the process is working.

- I. General discussion about discovery and initial engagement
 - i. Bob M. – it took 12 days for a recent US Search. Jill said average is now about 1 ½ days instead of earlier time of 1 ½ hours. Jill will provide her list of search sites used.
 - ii. Kids can now start search process for bio-parents at age 15 (instead of 18). This unfunded mandate puts the burden on the adoption agency (agency that finalizes the case) to facilitate the search process, for more kids.
 - iii. Jill noted that they use Fed-ex to send out family letters. They believe these deliveries are taken more seriously by family members and also, the agency can track who signed for what and the response.

10:30am break

- m. *Jerry Clyde (from LAC DCFS Metro North Permanency Unit)* says they started with volunteers and were quickly overwhelmed. Worked with unions to get the best outcomes. Teenagers (16-19) hard to work with – frequent AWOLS, often say they don't want services. Learning process – how to prepare kids for new connections. Need to find better ways to get state to support efforts.
- n. *Carol Griffin (from LAC DCFS Metro North)* – works with Emancipating Youth.
 - i. Helps them learn to survive.
 - ii. Helps create permanent connections.
 - iii. She finds that we aren't preparing youth to live on their own – kids are afraid about preparing for school, jobs, and housing on their own. They seem to have a false sense of power. They still have temper tantrums at that age. They need more reality based counseling and more discussion about results of their actions (giving them the choices).
 - iv. Counselors need to recognize that after the age 18, they walk out the door, not AWOL or run away.
 - v. Seeks to enlist Faith Based Community Support – possible permanent connections for youth.
 - vi. Use more Family Group decision making – with departmental guidelines.
- o. Art Mayfield– from LAC Probation Dept Placement. Quality Assurance
 - i. Ensures that Placement officers are making proper recommendations on court reports.
 - ii. Early success of program raises hope, then progress slows.
 - iii. Also sees some resistance from kids about Family Finding efforts – important to develop relationship with the client first.
 - iv. Perseverance required. Gets hard for staff to hear “no” again and again. High staff turnover – new, untrained staff members.
 - v. To increase services and support programs, need to have statistics showing success.

III. Efforts to Measure Success

- a. Tiffany Collins (from P3 program) says they track 2 things: exit person and anecdotal. CWS CMS system flags data with exit person (no data structure to record connections). She asks staff to provide anecdotal evidence to include in newsletters to promote successes.
- b. Bob M. (OC) is trying to define parts of the process; starting line, connections established, number engaged, and end outcome. In their case, they found 66% of youth dropped down one level or more, SIR reports decreased, fewer hospitalizations, and good anecdotal stories (Miss G, heavy mental health user, responded well to family finding and had expanded sense of hope after FF found extended relatives; Michael, hard to be around (swearing, AWOL, drugs), FF found 23 relatives in Florida and case workers helped client

emancipate early and move to Florida to be with relatives. He graduated from high-school and was starting trade-school).

- c. Renee Lozano (parent support, Five Acres) – Family support is necessary to give guidance, support and an ear for parents/guardians struggling to make it work.
- d. Greg Manning – suggests that getting kids “functional” now is the most important thing for them, and over time help them “get in touch with their issues” about family.
- e. Marylou McGuirk – reminds it’s a progression for kids, with extra work for all, more crisis, more support.
- f. Art – reminds this is a long-term process.
- g. Bob M. (OC) – reminds that fiscal investment now saves later (forever) expense.
- h. Bob Friend (CPYC) reminds group to build a larger network of champions (above, below, laterally) to move forward. Until we create solid measurement tools, use stories to build and sustain hope.

IV. Next Steps

- a. Quarterly meetings.
- b. Next meeting follow-up time discussion will come with minutes.

General Themes repeated:

- 1. Measurement challenges: how do we quantify over-time savings of sometimes high initial investment?
- 2. Difficulty in trying to formulate a structure to the process – when every case, and every region has different needs. Need for some legislation to create more guidelines and limit legal battles.
- 3. What is the best method for family finding? Most agree that teams work best. How to staff family finding?
- 4. How can we better prepare/teach kids for the importance of making connections – when often times they say they don’t want them?
- 5. Discussion on how to allocate scarce resources to shift family finding focus to front-end intake rather than Emergency searches for kids already long in the system.
- 6. How do we build champions, celebrate successes, overcome barriers?
- 7. Partnering – public/private/legal/family – is critical

1/30/07 Minutes taken by Aimee Wyatt, Research, Five Acres