

**California Permanency for Youth Task Force
Practice and Policy Joint Committee Meeting**

July 31, 2008

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Elihu M. Harris State Building, Oakland, CA

Next Meeting: October 30, 2008, Elihu Harris State Building, Oakland, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Practice Committee

Present

Bob Bentley, Fresno County
Kristie Esquivel, Kern County
Maryam Fatemi, Los Angeles County
Bob Friend, California Permanency for Youth Project
Phyllis Haugabook, Stanislaus County
Lydia Johnson, Fresno County
Jean Little, Stanislaus County
Angela Look, Kern County
Jessica Macias, Kern County
Nancy McDonald, Family Builders by Adoption
Cheryle Roberts, Lilliput Children's Services
Veronica Salmeron, Fresno County
Helga Zimmerer, San Francisco County

Absent (those who RSVPed only)

James Anderson, California Connected by 25 Initiative
Cyndee Borges-O'Dell, California Co-Investment Partnership
Crystal Luffberry, California Co-Investment Partnership
Bob Malmberg, Orange County
Katharine Odle, San Mateo County

Policy Committee

Present

Nenita Dean, Stanislaus County
Rick Fowler, Community College Foundation
Sophia Isom, San Francisco County
Jill Jacobs, Family Builders by Adoption
Gail Johnson Vaughan, Mission Focused Solutions
Fredi Juni, Alameda County
Jude Koski, California Youth Connection
Phil Ladew, California CASA Association
Ginger Pierce, Monterey County

Absent (those who RSVPed only)

Robin Allen, California CASA Association

Carol Biddle, Kinship Center

Amy Freeman, Stuart Foundation

Karen Grace-Kaho, State of California

Karen Gunderson, California Dept. of Social Services

Craig Harris, California Department of Mental Health

Chantel Johnson, California Youth Connection

Susanna Kniffen, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California

Carroll Schroeder, California Alliance of Child & Family Services

Diane Wagner, Los Angeles County

Julia Waters, California Youth Connection

CPYP Staff

Eileen Johnson

Mardi Louisell

Agenda

9:30 am Continental Breakfast

10:00 am Joint Committee meeting

- Introductions, agenda review, review of previous minutes
- Budget/Legislative update
- Group discussion around cost savings
 - How do you document cost savings as the result of your youth permanency work? What are our opportunities to do so collectively?
 - Once we document the cost savings, how do we best communicate them? Advocate for them?
 - Where do your local savings go (which dept. in your county)? Who oversees that dept.?
 - What are the differences in policy and practice as the result of permanency initiatives in your county (CPYP, OYA, etc)?
 - Who are your collaborators - public, private, volunteer - and how do they contribute to achieving permanence? What revenue streams or resources do they bring?

12:00 pm Lunch

12:30 pm Continue discussion

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 explained that the group would be departing from its usual format (joint meeting in the morning, separate committee meetings in the afternoon). Due to the urgency of cost savings issues, the group would stay together for the entire meeting.
 - We have demonstrated in small ways why permanency work makes sense fiscally.
 - Now we need to disseminate this information and show how these efforts actually save money.

Legislative Update – Jude Koski, California Youth Connection (CYC)

(Legislative summary information for these minutes was taken from the CYC and California Alliance of Child and Family Services websites.)

AB 3051 (Jones) Dependent children: court hearings

The governor signed AB 3051. This bill, authored by Assembly Member Dave Jones, was based in part on the recommendations for the Blue Ribbon Commission which were developed by a Task Force subcommittee (see February 14, 2007 Task Force minutes). The work was spearheaded by Pat Reynolds Harris, CPYP founding director, and Alice Bussiere, Youth Law Center. The legislation addresses a major flaw in California's juvenile dependency courts: hearings routinely occur without the children whose lives are being discussed. The new law, which takes effect January 1, 2009, calls for judicial officers to postpone hearings for children at least ten years old if they have not been given notice and the chance to attend; while the law already called for children to be notified of hearings, it made no provision if the law was ignored.

AB 1405 (Maze) Juveniles: joint assessment of status: confidential information.

Currently, whatever a youth says in dependency court can be used against him or her. This bill keeps statements of any kind made by a youth during an assessment to see if the youth should be in the delinquency, dependency, or both systems confidential. CYC youth feel it is important for foster youth and those advocating for them to feel comfortable sharing all of the relevant information so the court and decision makers have a full understanding of their circumstances. Post-meeting update: bill was sent to the governor for signature 9/16/08

AB 1864 (DeVore) Unclaimed possessions of juveniles in Dept. of Corrections

Previously, when a youth left the Dept. of Corrections, any unclaimed personal funds or property was held for seven years. This bill, entered into law on July 10, 2008, reduces the amount of time to three years.

AB 2029 (Tran) Dependent children: visitation

This bill would authorize any person, including a child who is a dependent of the court, to petition the court for an order of visitation between the child and a relative, as specified. The bill would provide that the court, upon petition, may order visitation between the child and a relative if the court determines that it is in the best interest of the child. The bill would also authorize the court to order the county to cause federal and state criminal records checks to be initiated and conducted. The bill would require any court-ordered criminal records and fingerprint clearance checks to be completed before the court enters an order regarding visitation.

Status: 08/07/08-In committee: Set, first hearing. Held under submission.

AB 2070 (Bass): Foster care: incarcerated parents

This bill would provide additional circumstances in which court-ordered services may be extended for parents who are incarcerated, institutionalized, or in residential substance-abuse treatment. This bill would also require the court, in determining whether court-ordered services may be extended, to consider the special circumstances of the parent or parents. 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.

Post-meeting update: This bill was sent to the governor for signature on 09/18/08

AB 2096 (Bass) Foster children: extracurricular activities

This bill would require a group home administrator and a facility manager, or his or her responsible designee, to apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard, as defined, in determining whether to give permission for a child residing in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities, and would also require that reasonable steps be taken in determining the appropriateness of the activity. The bill would encourage a group home administrator or a facility manager, or his or her responsible designee, to consult with social work or treatment staff members who are most familiar with the child at the group home in applying and using the reasonable and prudent parent standard. It is hoped that this bill would help youth living in group homes to participate in normal age-appropriate activities in the community, and help prevent group homes from unreasonably restricting and isolating youth.

Post-meeting update: This bill was sent to the governor for signature on 09/17/08

Group Discussion: Cost Savings

Who is currently documenting cost savings?

- Sacramento County - Gail Johnson Vaughan developed a spreadsheet to track cost savings with the Sacramento County, Destination Family project. This project was a partnership between Sacramento County and Sierra Adoption Services. She did not include children with relatives in her analysis.
 - The spreadsheet is a tool to help provide future funding when the counties request permission to reinvest the saved dollars.
 - Savings included court costs, worker savings, and placement cost.
 - As opposed to showing potential cost savings in the future, the spreadsheet shows savings **right now**.

- Kern County – Kristie Esquivel estimated placement costs savings. She looked at the starting and ending placement. However, she didn't figure in the county's share. Angela Look has tracked placement savings related to the 3-5-7 pilot project.
- Monterey County – over five years, they reduced by 1/3 the number older youth in long-term foster care (LTFC) over five years, and have gone from seven workers to five. However, they have done poorly on fiscal documentation.

Discussion/Suggestions

- When calculating savings, counties need to figure the amounts involved for staff costs.
- In CPYP counties, there can be a “culture shift” across the entire county. Changes in practice and cost savings may extend beyond the permanency unit. Concurrent planning may also reduce costs to long-term foster care.
- Find a way to advocate for **net** countywide savings and net county costs due to the various departments involved.
- How you capture the cost savings data depends on how you want to reinvest the dollars. For example, “This is how doing _____ will result in additional cost savings.”
- Know where the money is going, what amount is being saved, what it ends up doing, where it ends up, and who saves it.
- Have the data collection tool as simple as possible with few data points.
- When a county has several initiatives in process, the cost savings of particular strategies are sometimes hard to break out.
- Develop a “special relationship” with key fiscal people (could be a mid-level person). Invite your key fiscal person to celebrations. Stanislaus County made a video for their fiscal people so they could see the kids they were writing the checks for.
- Have a non-county employee (i.e. person not paid through county dollars) present information to the Board of Supervisors. Possible opening language: “I’m here to brag about your Dept. of Social Services. I want to **brief you on savings.**” The person is not there to ask for something.
- EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment)
 - EPSDT dollars can be used to fund permanency work. However, because EPSDT billable hours need to be meticulously documented, these hours are not so applicable to front end work but can be used for sustaining work after placement. Grief and loss work could be billed to EPSDT
 - In Monterey County, EPSDT dollars are used to minimize the need for slot dollars.

Differences in policy/practice as the result of permanency initiatives

Common Themes

- There has been a culture shift/expectation of permanency, both for the county and for partners (group homes, foster family agencies, etc.)
- A responsible administrator has to approve long-term foster care
- Policies which require permanency practice (for example, permanency TDMs) are being implemented.
- Language on county forms is being changed to reflect permanency.

Sacramento County

The county has changed its form checklist from “Why the child should remain in LTFC” to “What will it take to achieve permanency?”

Kern County

- They have enforced referrals to their OYA (Older Youth Adoptions) Project through December 2009, however, they haven’t had as much success as anticipated because the first steps weren’t done at the start. Kristie Esquivel is training the three OYA workers on FFE (family finding and engagement). Kevin Campbell came for an all-staff training.
- They have planned a team family-finding day. They are also writing success stories to share with staff.
- OYA workers were initially told to get kids from group homes into lower levels of care. The kids were moved too soon and there were lots of disruptions. There was a conflict between permanency and placement: the adoptions supervisor just “wanted the numbers.”
- OYA staff a spreadsheet to track outcomes.
- Every six months, workers need to return to court to justify LTFC.

Alameda County

- The biggest change is the expectation of permanency. This has been integrated well in most departments. Five years ago, a permanency champion in LTFC started working with county leadership; now program managers and supervisors all have the expectation of permanency.
- Most of the county initiatives are integrated or somehow connected to each other. For example, permanency was integrated into heart gallery; waiver dollars are being pointed toward permanency.
- Changed “mandatory adoption assessment” to “permanency adoption assessment.”
- Permanency TDMs will be mandated.
- The Dumisha project was completed inspired by CPYP
- The county held brownbag lunches every month to discuss/present permanency practice.
- Training was given by the Y.O.U.T.H. Training Project.

Monterey County

- There has been a cultural shift, but it took place over five years. Now there are a lower number of social workers and a lower number of cases.
- In contract language with providers, most commit to permanency

Fresno County

- There has been a huge cultural change. After three years, they are now getting referrals and emancipated youth are asking for reconnection. However, people are not always doing it “on their own.” The expectation of permanency is going to be incorporated into interagency MOUs with group homes (GH) and foster family agencies (FFAs).
- The county has focused on training. Veronica Salmeron still does new worker training on permanency.
- The county has a written policy, in part because conservative risk management required it.
- Their LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) policy outlaws harassment, and does not allow these youth to languish in care. (Fresno was part of the LGBTQ Model Standards Project).
- CPYP was mother to a lot of other changes.
- Salmeron wrote “Future Steps to Permanency,” a practice guide (available from CPYP at http://www.cpyy.org/fresno_files/FresnoFutureSteps.pdf)
- The county is trying to identify family at intake. They are using trees.
- Salmeron is now part of WRAP; this has been a good move as a way to “spread the word” about permanency. She is hoping to use WRAP dollars. She also plans to keep pushing the agenda of hiring five people as permanency specialists, because the WRAP model invites collaboration.
- The county has a Heart Gallery, but policy and procedures are needed to fully implement it.

Stanislaus County

- CPYP gave birth to permanency philosophy. Policy has been incorporated in the county’s child welfare handbook. For example, the county holds youth-driven “connected for life: meetings.
- Although the change of culture has been in place for some time, new workers still need to be oriented.
- The county has been able to use THP+ (Transitional Housing Program Plus) funding resources.
- Their foster youth transition committee includes FFAs, GH, mental health, and probation
- They are planning to do a workshop on permanency with group homes.
- Change of culture changes “way back” need to continue to orient new workers
- The county has two positions for former foster youth who assist social workers.

Los Angeles County

- Their discussion about permanency started in 2002 with the first Permanency Convening. Their last director established goals which included permanency and reduced reliance on out-of-home care.
- In 2004, there were 700 kids in LTFC; now there are 200+. One major factor causing this reduced number is the regional administrator must approve LTFC.

- They still are working at bringing about culture shift with staff. There have been many policy changes to help. Workers now have to look at permanency from the beginning. For example, three kids with TPR (termination of parental rights) were able to have parental rights restored and be reunited with their parents.
- The county has a Youth Permanency Implementation Group (YPIG) which meets regularly.
- They have been discussing redesigned TDMs but have found it hard to implement them.
- The county began P3 (Permanency Partners Program). Retired county social workers are rehired for FFE work. They assist the case-carrying social worker.

Additional observations

- Adequate funding is critical in order to fully implement best practice. Jill Jacobs gave the example of three “difficult” children in Alameda County who had family in Michigan. Workers needed to both have money and the ability to use it in order to reunite these children with their Michigan relatives.
- Buy-in from supervisors is also critical to success.
- Although upper level management may “push” permanency, do individual social workers have the knowledge to do the work? How do we make funding flexible and show outcomes?
- Adopting permanency practice is like the difference between playing on natural grass instead of artificial turf: the game is the same but the foundation is different.
- Balance is needed between written policy and informal culture change. Whoever is signing off on court reports should ask the appropriate questions.
- Mardi Louisell is holding a series of conference calls to develop expectations for each level of county worker. There are about eight or nine people participating, including both county staff and partners. Louisell hopes the final document will be a guide for counties, and for requirements for social workers.

Action Items/Questions for Follow Up

- Attendees were requested to think about additional ways to identify cost savings and share that information with the Task Force.
- E. Johnson will send Johnson Vaughan’s spreadsheet to the Task Force; as counties and agencies make modifications, they will return their modified version to CPYP.
- Who is our intended audience?
- How can we tie in our data collection for CPYP project evaluation with documenting cost savings?
- Johnson Vaughan suggested the Task Force produce some type of advocacy guide or checklist around documenting and disseminating savings.