



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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December 22, 2016

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chair
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From: Judge Michael Nash (Ret.) 
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection

Education Coordinating Council 2016 Annual Report

Background

The Education Coordinating Council (ECC) is a public-private partnership that was created in 2004 by the Board of Supervisors to raise the educational achievement of system-involved youth in Los Angeles County. ECC members include department heads from Children and Family Services, Probation, and Mental Health, superintendents from Los Angeles County school districts, and the presiding judge from the Juvenile Court, as well as advocates, representatives from community-based organizations, and a former foster and former probation youth.

The California Department of Education recently published data on the number of foster students at the county, district, and school levels, as well as their performance on Common Core-aligned tests. The numbers—57% of foster students in Los Angeles County did not meet standards in English Language Arts, and 65% did not meet standards in Mathematics¹—demonstrate the clear and continued need for improvements in educational achievement for this population.

The job of the ECC is to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions, encouraging varied networks to work together to expand best practices and help fill gaps to prevent system-involved children from being left behind educationally. It does this by mobilizing supports across stakeholder groups, brokering solutions and collabo-

¹ California Department of Education (2016). DataQuest: Foster Enrollment Report.

rations among child-serving entities, and spearheading strategies that bolster the increased educational achievement of the County's foster and probation youth.

New Director

Stefanie Gluckman began as Director of the ECC in November 2015. She has over 20 years' experience in child welfare, education, and health care policy, as well as civil rights advocacy. Earlier in her career, Stefanie worked at The Children's Partnership, where she developed research, policies, and programs focused on improving outcomes for system-involved youth using electronic information exchange to facilitate care coordination. Stefanie has a bachelor's degree in political economy from UC Berkeley, a master's in economics from Brown University, and a law degree from UCLA.

2016 ECC Accomplishments

Rebuilding ECC Participation and Commitment

With a new full-time Director coming on at the end of 2015, early 2016 was devoted to renewing and building relationships between and among ECC members and constituents, and on gathering information about their respective concerns and priorities. This smoothed the path for the development and adoption of a new five-year ECC strategic plan, and the exercise in relationship-building additionally resulted in renewed buy-in and commitment to the ECC from both members and constituents, as evidenced by a considerable increase in meeting participation and completed actions items. The ECC also brought a new member on to the Council, Sylvie de Toledo, the founder of Grandparents as Parents, Inc. She now represents relative caregivers, a strong source of support for many system-involved youth and a prior gap in the Council's membership.

ECC Strategic Plan 2016–2021

The ECC spent its first meeting of 2016 (April 20) determining priorities for a new five-year strategic plan. The 2016–2021 ECC Strategic Plan was then crafted and vetted by the Council over the next few months. At the next ECC meeting (July 20), the document was discussed by members and constituents, amended, and ultimately passed unanimously.

The 2016–2021 ECC Strategic Plan outlines priority areas, outcomes, and action items around which the ECC will engage to accomplish its mission. The chart below shows the five priority areas and their related outcomes.

ECC Strategic Plan

Priorities Areas and Outcomes

Priority Area 1: Enrollment in Early Childhood Education

Outcome: the ECC aims for at least 90% of system-involved children under the age of six participating in high-quality early care and education programs.

Priority Area 2: Achievement for School-Aged Youth

Outcome: Departments, Courts, schools, caregivers, and other providers work in concert to supply system-involved youth with the supports they need to be working at grade level (at a minimum) and on target to graduate from high school.

Priority Area 3: Job/College Access for Transition-Aged Youth

Outcome: Improve readiness for and access to college and/or jobs for transition-aged youth.

Priority Area 4: Electronic Information Sharing

Outcome: Expand the sharing of education information related to system-involved youth across departments, providers, and youth.

Priority Area 5: Research and Evaluation

Outcome: Assess the progress of the educational achievement level for system-involved youth in Los Angeles County.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in July of 2016, the ECC has begun work in a majority of its priority areas.

Priority Area I: Enrollment in Early Childhood Education

Filling Available Spaces

The ECC is convening an Early Childhood Education workgroup focused on overcoming barriers to matching foster youth in need of early childhood education to existing spaces. The workgroup will examine both short-term and long-term solutions involving information-sharing and feedback systems to address this issue. Key early childhood education players in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Chief Executive Office (CEO)/Service Integration Branch (SIB), academia, community-based organizations, and service providers have agreed to participate in this workgroup that will begin meeting early next year.

Priority Area II: Achievement for School-Aged Youth

Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

The ECC has regularly participated in meetings of the Coalition for Educational Equity (CEEFY) to help ensure that the needs of system-involved youth are addressed in school-district LCAPs; it also helped to edit and distribute a CEEFY review of the LCAP system's second year. The ECC has encouraged school districts to complete LCAP evaluations and urged the state to develop an evaluation rubric to help districts better assess their LCAPs. The ECC also supports school stability initiatives that are addressed through CEEFY and is leading a discussion on classroom-based trauma-informed care in partnership with CEEFY members early next year.

Education Rights

The ECC contributed to the development of the Alliance for Children's Rights' *Foster Youth Education Toolkit*, which the ECC formally endorsed at its October 19, 2016, meeting. The Toolkit is designed to assist school districts in meeting the promise of Local Control Funding Formulae for foster youth by providing comprehensive information on their educational rights, along with tools to help districts employ best practices to enable foster youth to achieve their college and career dreams. Following the ECC meeting at which it was presented and endorsed, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) distributed the Toolkit to all 81 Los Angeles County school districts for training and daily use.

The ECC also brokered a partnership among Probation, LACOE, and youth advocates to provide education-rights training to youth residing in—and to employees of—the juvenile probation halls and camps. This is the first time training will be provided to probation youth on the issue of education rights, and it will be based on materials found in the *Foster Youth Education Toolkit*. The ECC also created a youth-friendly one-page summary of the Toolkit to help youth better understand and exercise their educational rights. Both the full Toolkit and its summary will be placed in County libraries for probation youth to access.

Programming

To increase access to evidence-based arts education and alternative programming that improves outcomes for system-involved youth, the ECC is exploring opportunities with a nonprofit arts organization, the Spirit Awakening Foundation, that is dedicated to assisting “at-risk” youth and children in the juvenile justice system. This organization brought arts-based anti-bullying programs to juvenile halls and camps in the past (at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, for instance, from June 2013 to August 2015), and an evaluation of that program showed a large decrease in fights and suspensions over the course of the program sessions². The ECC is examining ways to institutionalize access to this kind of program so it is available to all system-involved youth.

² The number of suspensions per month at the facility underwent a fairly steady but imperfect decline from 58 in June 2013 to 7 in August 2015, and the number of fights per month dropped from 21 in June 2013 to 2 in August 2015. <http://spiritawakening.org/>

Potential additional initiatives include dance, theater programs, and yoga therapy/mindfulness training to promote rehabilitation and healing for probation and foster youth. The ECC is currently facilitating connections between County partners and professors/students in Loyola Marymount University's Master of Arts Program in Yoga Therapy to offer yoga therapy and mindfulness training to system-involved youth.

Priority Area III: Transition-Age Youth

On June 28, 2016, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion to support efforts for Transition-Age Youth (TAY) self-sufficiency. The ECC, in partnership with County youth-serving departments, created a TAY workgroup to:

1. Identify new goals to meet the needs of TAY
2. Develop new annual performance-based goals for department heads represented in the workgroup
3. Revisit a TAY self-sufficiency integrated service delivery plan developed in 2013 that is currently being implemented through the Core Practice Model and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings

New Model for Integrated Service Delivery

Based on its findings, the TAY workgroup created a modified plan that builds upon the youth-serving departments' current integrated service delivery model and addresses challenges experienced in the original 2013 implementation of the approach. Highlights of this modified model include:

- Educating youth and families about the importance of having all youth-serving departments at CFT meetings to provide the best resources for self-sufficiency
- Starting self-sufficiency services earlier (especially mental health and educational services) to provide a solid foundation for career and college readiness
- Ensuring a single plan for each TAY transitioning out of care, thereby preventing duplicative services, better identifying barriers across departments, and facilitating a unified approach to help the youth reach self-sufficiency

The overall goal of the modified model is to work toward a complete integration of self-sufficiency services across all youth-serving departments.

Promising Programs

The TAY workgroup has identified promising programs and opportunities for improving self-sufficiency in four areas: education, housing, employment, and social/emotional well-being. They include a college prep pilot being conducted in collaboration with the National Youth Center for Law's FosterEd: Los Angeles initiative and the Alliance for Children's Rights' Opportunity Youth Collaborative. This pilot provides a career/college pathway for foster youth in high school as well as employment services and resources for youth while they attend college. Program staff engage with education rights holders and liaisons to help ensure that each youth has an education champion who can monitor achievement, provide encouragement, and communicate the resources available to

each student. The program also offers students assistance and guidance in applying to colleges and for financial aid. Furthermore, staff follow the youth and provide them continued support after they have graduated and started their college/job careers. The pilot will be implemented in the 2017–2018 school year and serve at least 150 students across several high schools in Los Angeles County.

The ECC is also coordinating with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and Los Angeles County's Homelessness Initiative Strategy A4 (Foster Care Discharges) group to update both on the progress of the TAY workgroup. The TAY workgroup and the Homelessness Initiative Strategy A4 group meet regularly to exchange progress updates and work together to help foster and probation youth reach self-sufficiency. An early focus of this partnership has been employment and career-readiness opportunities, which can significantly increase this population's ability to resist homelessness.

Implementation of TAY Self-Sufficiency Plan

Since it submitted the TAY Self-Sufficiency report to the Board of Supervisors on September 28, 2016, the ECC has begun convening TAY workgroup meetings to start implementing the modified integrated service delivery plan. The workgroup has addressed policy barriers that limit the number of departments attending CFT meetings, discussed the need for a single transition plan across departments, and recommended modifying the training for CFT facilitators so they can better inform and engage youth and families on the importance of having all departments around the table. Through the workgroup, departments are also adding to their new annual performance-based goals, which include the development of a Department of Public Health (DPH) mobile-friendly TAY website and an analysis by Probation to determine how it can better support employment for youth in its care.

The ECC has invited both advocates and County department representatives to be a part of the TAY workgroup. County/community partnerships have generated successful initiatives in the past, and both groups are learning from each other. The ECC will continue to facilitate the TAY workgroup to monitor the implementation of the modified integrated service delivery plan to improve self-sufficiency for transition-age youth.

Priority IV: Electronic Information-Sharing

The ECC took steps to improve electronic information-sharing so that the Health and Education Passport mandated for each foster youth can be effectively populated with the needed information. An electronic connection is being facilitated between the system designed to enable local information exchanges across health providers—the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES)—and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS); LANES, DCFS, and DPH have all committed to implementing an electronic-connection initiative. This will make legally permissible (and often crucial) health and mental health data available to appropriate members of child welfare teams for the purpose of care coordination. Multiple ECC-led planning meetings have brought LANES, DCFS, County Counsel, the Chief Information Office, and DPH to agreement on the goals and direction that underpin the next phase of the effort.

In addition, the ECC is facilitating discussions between DCFS and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on how the county's Health and Education Passport can interface most efficiently with the state's future child welfare system (CWS-NS). It also contributed feedback to the Attorney General's office about current impediments to sharing education data and made suggestions for state guidance on this issue. (New guidance was released on September 1, 2016, that included the ECC's recommendations.)

If you have questions about this report, please contact me at (213) 893-1152 or via email at mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Stefanie Gluckman at (213) 893-2507 or via email at sgluckman@ocp.lacounty.gov.

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