

CPYP Task Force Practice and Policy Committee Meetings

April 17, 2008

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts, San Francisco

Next Meeting: Date and location TBD, 10:00 a.m.

Post-Meeting Update:

July 31, 2008, Elihu Harris State Building, Oakland, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Practice Committee

Present

Mary Bedford-Carter, Rebekah Children's Services

Kristie Esquivel, Kern County

Robert Friend, California Permanency for Youth Project

Angela Look, Kern County

Jessica Macias, Kern County

Abby Montano, Fresno County

Katharine Odle, San Mateo County

Veronica Salmeron, Fresno County

David Turk, San Francisco County

Absent (those who RSVPed only)

Cyndee Borges-O'Dell, Stanislaus County Community Services Agency

Jeff Griffin, Orange County

Jean Little, Stanislaus County

Nancy McDonald, Family Builders by Adoption

Cheryle Roberts, Lilliput Children's Services

Policy Committee

Present

Kristina Gelardi, California Youth Connection (attending for Jude Koski)

Sophia Isom, San Francisco County

Gail Johnson Vaughan, Mission Focused Solutions

Fredi Juni, Alameda County

Ginger Pierce, Monterey County

Carroll Schroeder, California Alliance of Child & Family Services

Diane Wagner, Los Angeles County

Absent (those who RSVPed only)

Carol Biddle, Kinship Center

Rick Fowler, California Community College Foundation

Karen Gunderson, California Dept. of Social Services

Craig Harris, California Department of Mental Health

Jill Jacobs, Family Builders by Adoption

Susanna Kniffen, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California
Jude Koski, California Youth Connection
Robin Lockett, Alameda County
Crystal Luffberry, California Co-Investment Partnership
Julia Waters, California Youth Connection

CPYP Staff

Eileen Johnson

Agenda

- 9:30 am Continental Breakfast
- 10:00 am Joint Committee meeting
- Introductions, agenda review, review of previous minutes
 - Legislative update- Carroll Schroeder, CA Alliance
 - Re-branding the Task Force – Bob Friend and Gail Johnson Vaughan
Discuss the responsibilities of participants
 - Short Notice Advocacy –Gail Johnson Vaughan
Make decision whether to leave this item on the Policy Committee agenda or
have both committees discuss.
 - CPYP update – Bob Friend
 - Savings documentation – Gail Johnson Vaughan
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 12:45 pm Separate into committees
- 2:00 pm Adjourn

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions

- Bob Friend welcomed the group and attendees introduced themselves.
- The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved. Friend apologized for the delay in distributing the minutes.
- To ensure that assigned tasks don't get lost or buried, Action Items from the Task Force meeting will be sent out separately as soon as possible after the meeting.

Legislative Update – Carroll Schroeder, California Alliance of Child and Family Services

Budget Update

- The legislature is gearing up for budget negotiations around the budget proposed by the governor in January 2008. His proposed cuts would have meant lots of dollars lost to child welfare (see minutes from January Task Force meeting).
- The legislature did not accept the proposal for the mid-year budget. About a month ago the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) proposed a separate budget, which proposed that foster care simply roll back the 5% increase it had been granted.
- Real discussion won't happen until proposed revision comes out.
- The new projected deficit is 8 billion dollars. The LAO had three suggestions for cutting the deficit:
 - 1) closing tax loopholes
 - 2) reduction in dependent people
 - 3) some combination of cuts and increases in "non-taxes"
- Budget hearings are held by the Senate Budget Subcommittee 3, and Assembly Subcommittee 1

Pending Legislation

No legislation being proposed that is not revenue-neutral or income-producing will be considered seriously. Bill status and summary information was taken from www.cacfs.org. For additional information on any California legislation, see www.leginfo.ca.gov.

AB 2070 (Bass) Foster care: incarcerated parents

Status: 04/22/2008-Re-referred to Committee on Appropriations

Summary: Would provide additional circumstances in which court-ordered services may be extended. This bill would also require the court, in determining whether court-ordered services may be extended, to consider the special circumstances of an incarcerated or institutionalized parent or parents, or parent or parents court-ordered to a residential substance abuse treatment program, as specified. This bill would also exempt an incarcerated parent or guardian from participating in those counseling or other treatment services if he or she is incarcerated in a corrections facility that does not provide access to the services ordered by the court. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Comments: This bill deals with the extent of time incarcerated parents have to reunify. It has gone through lots of discussion and amendments. The issue is "close to the heart" of one of the

Blue Ribbon Commissioners. The bill started out relatively narrow in scope, but since has gotten a lot broader; it now needs to be narrowed.

AB 2096 (Bass) Foster children: extracurricular activities

Status: 04/24/2008-In Senate. Read first time. To Committee on RLS. for assignment.

Summary: Would authorize both group home providers and caregivers to give permission for a child residing in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities. The bill would require group home providers and caregivers, before giving permission, to use the reasonable and prudent parent standard in making that determination regarding a foster child's participation in those activities.

Comments: This bill is to correct existing legislation. Previous legislation about the prudent parent standard was supposed to apply to all community facilities, but somehow group homes got left out of the language.

AB 2117 (Evans) Dependent children: psychotropic medications

Status: 04/16/2008-In committee: Set, first hearing. Referred to APPR. suspense file.

Summary: Would expand the authority of a juvenile court judicial officer to make orders regarding the administration of psychotropic medications to include a dependent child who has been removed from the physical custody of his or her guardian, or a child who has been removed from the physical custody of a parent or guardian pending adjudication as a dependent child. The bill would require the physician or other health care professional submitting the request for psychotropic medication to have conducted an examination of the child. The bill would require the juvenile court judicial officer, before authorizing the administration of psychotropic medication, to make a finding that the child's caregiver has been informed, and the child has been informed in an age and developmentally-appropriate manner, about the recommended medications, the anticipated benefits, the possible side effects, and any other recommended treatments, and that the child has been informed of the right to request a hearing. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Comments: This bill deals with court involvement regarding the use of psychotropic medicines. Judge Edwards thought there should be less judicial involvement, not more; Judge Nash suggested having a panel that reviews all pertinent information.

AB 2310 (Maze) Dependent children

Status: 04/15/2008-From committee: Do pass, and re-refer to Com. on APPR. with recommendation: To Consent Calendar. Re-referred. (Ayes 10. Noes 0.) (April 15).

Summary: Would additionally require that the written information include information regarding the child's Indian heritage or tribal connections, if applicable, and any photographs of the child or his or her family in the possession of the department, except as specified. The bill would also make technical changes. The bill would also require the documents to include a letter prepared by the county welfare department that includes specified information regarding the

child. By imposing additional duties on local employees, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

AB 2338 (Beall) Foster care placement: children 12 years of age and younger

Status: 04/23/2008-Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: Would extend application of these required regulations to children from 6 to 12 years of age, inclusive, and would make conforming changes. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Comments: Under current regulations, no child under six can be placed in a group home. This bill would apply the same rules to children 12 and under. However, the house parent model is not sustainable, because it is too expensive.

AB 2341 (Maze) Reunification services

Status: 04/17/2008-Re-referred to Com. on APPR.

Summary: Would revise those provisions to require that reunification services be provided during the period of time beginning with the dispositional hearing and ending with the date of the review hearing that is scheduled for either 6 months or 12 months depending upon the age of the child involved. By specifically requiring that services be provided for a minimum time period, the bill would impose additional duties on county employees, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Comments: This bill revises requirements. Reasonable efforts will start at the dispositional hearing.

AB 2352 (Fuentes) Mental health services: confidential information

Status: 04/24/2008-In Senate. Read first time. To Com. on RLS. for assignment.

Summary: Would in addition, permit release of that information to a county social worker, probation officer, or any other person who is legally authorized to have custody or care of a minor who is taken into temporary custody or as to whom a petition has been filed with the court, or who has been adjudged a dependent child or ward of juvenile court, but only for the purpose of coordinating health care services and medical treatment, as defined, mental health services, or services for a person with developmental disabilities, for the minor. This bill contains other related provisions.

AB 2399 (Portantino) Independent Living Program

Status: 04/16/2008-From committee: Do pass, and re-refer to Com. on APPR. with recommendation: To Consent Calendar. Re-referred. (Ayes 6. Noes 0.) (April 15).

Summary: Would require services available under the Independent Living Program to be provided to former dependent children of the juvenile court meeting prescribed requirements.

Comment: This bill would require ILP services for kids in KinGap.

AB 2927 (Bass) Juveniles: dual status children

Status: 04/16/2008-In committee: Hearing postponed by committee. (Refers to 4/15/2008 hearing)

Summary: Would require the county child welfare agency to assess a dual status child for prompt return to the jurisdiction of the dependency court and for services by the county child welfare agency immediately after that child has fulfilled the requirements imposed by the delinquency court. By imposing this duty on the county child welfare agency, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

AB 3015 (Brownley) Foster care

Status: 04/16/2008-From committee: Do pass, and re-refer to Com. on APPR. Re-referred. (Ayes 4. Noes 1.) (April 15)

Summary: Would require the training for administrators, licensing personnel, licensed foster parents, and relative caretakers to also include basic instruction of the existing laws and procedures regarding the safety on foster youth at school and the ensuring of a harassment and violence free school environment contained in separate provisions of existing law known as the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Comments: This bill is in response to the killing of Larry King, a Ventura County gay youth who was shot. It requires training regarding a harassment and violence-free environment in schools.

SB 1132 (Migden) Medi-Cal: foster care adolescents

Status: 04/14/2008-Placed on APPR. suspense file

Summary: Would specify that if the department has exercised its option to extend Medi-Cal benefits to those independent foster care adolescents, the department, to the extent that federal financial participation is available, shall not require the independent foster care adolescent to complete any paperwork qualification or provide any other information as a condition to continuing to receive the Medi-Cal benefits to which he or she is already entitled.

SB 1148 (Cedillo) Dependent children: emancipation

Status: 04/21/2008-Placed on APPR. suspense file

Summary: Would prohibit the guardianship laws described above from being construed to prevent a court that assumes jurisdiction of a minor child and selects and implements a permanent plan, as specified, from appointing, on the motion of a child's counsel, a guardian to administer funds for the benefit of the child. The bill would provide that a guardianship established under these circumstances may continue after the court's jurisdiction is terminated, as specified. The bill would also correct an obsolete reference to the California Rules of Court in connection with these provisions. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

SB 1380 (Steinberg) Intensive treatment foster care program

Status: 4/23/2008-Read second time. Amended. To third reading

Summary: Would revise various eligibility, operational, reporting, and foster parent training components of ITFC (intensive treatment foster care) programs. The bill would expand eligibility for ITFC services to include children with a serious behavioral disorder. This bill would recast and revise the services a foster family agency would be required to provide, or arrange for provision of, on behalf of children in the ITFC program.

Comments: This bill goes with the RBS (residential-based service) reform bill from last year to use group homes as short-term intervention.

SB 1726 (Scott) Adoption

Status: 04/17/2008-Set for hearing April 28

Summary: Would revise the latter provision to provide that a presumed father may waive the right to notice of any adoption proceeding before or after the birth of the child and in front of either an authorized representative of the State Department of Social Services, an authorized representative of a public or private adoption agency, or a notary public. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

Re-branding the Task Force – Bob Friend, CPYP

Historically, the Task Force has been referred to as “CPYP’s Task Force” or the “Youth Permanency Task Force.” However, because of two concerns, Bob Friend is interested in making a separation between CPYP and the Task Force:

- A) CPYP will be ending as a project at the end of 2009; its future shape (if any) is still to be determined. However, Friend is interested in the Task Force continuing as its own entity, regardless of what happens to CPYP.
- B) The fiscal agent for CPYP is the Public Health Institute (PHI). As a PHI employee, Friend is very restricted in terms of advocacy work he can do

Friend proposed re-branding the Task Force. Group discussion followed:

- CPYP doesn’t own the Task Force. However, the CPYP influence is important to CWDA and elsewhere.
- It will be very helpful if CPYP can continue to provide administrative support
- If the Task Force has its own name it may help clarify roles. However, the Task Force currently has name recognition. It may not be possible to have the “entity” separate from CPYP and keep the name.
- Friend wants the Task Force to be free to work on advocacy; keeping the same name may be a problem. If we use another name, such as California Permanency for Youth Partnership, there is a possibility of confusion, since the acronym is the same.
- If individual Task Force members are known to the legislature as advocates, the fact that they are speaking “for” Task Force won’t be an issue.
- For short-term advocacy, contact Johnson Vaughan or Friend on how to use information from the group.

Short-Term Advocacy – Gail Johnson Vaughan

- If there are short-term issues that come up, Gail Johnson Vaughan would be willing to go testify.
- Historically, Johnson Vaughan has sent communications out about upcoming legislative items. Several county employees present pointed out that they were very limited in the advocacy work they can do. Usually, any “official” positions are handled by the county public information officer (if there is one). However, public workers *can* send message to their private partners communicating the effects of proposed legislation on their county/agency.
- The Task Force is seen as a good venue for cross-fertilization in this needed dialog. For example, Johnson Vaughan said that the January 2008 meeting really helped her thinking about the fiscal and moral issues around the proposed budget cuts.

CPYP Update – Bob Friend

- The project will be ending as a project in December 2009. Discussion is underway with the Co-Investment Partnership concerning the future of CPYP after that point. It may continue, but in a different form.
- As of April 1, 2008, CPYP began working with several new counties/county areas: Madera, Los Angeles-Pomona, Los Angeles-Santa Clarita, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Solano. Although Ventura initially was planning on participating, the county had to withdraw, as they have to take their hotline in-house (up to now, it had been outsourced). CPYP also may have an affiliation with Glenn County through the California Connected by 25 Initiative.
- Although major work with Pioneer II counties (Contra Costa, Fresno, Humboldt, Kern, Los Angeles-Metro North, Orange, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, and Sonoma) concluded on March 31, 2008, CPYP will continue to provide support, including some visits.
- The project is working on three major documents:
 - In collaboration with the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, Mardi Louisell has written a guide to family finding, *Six Steps to Find a Family* The guide is now available online at:
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/SixSteps.pdf>
 - CPYP is reviewing proofs for its organizational practice guide, *Organizational Development Guide for Youth Permanency*, also by Mardi Louisell. It should be available in a few weeks
 - The final report of the Emancipated Youth Connections Project is in the final stages of writing. Material from the report will be presented at the 2008 National Convening on Youth Permanence, April 30 – May 2, 2008.

The models presented in these three documents are a result of what CPYP has learned over the past five years.

- CPYP held its Annual Conference February 27-28, 2008, in Oakland. In general, the conference went very well; in addition to the keynote speakers, Pat O’Brien and Kevin Campbell, there were breakout sessions and opportunities for informal networking.

Savings Documentation – Gail Johnson Vaughan

Johnson Vaughan presented the cost savings she had been tracking with the Sacramento County, Destination Family project (see attached, “Destination Family Cost Savings”). This project was a partnership between Sacramento County and Sierra Adoption Services.

Partnership with Mental Health

- The model used by the project involves partnership with Mental Health (MH).
- Some services can be billed to EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment), which provides either a five or ten percent match (the amount varies by county).
- She invited the Director of Mental Health to sit on the Steering Committee, which helped to get partnership on board.

Using the Documentation for Advocacy

- Request permission to reinvest the savings
- Have a representative from the private partner agency approach the Board of Supervisors to ask permission to reinvest. Take advantage of the advocacy of a “private citizen.”
- Possible opening language: “I’m here to brag about your Dept. of Social Services. I want to **brief you on savings.**”
- Ask MH to put the money in the budget themselves. In Sacramento County, MH has said they will have an RFP for a youth permanency competent provider.
- Use personal relationships with those in decision-making positions, such as county supervisors.
- Keep a shared vision.

Action Item:

Johnson Vaughan will send the complete spreadsheet to the Task Force.

Next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for July 23, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., location to be determined.

Post-meeting update: Another meeting involving both Gail Johnson Vaughan and Bob Friend had previously been scheduled for July 23, 2008. The Task Force meeting was re-scheduled for July 31, 2008.

Policy Committee Minutes

Gail Johnson Vaughan, Mission Focused Solutions, chair

Kristina Gelardi, California Youth Connection (attending for Jude Koski)

Sophia Isom, San Francisco County

Gail Johnson Vaughan, Mission Focused Solutions

Fredi Juni, Alameda County

Ginger Pierce, Monterey County

Carroll Schroeder, California Alliance of Child & Family Services

Diane Wagner, Los Angeles County

Rumors of change/reduction in AAP rates

This issue was brought up at the Joint Committee meeting, but recorded here as a Policy Committee issue. This item was reported at the CWDA Adoption Subcommittee and needs to be researched. Strategy to be built based on information received. The group noted that no organization is carrying the torch for AAP since Sierra Adoptions had to close their AAP Education and Support Project due to lack of funding

Action Items:

- Johnson Vaughan will ask Voice for Adoption and Jeff Luther for more information. She will communicate with committee members via email with results and input on next steps
- Johnson Vaughan will get Ginger Pierce's citation on the correlation between lowered AAP and lowered adoption rate.

Wraparound contracts and permanency services

Monterey County is looking at a possible change in Wraparound contracts related to the use of flexible dollars. Specifically, they are considering asking wrap providers: for every six children referred to wrap, they will also be referred one youth who is not connected to a family. The wrap provider is to use some of their flexible dollar pool to provide youth permanency services for that youth, who will then be provided wrap services to sustain the placement. Ginger Pierce asked for feedback on the idea. There was general support from the group as long as the wrap providers have youth permanency competency.

That led to conversation about policy in some counties where youth receiving wrap services concurrently with youth permanence services have their wrap services terminated when the youth achieves permanency. The reason: the wrap provider has achieved the goal of permanent placement. Problem: new placement destabilizes the youth; the promise of permanency will be tested by the youth. There are other predictable issues. This means that wrap should be continued to stabilize the new placement.

Action Item:

Action needed by not yet assigned: What are the policies that need to be created to assure that wrap continues to stabilize the new family? What are the barriers preventing such policies? What is the appropriate policy for how long wrap continues after placement into the permanent family.

Lack of funding for family finding

Counties are beginning to provide family finding for all children when they enter the system, but are not staffed/funded to do the family engagement work or the post-placement family support work. Alameda County is considering contracting with private partners to do that work.

Family visits by FFAs

A new ACL (All-County Letter) is coming out that will require all children entering the system beginning in 2009 to have documented family visits by a child welfare professional (90% compliance required by 2011). The ACL allows designation of visit responsibility to FFAs; a new ACL is coming out with forms for FFAs to fill out. Counties are concerned about the increased data caseload to enter information from FFAs. Kristina Gelardi (CYC) commented that many of their youth view the FFA worker as their foster family's ally and not responsive to youths' needs. They feel they get better support from their county worker. The CA Alliance of Child and Family Services (CACFS) is interested in discussing that issue with their FFA members and considering best practices standards to address.

Service vs. outcomes

What gets better results, focusing on services or focusing on outcomes? Is a balance needed? It may depend on how outcomes are defined. If the outcome is permanence, services may end when it is achieved to the detriment of the youth. If the outcome is defined as "being a healthy adult." outcomes services will continue.

Seven-Day Notices

Is the ability for families to give a Seven-day notice detrimental to permanency? There was general agreement that it is a real problem. Thoughts contributed:

- Seven days is not enough to get services to the family to save the placement.
- Families tend to wait until they are fully fed up and are beyond hope of repair.
- Some states (Virginia) have a 21-day notice policy.
- With more time required, the family may be more likely to put up a red flag earlier, allowing more hope of redeeming the placement or making a planned change of placement.
- Seven-day notices makes it very difficult to utilize TDM.
- Seven-day notices makes it very difficult to make a good transition plan.
- Seven-day notices makes it hard to make the best placement decision.
- Having more time allows opportunity to explore different issues and options for interventions.
- A seven-day notice is "adultist." The youth doesn't get to give a seven-day notice when the family doesn't meet their needs.
- Longer notice time should lessen placement moves and increase the likelihood of successful permanence
- The seven-day notice is codified in the Agency/Group Home agreement. It is possible to require the family to give the agency at least seven days. No one knew whether the seven-day notice is a minimum or maximum requirement or whether it is statute, regulation, or policy. Action: CACFS will research.
- Seven-day notice policy contradicts permanency policy.
- What do other states do? Action: CACFS will research

- It is important to remember the caregiver role. The seven day notice gives them some control. If we take that away what do we give them in return? Emergency response? TDM? Additional services?
- In the current climate of permanency, foster parents should be trained to the expectation that each placement is permanent and be given the tools to be successful.
- Recruitment and training of resources should push the concept of “first placement is the only placement.”

Action Items:

- Research legal basis of seven-day notice (CACFS)
- Research actual rule (CACFS)
- Research what other states do (CACFS)
- Get Casey involved ... does this fit into their Breakthrough Series concepts? (not assigned)

Practice Committee Minutes

Robert Friend, California Permanency for Youth Project, acting chair

Mary Bedford-Carter, Rebekah Children's Services

Kristie Esquivel, Kern County

Eileen M. Johnson, CPYP

Angela Look, Kern County

Jessica Macias, Kern County

Katharine Odle, San Mateo County

David Turk, San Francisco County

Bob Friend distributed an excerpt from *Six Steps to Find a Family*, the new practice guide to family finding and engagement by Mardi Louisell. The excerpt was an overview of the six steps:

1. Setting the Stage
2. Discovery
3. Engagement
4. Exploration and Planning
5. Decision Making and Evaluation
6. Sustaining the Relationship(s)

The document is available online at:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/SixSteps.pdf>

It will be available on the CPY website shortly.

Several people noted that they were already familiar with the steps:

- Kern County uses something similar
- Family Builders by Adoption (under contract with San Francisco) uses it to service the county's CPYP program.

After taking some time to review the excerpt, the group decided to discuss issues and best practice around Step #3, Engagement.

Issues/Questions Around Engagement:

- How do we engage alleged (legal definition) paternal relatives?
- How do we engage the adoptive family?
- What have been the experiences of engaging birth families after adoptions have been vacated?
- Is there current legislation that can guide this protocol?
- Special populations

What's important when preparing for engagement?

- Setting the stage is key. When this is not done properly, problems arise rather quickly and cause problems within the team for the child and the family that has been found. This step is critical for program success.
- Example: In one county that partners with a private agency for family finding, initially, they had problems because there was no clear communication of goals, expectations, and

protocol within the team. Individual members had different expectations of the outcome. Communication within the team was lost and individuals were acting without consulting with the child's social worker, mental health provider, or care provider. In one instance, this caused a child to be hospitalized on a 51-50 because of ill preparation.

- Another private agency providing Wrap services to several counties is having trouble connecting with Probation and Mental Health in regards to implementing Permanency.

What should be considered best practice? What is the key to successful engagement?

- The family should have a reasonable expectation of what is going to happen
- The family should be offered a support counselor
- The family should be offered an open line of communication with the family finder
- It is important to convey to the family the urgency of the call: "we" are concerned about the child. The child needs connections and "WE" can help this child.

Practice Tips/Suggestions

- Keep the focus on the child
- Maintain a positive atmosphere and let family know that we will be letting the child know that we connected.
- LISTENING: be prepared for emotional outpouring from the family (good or bad), but be prepared to guide the conversation so that you still get the information that you called to get. Offer the family written or telephone methods of opening the line of communication with the child.
- Be sure to schedule a time for re-engagement. Remember to have "good customer service."
- Be prepared to help the family work through their own grief and loss.
- Engagers need to do their homework. Be sure and read what happened at the time of removal. What was going on with the family, the parent, the child? That is what the family remembers; time stopped for them when the child was separated from the family.
- Be sure to have a clear goal for the conversation: know what information you want to acquire and how to get it. If there is a script or a list of questions, you can have in front of you to keep your focus on the goal.
- Know which individuals are better suited for the engagement piece. To some it comes naturally; others may require more guidance and staff support. And, know which team member should NOT be doing the engagement. The wrong person could raise new barriers and cause new problems for the team and the child.
- Supervisors need to be careful and prepared to be flexible and open minded. A "cookie cutter" approach won't work.
- There are strengths and weaknesses to using a contract agency for the family finding:
- Private agencies get to say "we are not DCFS."
- They have an easier time connecting with the family, and the family is less apprehensive about opening up.
- Call youth on the phone and establish a date to initiate family contact, whether it be by phone or by mail.
- The team meeting should always focus on what the child needs and wants.
- The child's mental health professional and care provider should always be kept abreast of what is going on with the child's findings so they can look for reactions, and be prepared

for emotional outbursts from the child. The care provider should always be made aware of the issues that will be raised which may affect the child's stability.

- The team should make sure the youth feels supported. They should ask the youth, "Who do you want to find?" Again, once the family is found, set dates for follow up and re-engagement. **Always** follow-up with letters, telephone calls, or emails.
- When setting up the team meeting the child should be asked, "Who do you want there?"
- Simultaneously work on changing the mentality of the care provider and cohorts. If necessary, use the courts to enforce family finding and engagement.

Special Populations

Based on questions raised at the start of the meeting, there was brief discussion about current practice for contacting alleged fathers and natural family.

Contacting Alleged Fathers

- Counties/private agencies have different policies and protocols for contacting alleged fathers as part of family finding work. How/whether to find and engage the alleged father will vary from county to county.
- Does the father want to be elevated?
- One county requires the family finding worker to do a connectedness tree.
- In one county, a youth identified her alleged father as the individual she wanted the connection with.

Contacting Natural Family

- Sometimes, adopted siblings want to contact their natural family. Again, policies and protocols vary from county to county.
- In San Mateo County, the worker must file a motion with the court to allow for contact with the natural family, or the adoptive extended family. However, some counties don't have such a strict protocol.
- In one county, workers have been frustrated because they have information about the biological family, but the adoptive family won't release consent to authorize dissemination of the information to the adoptive child.
- This area has to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Learn to be creative with the solutions, and make the system work for you.
- Is there current legislature about this issue, or is any currently being written?
- When involving natural family, good judgment and sound practice is critical. Bob Friend shared an example: In one county, the mother was in a drug treatment facility and had children in the facility as well. The grandmother wanted the children but had a previous history of violence. DCFS was aware of this risk; however the grandmother was able to take the children through probate court. The day the children were released to her; one child was victimized and beaten.

Topics for Next Meeting

(1) Support; (2) As a committee, what do we want as our end product?