

Tri-County CPYP Meeting
July 17, 2007
Morro Bay, California

ATTENDANCE: Kern County; Tom Baca, Jessica Macias, Kristie Esquivel, Jeanette Ross, San Luis Obispo County; Patrick Considine, Summer Frappier, Katie McCain, Nita Kenyon, Julia Miller, Jannine Lambert, Matt Aydelott (Cuesta College), Fresno County; Veronica Salmeron, Nichole Castanon-Belz

DARLA HENRY TA: Veronica Salmeron reported that Darla's Technical Assistance Training was very well received and she has heard only good feedback from everyone. People especially appreciated the tangible suggestions that she provided, such as how to support youth when time resources are limited. Darla stressed the importance of recognizing the abandonment issues and the resulting hurt experienced by foster care youth. Veronica was successful in having over 75 people in attendance, many of them community partners. Some of her suggestions to make the first day a success were: Provide breakfast, lunch and snack if possible, develop a flyer to distribute, repeated personal contacts are necessary, utilize administration to e-mail and call other administrators such as mental health, don't forget CASA, and establish the ability to get CEUs. Fresno's training department was very helpful in obtaining a location for the TA at the college and the foster parent training person assisted in getting some foster parent attendance. Family to Family neighborhood collaboratives assisted in getting attendance. Mental health people who were working with youth were targeted to attend as was WRAP. Repeated personal contacts were made, and this seemed to help. One example was obtaining Probation attendance by repeated calls.

SUPPORT FOR CONNECTIONS: The counties discussed what they are learning about establishing and facilitating connections. Kern reported on holding a family decision type meeting with family members and the youth. Kristy led the meeting but first talked with each person on the phone to prepare them for the meeting. In the meeting they put forth the goals for the youth, which included his goals. Because there were concerns about the youth's behaviors, they utilized a youth advocate to mediate in behalf of the youth. They attempted to keep the meeting positive and strength based. Baby sitting was provided by a human services aid. People discussed how to pay for family to come or for youth to go to family. OIP funds are one source. San Luis Obispo reported that administration has directed them to "think out of the box" and to make it happen within reason.

Fresno reported that they have learned that it is not as simple as how to get there. Their administration has formally stated that background checks are not necessary as that would be a barrier. Staff talks with family and makes assessments as to safety issues or concerns. On out of state visits, staff go along. On the first day they get to know the area. On the second they meet with the family, the youth is left with the family but the caseworker and youth talk every hour by phone. The youth does not stay for the evening. They try to make the visit as normal as possible. A schedule is made a head of time with the family. Money is provided to the youth for activities and food (ILP funds).

Fresno stressed that they have learned the hard way how important it is to prepare the youth and family. In one situation the youth was not prepared and was extremely anxious. The family also did not know what to expect and consequently, did not 'stick in there'. It is so critical to meet them before hand and for the youth to have letter and phone contact with them. The family needs to be prepared as to what to do if certain things happen on the visit. In one situation the family was well prepared in this regard and when the youth acted out behaviorally the grandmother handled it well and reported that she had lost her grandson for ten years and a few of his behaviors weren't going to stop their relationship now. It is important that a staff person be available by phone at all times and there also be a back up person so that family can always reach someone.

COUNTY REPORTS:

Kern County: Pat Cheldle has been appointed as Kern's new director.

Kern County has purchased address books for all of their youth and they are being provided with the business cards of their social worker etc. and the addresses of their family members that have been located or that were previously known.

Kristy reported that their cases are having lots of movement with several adoptions, an ICPC to Idaho that will become an adoption, and a guardianship.

The federal adoption opportunity grant, called Older Youth Adoption, in Kern is up and running with one staff person hired. They will work with 180 youth over three years and the goal is for 120 adoptions. All of the youth are in group homes. The CPYP project will no longer focus on group home youth.

The Kern County Heart Gallery has been very successful with responses for all but two of the 22 youth in the gallery. They attribute the success to lots of staff support and being able to have someone at the gallery showing lots of the time to answer inquires. When this is not possible, they have an inquiry box for people to access and staff respond very timely. One of the outcomes has been many community people reporting that they did not know that there were so many youth in care that needed homes. Their Heart Gallery has moved to five different locations with an opening ceremony and media event in each community. They have been able to have youth who are not free for adoption in the gallery by having the youth's attorney agree and sign off on the plan.

Each county was to discuss their barriers and how they are addressing them. For Kern County, the issue is trying to involve permanency planning staff. They plan to make the Darla Henry TA mandatory for them and hope that will stimulate interest. They also plan to revamp their committee. Because CPYP is not the 'hot' item any longer as new initiatives have come along, each county must address how to keep the interest in permanency vital. Kern County has been sending out success stories to all staff via e-mail from the program director. They have had lots of positive feedback about the stories.

Kern is now adding an additional four youth to the project to begin working on immediately.

Fresno County: Veronica has been asked by administration to submit a proposal for what she needs in order to have permanency be successful in their county. Besides herself, she is asking for one clerical and two family engagement staff. Her role would become more of a consultant to caseworkers in the county when they became stuck on a case in regard to permanency issues. She would also conduct ten minute case reviews on cases in which the goal will be to establish a plan on how to reach permanency with follow up reviews to determine progress. Cases can be referred to her for family finding and she will conduct discovery, early engagement and some planning and then the responsibility of continuing will be that of the social worker. The goal is to make case workers more accountable in achieving permanency on their cases. Eventually it is hoped to move the case consultation to the supervisors.

Veronica has been provided a staff analyst to assist her in developing processes and procedures for each of the steps in family finding and engagement. She will provide this to the tri-county people.

In order to keep CPYP vital in the county she recommends and is attempting the following;

1) send out success stories, 2) invite more people to be involved, 3) be a champion and talk to everyone around, 4) deal with own burnout, 5) put another name on activities for example since sibling connections is a part of permanency she has led a spring swing activity for siblings, 6) have events and have fun, 7) keep administration informed and ask them for continual support.

San Luis Obispo: Tracy Buckingham has been appointed as Assistant Director. San Luis Obispo has made new efforts to reorganize the CPYP Committee (now called Task Force). Previously the committee addressed other ILP issues including permanency. Now the only focus is permanency. They are emphasizing clarity of goals and expanding the inclusion of more community partners. Weekly case staffings are being held with Katie, Summer, Patrick and Cuesta College, who now has the permanency contract.

Katie and Summer are also involved in regional staffings to discuss permanency. Division Manager meetings are held to discuss and deal with barriers impacting permanency on cases.

Some of those issues relate to support for connections such as how to get counseling support and also barriers that relate to the social worker's mind sets.

Katie and Summer are carrying four cases in which they work through all of the steps in the case to reach permanency. This is part of their second year plan to explore effectiveness of approaches.

San Luis distributed the rough draft of a youth survey developed by the youth who attend the Task Force. The survey will be distributed to all foster care youth through the school counselors. A copy of their rights will be provided them at the same time.

The Task Force is inviting providers to meetings to discuss how to support connections as well as how to prepare youth and families, such as using life books. It is also looking at data collection needs.

San Luis is utilizing Permanency Team Meetings at least quarterly on cases. When reunification is no longer the goal, permanency team meetings are held. The youth and social worker decide who should attend those meetings. Life Team Meetings are held for the older youth at least every six months.

They are in the process of planning for their second Heart Gallery. Lessons Learned have been to involve a larger community effort to help raise continued awareness.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is October 23, 2007 in Fresno. Meetings begin at 10:00.