

Strategic Plan Update

2011–2014



ECC Mission

To raise the educational achievement of children and youth served by the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department so that they may have positive futures.

ECC Role and Approach

As noted in the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) Blueprint, *Expecting More*, our job is to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions, encouraging networks of people to work together to expand best practices and fill the gaps in communities where little help is available, to prevent our children from being left behind. Our primary role is to be a **champion of education** and to promote the achievement of youth in the following ways:

- As an *advocate*, mobilizing support across various public and private stakeholder groups
- As a *convener* and *broker*, working with other organizations to identify problems and develop solutions
- As a *policymaker*, spearheading strategies that support the increased educational achievement of the County's youth

Moving forward, we must learn from our prior experiences, build upon our successes, and focus on the quality and impact of our efforts. We have always known that “belonging” somewhere and with someone is especially important to our youth. We now recognize that this is a foundational piece of our mission. We must make every effort to create environments that promote youths' sense of belonging and enable them to have relationships with people who care about them and their educational success.

ECC Strategic Plan 2011–2014

Priority Areas, Outcomes, and Action Items

Priority Area 1: Early Childhood Education

Outcome: At least 90% of young DCFS children under the age of six—and the children of DCFS and probation youth—participate in high-quality early care and education programs.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Promote the emerging Strengthening Families approach by helping departments and organizations incorporate its elements into their work, using the County's newly established Youth Self-Sufficiency Countywide Goal and the Child Care Policy Framework as vehicles to integrate and align efforts.
2. Create policies, procedures, and practices to enroll DCFS children and the children of current/former system youth in early care and education programs.
3. Support the development and implementation of an electronic referral system in DCFS regional offices to enroll children in early care and education programs.
4. Help convene trainings—such as early learning symposiums and caregiver/parent summits—to instill the value of early education for the County's most vulnerable children and to strengthen partnerships between county departments and early care and education providers.

Priority Area 2: Youth Education and Development

Outcome #1: Educational programs provided to youth in juvenile halls and camps are reformed so that they significantly increase student academic achievement.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Help the Comprehensive Education Reform Committee (CERC) fully implement its educational reform recommendations.
2. Assist in achieving the educational mandates of the Challenger lawsuit settlement.
3. Advocate for camp-to-community transition strategies that help probation youth access the resources and supports they need to successfully integrate into local educational settings that challenge them and help them rise to the next level of achievement. Encourage the expansion of successful models, such as the one developed by the Pomona Unified School District, to other districts.
4. Partner with key organizations to convene a juvenile justice leadership forum to share reform ideas and strategies.

Outcome #2: System youth participate in after-school and summer enrichment activities that offer a variety of learning experiences, enhance social/emotional well-being, and provide opportunities for them to build positive and enduring relationships with caring adults.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Encourage the convening of resource fairs and other events to inform youth, their caregivers, and those who work with them about after-school, summer, and enrichment programs, including academic mentoring/tutoring opportunities.
2. Support current efforts to establish community school models in the County that offer youth-enriching educational experiences during non-school hours.
3. Meet with after-school program providers to identify ways to increase the participation of system youth in their programs.
4. Support the development of trainings for youth, parents, caregivers, and county and school staff that highlight the benefits system youth gain by participating in enrichment activities during non-school hours.

5. Partner with LACOE Foster Youth Services (FYS) to develop and implement its new strategic plan, which focuses on tutoring, case management, transition services, and educational advocacy for DCFS and probation students.
6. Promote the development of youth councils that give system youth a voice in determining the best ways to enhance their education and overall well-being.

Outcome #3: DCFS and probation youth successfully transition to preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, adult education, vocational school, and college, and smoothly transfer between schools.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Promote transition strategies that increase schools' ability to support system youth, fully include them in their school communities, and link them to resources that improve their academic achievement.
2. Partner with other organizations to develop convenings and trainings that equip parents, foster parents, and relative caregivers with educational advocacy strategies, tools, and resources.
3. Encourage the expansion of postsecondary education support programs that increase youth success and self-sufficiency.

Outcome #4: Prevent/reduce school truancy and engage truant youth in safe and welcoming educational programs.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Provide staff support to the Truancy Task Force created by the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court to identify truancy prevention/reduction efforts that work, and help promote and coordinate these approaches countywide.
2. Through the Truancy Task Force, School Superintendent Dialogues, youth councils, and other vehicles, work with key stakeholders to develop policies and best practices for increasing school attendance.

Priority Area 3: School/Department Coordination and Support

Outcome: Departments and schools work in concert to provide system youth with the education and supports they need to attain future success.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Facilitate the expansion of the Gloria Molina Foster Youth Education Program and similar models that:
 - Develop and implement individual, specialized educational plans for participating students
 - Recover credits for youth with multiple school placements
 - Support family/caregiver involvement and connections with caring adults
 - Link youth with tutoring and other support services
 - Improve the quality of student transitions to postsecondary education settings
2. Monitor the implementation of the school stability recommendations adopted by the ECC in 2010.
3. Promote the incorporation of LACOE FYS staff into DCFS and Probation case planning meetings.
4. Build on existing efforts to integrate assessments of youths' educational progress into the tools, procedures, and policies used by Juvenile Court bench officers, attorneys, and DCFS and Probation workers.
5. Support youths' timely enrollment in schools by:
 - Continually updating, disseminating and tracking the effectiveness of informational tools such as the AB 490 foster youth letter
 - Convening caregiver training summits
 - Distributing current contact lists
 - Developing policies and procedures that quickly identify holders of education rights
 - Helping school staff understand and implement new legislation such as AB 167 and SB 1317.

Priority Area 4: Data- and Information-Sharing

Outcome: Share education information electronically across systems.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Include language in Delinquency Court minute orders that allows for the sharing of school district educational records with probation officers, attorneys, and the Juvenile Court.
2. Conduct data matches that track the enrollment and educational progress of DCFS and probation youth.
3. Facilitate the creation of a mechanism that can electronically access system youths' education records and share these records with eligible users.
4. Monitor the implementation of data-sharing efforts among Los Angeles County school districts, county departments, attorneys, and the Juvenile Court.

Priority Area 5: System Accountability

Outcome: Courts regularly track and monitor youths' educational plans and progress and hold accountable those most responsible for youths' increased educational achievement—including child welfare workers, probation officers, attorneys, caregivers, parents, school personnel, and the youth themselves.

Examples of actions that would help achieve this outcome:

1. Support Juvenile Court-led initiatives and activities that improve students' school attendance, participation, and academic attainment.
2. Facilitate efforts to ensure that every youth has an effective holder of education rights assigned as soon as he or she enters the system, and that this information is immediately shared with caseworkers, caregivers, and school staff.
3. Develop trainings and tools that help bench officers ask the most important questions about youths' school attendance and achievement and thoroughly assess each youth's individual education needs and developmental progress.