



Education Coordinating Council

April 24, 2008

9:30 a.m.

Children's Bureau of Southern California
Magnolia Place
1910 Magnolia Avenue, Los Angeles, California

Present: Yolie Flores Aguilar
Berisha Black
Carol Clem
Renatta Cooper
René Gonzalez, representing David L. Brewer III
Leslie Heimov
Aubrey Manuel
Machelle Massey
Judge Michael Nash
Trish Ploehn
Ron Randolph, representing Darline P. Robles
Bruce Saltzer
Marvin J. Southard
Robert Taylor
Jennifer Webb, representing Evelyn V. Martinez

In the absence of Chair José Huizar, Vice Chair Michael Nash brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., thanking Children's Bureau for allowing the ECC to meet in its brand-new facility.

Pat Bowie, a consultant with Children's Bureau, explained the vision of the Magnolia Place center as a community hub for improving the lives of children and families within a radius of three and a half miles around the facility. The 'place-based' project's goals are to meaningfully integrate efforts in four goal areas: safe and nurturing families, school readiness, health and emotional well-being, and economic stability. The \$22 million capital campaign for the building has spurred investments from various partners that will have offices there, including Public Counsel, Para Los Niños, and St. John's (with a pediatric and dental clinic). The child development wing will also house a Head Start program. Los Angeles County has committed to providing intensive case management strategies as well, and is testing a new concierge function to interact with the community supportively, engaging families early on to avoid their needing intensive services later. Departments that will have staff on the premises include Children and Family Services, Public Social Services, and Child Support Services. "We want to model the

fact,” Bowie said, “that the changes we talk about can be realized, brought into the county system, and scaled up.” The facility’s conference room is open for booking, and a tour will be available after today’s meeting.

Supervisor Don Knabe’s Motion for Structuring Child Care Policy Across Agencies

The ECC’s leadership on early childhood care and education is having an impact on a number of policy discussions, one of them being the use of early childhood resources throughout the county. A March 4 motion by Supervisor Don Knabe was made in response to a report from the county’s Child Care Planning Committee that during the past three years, the state has made available over \$2.1 billion to child care providers in Los Angeles County, of which \$162 million has remained unspent. (Copies of that report and motion were included in member packets.)

ECC consultant Terry Ogawa introduced Duane Dennis, the executive director of Pathways and chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, the body that develops the infrastructure for child care in Los Angeles County and makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding legislation, policy, and programs.

Within the fragmented early childhood education system and its complex array of funding streams, Dennis said, several reasons exist for monies being unspent. Half the dollars coming into the county from the state Department of Education, for example, are specifically for CalWORKs child care (for welfare-to-work clients), but the number of CalWORKs recipients has fallen short of the projections that were used to establish contract amounts, decreasing by 38 percent over the last several years. Other unspent dollars are earmarked for part-day programs that many parents cannot use when working full-time. Still others are allocated solely for four-year-olds, whose numbers have also been dropping.

In Los Angeles County, child care grants from the state Department of Education’s child development division (the largest funding source) are awarded to 13 intermediary agencies—the ten Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and three others. These agencies contract with direct child care providers—centers, family child care providers, and license-exempt providers—for a maximum reimbursable amount. The intermediary agencies are then responsible for enrolling enough eligible children to ‘earn’ their full contract. If enough children are not enrolled, or don’t attend every day, the full amount is not earned. Many of these agencies administer multiple subsidized child care contracts, but each has specific eligibility requirements for parents and their children, and they are not flexible. If one program is fully enrolled or overspent, funds cannot be moved from one resource to another. Organizations have a commitment to providing services, Ogawa said, but the rules for categorical funding streams tie their hands in so many ways that they often cannot meet the needs of the families they serve. A local plan, as suggested by Knabe, could ask for exemptions from those rules.

A central problem, Dennis noted, is that the state departments of Education and Social Services, child care’s primary funders, have no interest in ensuring that funds are spent in Los Angeles County or anywhere else. Unspent child care monies return to the state’s general fund—something to be wished for by many in this time of fiscal constraint. Also, starting with welfare reform efforts in the Clinton administration, the overall focus of subsidized care in this country has changed from ensuring high-quality child development settings to making sure that poor par-

ents (primarily women) are working. The challenge is to get state and Federal dollars to function better together to meet local needs, Dennis said, and to reinstate the emphasis on the child, and on links between parents, children, and family development.

Knabe's deputy, Nick Ippolito, said that the supervisor has long been concerned with child care issues and maximizing available benefits, especially for the 43,000 children currently on the waiting list for subsidized care, whose families may receive other county services as well. If those children receive high-quality child care, "helping them to survive and thrive," as Ippolito put it, they are more likely to stay out of county systems in the future. The counties of San Francisco and San Mateo have pursued waivers allowing them to retain child care funding locally, and Knabe would like to do the same for Los Angeles, particularly concentrating on full-day care, since that is what parents overwhelmingly want.

Child development programs and systems in Los Angeles County are multi-layered and complex. Except for the Department of Children and Family Services, whose subsidized child care program accounts for only about 1 percent of the total funding received within the county for early care and education, county departments do not directly administer these programs. (For CalWORKs participants, the Department of Public Social Services contracts with the same 13 intermediary agencies that administer the state Department of Education's child development division dollars, using a similar process.) For state funds alone, over 150 private agencies, school districts, community college districts, and other entities contract directly with the Department of Education to provide child care services. In addition, Head Start and Early Head Start (which are Federally funded) and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (which is funded primarily by First 5 LA) function under still other sets of regulations and contracts, and are not yet hooked into the centralized waiting list for subsidized care, although those connections are expected soon.

Knabe's motion is two-pronged, Ippolito said, calling first for a child care policy that cuts across county departments, providers, and other entities to bring a collective voice to this issue. Secondly, he wants to explore legislative solutions for retaining unspent child care funds and using them more flexibly. With more flexibility—to move funding from part-day programs to full-day programs, for instance—providers would be less handcuffed and all available monies could be spent. The motion asks the Chief Executive Officer to bring together the relevant county entities with First 5 LA and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) to coordinate the discussion. Once strategies are more clearly solidified, Ippolito will return to the ECC and its constituent organizations for help in advocating in Sacramento and Washington for the mechanisms needed for a unified approach.

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care is very concerned about services for children in foster care, Ogawa said, and will more fully flesh out a policy agenda during its July retreat, to which ECC members are invited. (A notice will be sent with further information.) Even after policies are drawn up, Berisha Black commented, consumers still need a place to go if their needs are not being met, and she encouraged continuing oversight of this issue.

One of the largest administrators of state Department of Education child care funds is the Los Angeles Unified School District, whose early childhood education division has hundreds of sites. The ECC ultimately wants to map those by DCFS regional boundaries, Ogawa said, but has

started with service planning areas. The majority of DCFS families with children six and under live in SPA 6, while, fortunately, the preponderance of LAUSD sites are in SPAs 4 and 6; connections needs to be made between the district and DCFS regional offices in those areas. Ogawa acknowledged Barbara Gutierrez, assistant superintendent of the early childhood education division, for sharing that information.

Yolie Flores Aguilar expressed appreciation for the ECC's spotlight on child care, underscoring the importance of early education especially with regard to reading. In LAUSD, only 26 percent of third-graders read at grade level, and third-grade reading scores are a strong indicator for both graduation and incarceration. (Arizona, in fact, plans the number of jails it builds based on third-grade reading scores.) At a recent meeting with reading experts in Baltimore, Flores Aguilar learned that if children are not reading at grade level as early as first grade, only a 10 percent chance exists, if nothing changes, that they ever will. A common theme for youth in probation camps is the inability to read. "If kids can't read, they can't learn," Flores Aguilar said. "They lose hope, they feel shamed, they drop out, they get into trouble." Early childhood is the most critical time to build literacy skills, and she praised Knabe for his diligence in wanting to make use of available funds. Flores Aguilar also mentioned HR 3289—the Providing Resources Early for Kids Act of 2007 or the PRE-K Act—which would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve early education, allocating \$1 billion a year for five years to increase the number of children served, focusing on low-income families and areas of high need.

Marv Southard related a recent experience in meeting with a young woman who was part of the Department of Mental Health's jail release re-entry program. She has been out of jail for six months, clean and sober, and is in the process of reunifying with her children and seeking employment. Until she arranges for child care, however, she can't get a job. "All the pieces hinge together," Southard said, "and the system can easily grind to a halt for individual families."

In response to Renatta Cooper's question about Knabe's emphasis on any particular type of program—favoring licensed over unlicensed care, for example—Ippolito said that the supervisor wants to look at best practices and investing in a system that serves the needs of families. "His dream is to reinvest in a way that aligns with the goals of high-quality care in a stimulating environment," Ippolito said, "and getting the highest-need kids ready for school." Not all programs prepare children for school equally, Cooper said, and it takes a lot of work to get children ready for the standards expected of them in kindergarten.

Trish Ploehn spoke to the issue of flexibility, which has been a primary goal with the successful Title IV-E waiver granted to DCFS and the Probation Department. "The rules we had to live by [prior to the waiver] weren't serving the population any more. That's what we need for child care," she said. "But we also need to consider where we're going as a county with public/private partnerships. Until we break down our silos and share our resources for the collective good, we won't get ahead. That must be at the forefront, and the task force [that Knabe proposes] is a good foundation to get the word out and do some planning, coming together to determine who will front this with the state and the Feds."

Chief Taylor suggested using visiting nurses to help with parent education, especially as health care dollars diminish.

Berisha Black moved that the ECC support Supervisor Don Knabe's motion with regard to a unified child care policy and legislative solutions to retain funding locally. Chief Robert Taylor seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

ECC Early Childhood Education Report and Proposed Actions

Terry Ogawa highlighted the map in member packets of the ten Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in Los Angeles County and their toll-free consumer education hotline (1-888-92-CHILD). "Any parent can call and get advice about child care needs," she said, "and all probation officers and children's social workers should have this information," since the CCR&Rs can help parents and some social workers get children's names on the centralized eligibility list, awaiting a vacant slot for subsidized child care.

Ogawa highlighted a fact sheet she had prepared on making connections between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and early care and education, commenting that integration efforts between two systems often assume that both infrastructures are themselves integrated and working well. With early childhood education, as meeting attendees have just heard, this is not, of course, the case.

- The early care and education 'system' does not have a single point of entry, but is a blend of public funds, informal babysitting, entrepreneurial businesses, and full-day, part-day, and voucher program services. Shortages exist, the waiting list for subsidized slots is huge, and many children will never receive subsidies.
- Infant care, although especially vital for youngsters served by DCFS, is very costly. County-wide, almost two-thirds of families with infants use license-exempt care offered by individuals.
- Disconnects between supply and demand exist in many areas. SPA 6, where the largest numbers of DCFS children live, has the greatest surplus of family child care spaces in the county, but connections are needed.
- DCFS directly administers only a tiny portion of the California Department of Education child care funds allotted to Los Angeles County. Children are eligible for only 18 months, and transitions to other ongoing programs need to be ensured.
- Resources to oversee California's early childhood education regulatory system are sorely inadequate and, most importantly, do not address quality. If facilities are licensed, Ogawa said, that does not imply a high-quality program and environment, but means only that they have met basic health and safety standards (in other words, are clean and safe). If no complaint is filed, facilities can go seven or more years without being visited by a licensing evaluator.

Kathy Malaske-Samu, director of the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care, thanked colleague Michelle Sartell for updating that office's report, *Major Funding Streams: Child Care and Development Program Operations in the County of Los Angeles 2006-07*, which was included in member packets. She distributed a one-page excerpt showing the numerous different

funds allocated to child care and development programs within the county. Detailed in the single table were:

- ✓ Ten programs funded by the state Department of Education's Child Development Division (54 percent of the total allocation)
- ✓ Three programs funded by the state Department of Education's Learning Support and Partnerships Division (11 percent)
- ✓ One program funded by the state Department of Education's Title I, Part A Preschool (less than 1 percent)
- ✓ Four programs funded by the state Department of Social Services (11 percent)
- ✓ Six programs funded by First 5 LA (6 percent)
- ✓ Head Start and Early Head Start, both funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (20 percent)

Malaske-Samu focused on the first ten programs, funding for which goes from the Child Development Division to individual agencies, she said, "with a lot of strings attached." To begin with, eligible families must have incomes at or below 75 percent of the state median income. For a family of three, this means a gross monthly income under \$3,769; for a family of four, \$4,188. However, although families are eligible at those income levels, they usually enter the subsidy system earning far less. Families must also have a 'need for child care,' meaning that parents are employed or in school or a training program, families are homeless, the parent or parents are incapacitated, or the child has been determined to be at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Nine of the ten programs have capped funding, with only CalWORKs Stage 2 child care operating as an entitlement to families who are current participants in the CalWORKs program or are still income-eligible after having participated in the past two years. (After two years, income-eligible families are moved into Stage 3.) Children who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation have top priority for enrollment, but spaces must first be available. Families with the lowest incomes have second priority. As mentioned, approximately 23,000 income-eligible families with 43,000 children are on the Los Angeles County centralized eligibility list, the mechanism through which most families enter the system.

Some programs assess fees. Families earning less than 40 percent of the state median income—\$1,950 monthly for a family of three or \$2,167 for a family of four—do not pay anything, but as income rises, per-family fees (regardless of the number of children) are calculated on a sliding scale. As families approach the income-eligibility cutoff when they are bumped from these programs (75 percent of the state median income), a family of three would be paying \$17.25 per day and a family of four \$19.20 per day—still significantly less than most non-subsidized care.

Full-day state preschool programs serve three- and four-year olds, but only 12 contracts are in operation within Los Angeles County. Part-day, part-year state preschool programs are also available, for which no parent fees are assessed and no 'need for care' is required. Pre-kindergarten family literacy programs are mostly part-day—only 204 full-day spaces exist—and are limited to four-year-olds. Full-day, full-year general child care programs serve infants through school-age children, but current reimbursement rates deter providers from offering infant care.

Challenges exist for parents in finding a program for which they are eligible and that will cover their children's ages, Malaske-Samu said, and challenges exist for administrators in identifying children and families who meet program criteria. "There's an embarrassment of riches for part-day services for four-year-olds," she said, "but what if they have siblings, either older or younger, or need full-day care? The Knabe motion will give us the opportunity to examine ways to help families get the services they need. I look forward to solving this with the ECC."

Policies put in place over the years have created these silos, Ogawa continued, adding up to an unworkable and untenable process for families to navigate. Last October, as part of its approval of recommendations made in *Investing in the Future of L.A.'s Most At-Risk Children*, the ECC agreed that it would convene key stakeholders to design an integrated, countywide early childhood education/child welfare/probation initiative that honors current efforts and includes a focus on strengthening families. Today's report, *Making the Connections in Los Angeles County Between Child Welfare and Early Care and Education*, included in member packets, is a result of small stakeholder meetings that included representatives from DCFS, First 5 LA, and the county Office of Child Care. This group is recommending three action steps:

- A. Start small and take advantage of potential opportunities.
- B. Expand the circle with additional partners.
- C. Build on lessons learned.

For the first, group members identified the DCFS Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project as a possible starting point or foundation, and Ogawa introduced DCFS's Angela Carter, deputy director for service bureau 4, to explain the prevention project.

Preventing child abuse and neglect, Carter said, has been a four-year conversation born from the leadership of the Board of Supervisors, especially Don Knabe. The focus has been on getting to desired outcomes with shared resources, working in neighborhoods with families both known and unknown to DCFS, and bringing communities into relationships with one another so they can solve problems on their own. The PIDP is a community-based partnership involving county departments, community institutions, and families. Its intent is to:

- ✓ Bring families out of isolation and encourage their self-determination
- ✓ Address economic stability by providing supports for children and families
- ✓ Interweave services for easy access, using a 'no wrong door' approach

Community-based organizations are convening residents, families, and other partners to knit together resources to achieve those shared outcomes, and participants expect to learn what works and how to replicate it, strengthening the county's investment around outcomes.

Ogawa has spoken with lead agencies for the project who have a natural connection to early childhood education, and believes that linking with the PIDP provides a perfect opportunity for action, especially since the project includes an evaluation effort, technical assistance, and communication experts that will track outcomes for families. Many challenges still exist, but Ogawa is excited about moving forward with the goals the ECC approved in October, working with others committed to connecting child welfare and probation with early childhood education.

Aubrey Manuel moved to approve the plan outlined in the *Making the Connections in Los Angeles County Between Child Welfare and Early Care and Education* report, and Chief Robert Taylor seconded the motion. It moved to the floor for discussion.

In response to Bruce Saltzer's question about the coordinating body working on this plan, Ogawa said that the ECC will partner with county departments to work with PIDP lead agencies to learn from their activities and evaluation process. Lead consultant Sharon Watson explained that the stakeholder group—currently the Office of Child Care, DCFS, and First 5 LA—will work with ECC members and staff to develop further recommendations, as agreed in October. First 5 LA sees itself as a key stakeholder in that conversation, Jennifer Webb said from the audience, and is committed to continuing it with the ECC as convener. Watson agreed with Saltzer's suggestion that the ECC's role be made more explicit in the report.

Chief Taylor emphasized the importance, as the process moves forward, of adhering to evidence-based practices rooted in sound management and scientific principles. Leslie Heimov warned against closing the door on innovative ideas that may not have long bodies of research behind them, and Saltzer urged a focus on outcomes. Researcher Jacquelyn McCroskey assured everyone that 50 years of evidence exists on this topic. "There's a body of enormously rich literature about why this is an important area," she said. "As we begin the discussion about early childhood within the context of child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health, the challenge is to pull those individual thrusts together. We can set people's minds at ease about best practices, but we also want to go further, addressing the diverse populations in Los Angeles County and differing community needs." Trying new things is important, Berisha Black agreed, even if they're simply called pilots.

"One benefit of an evidence-based approach," Southard said, "is that it may get us to stop doing things that we've done traditionally when there is clear evidence that they *don't* work. Stifling innovation is not the intent." Within evidence-based practices, Taylor added, is the whole field of 'promising practices,' where evidence suggests that certain practices produce desired outcomes. "We shouldn't be rigid," he said. "As a functioning, growing society, we evolve and change."

Chief Taylor moved to amend the motion to include that the principles of evidence-based practices be considered in the development and evaluation of programs. Marv Southard seconded the motion, and ECC members unanimously voted to adopt the action plan as amended.

Staff Reports

- On July 21, an education summit will be held for between 200 and 300 foster parents and relative caregivers in partnership with the Los Angeles County Resource Families Coordinating Council, DCFS, and the juvenile court. The summit will address recent developments in the court system, what caregivers need to do to prepare youth for the upcoming school year (in terms of enrolling in the proper classes and participating in enrichment opportunities), and other issues. In addition, the goal is to talk with parents and caregivers to find out what barriers exist to getting foster youth included in extracurricular, after-school, and summer activities, and what supports caregivers need to be more successful with their youth. A

flyer for this summit will be developed and distributed, and ECC program director Carrie Miller will report on the event at the ECC's July meeting.

- On May 10 in Pasadena, a town hall meeting on helping system youth into and through higher education will be held with a panel of legislators that includes Assemblymember Anthony Portantino and ECC member Renatta Cooper, who sits on the board of education for the Pasadena school district. Youth and staff will detail the barriers they experience with regard to higher education, and the panel will not only respond with possible legislative remedies, but will make sure that a tape of the proceedings is entered into the Assembly's legislative record as a resource for other legislators who may wish to address these barriers. Youth already in college or trying to get there are encouraged to attend; please contact Miller for further information.
- Darline Robles, superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, has convened a work group of school districts to discuss a standardized way to award partial and full course credits, a barrier for many system youth who lose credits as a result of placement changes or who earn numerous credits in courses that do not count toward graduation. Once a method has been decided upon, it will be sent to the state as a possible model for other counties. The work group met on April 15 and will report at the joint superintendents' meeting to be convened by the ECC on June 18.
- Miller distributed a contact information sheet for education-related questions regarding foster and probation youth, including phone numbers and e-mail addresses for staff at the DCFS education section, and contact information for obtaining school transcripts for probation youth leaving the juvenile halls and probation camps. The individuals listed have committed to responding quickly to requests.
- On June 25, a countywide education resource fair at the California Endowment will include vendors, job opportunities, and information in many areas of interest to foster and probation youth, broken out by SPA so that attendees will know what is available in their area. Several hundred attendees are expected and Miller encouraged staff members from DCFS, Probation, and other organizations to attend and bring their youth. She distributed a 'wish list' for donated items that will be used as giveaways to encourage youth to attend.

Announcements

- Marv Southard reminded members that the planning process for the prevention and early intervention component of the Mental Health Services Act is underway. Tomorrow at St. Anne's, beginning at 9:30 a.m., the stakeholder group will consider three proposals—one to allocate a certain percentage of prevention and early intervention funds for children and transition-age youth, another to privilege proposals that leverage First 5 LA funds, and a third to create a pool to fund new entities that have not received mental health contracts in the past.

- May is Foster Care Month, and Berisha Black asked Leslie Heimov to enumerate the many local and statewide activities planned.
 - May 3 is Big Sunday, when foster youth will give back to the community by coming out with their mentors, attorneys, caregivers, and parents to replant burn areas in Griffith Park. A suitcase collection is also planned, and donations of new or gently used luggage are being solicited so foster youth don't have to transition to college or between placements with their belongings in garbage bags.
 - On May 5, an invitation-only kick-off reception for Foster Care Month will be held in Sacramento.
 - May 6 is 'lobby day' in Sacramento, when advocates, families, and social workers will be honored in a ceremony that is open to the public.
 - On May 13, 'foster care heroes' will be honored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.
 - On May 15 in Los Angeles, the annual job shadow day will put 75 foster and probation youth ages 16 to 21 at career-focused job sites such as law firms, banks, television news stations, and newspapers. Other youth have expressed interest in law enforcement and business, and additional employers are being sought.
- Judge Michael Nash announced the juvenile court's annual Partnership Conference, this year to be held on October 16 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Between 1,000 and 1,100 judges, lawyers, social workers, probation officers, educators, and volunteers with an interest in the juvenile court system are expected to attend. Organizers are soliciting workshops for the conference, and Nash encouraged anyone wanting to present on issues of importance to the court system to contact him at MNash@LASuperiorCourt.org to receive a proposal form to be considered by conference organizers.
- Celebration One will be held on June 4 at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Black said—a ceremony for system youth graduating from high school with a grade point average of 2.8 or over.

Public Comment

- Linda Ramos from United Friends of the Children is collecting applications for that organization's college readiness program, which serves youth in care from seventh through twelfth grades. Applications are being accepted until April 30 for students in grades seven through nine.
- Jennifer Webb announced that First 5 LA has revamped its website to include funding opportunities and community announcements. She encouraged everyone to visit and submit information for posting at <http://www.first5la.org>.
- Ron Brown, chief program officer at Children's Bureau, will gather everyone wishing a tour of the new facility in the lobby following the meeting.

Next Meeting

The ECC's next meeting is scheduled for:

Thursday, July 31, 2008
9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
The California Endowment
1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, California

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.