



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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July 30, 2021

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
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From: Judge Michael Nash (Ret.)
Executive Director

PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

In the final report of the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection (BRCCP), [The Road to Safety for Our Children](#),¹ two key recommendations were to “establish an entity to oversee one unified child protection system,” and for it to create a strategic plan for the work it will focus on. On June 10, 2014, the Board adopted the recommendations contained within that BRCCP final report and took action to establish the Office of Child Protection (OCP) as a separate entity reporting directly to the Board and located within the Executive Office. In October 2016, the OCP submitted to the Board its Countywide Child Protection Strategic Plan, which categorizes the work across five goal areas: prevention, safety, permanency, well-being, and cross-cutting approaches. It has submitted quarterly updates on its progress since August 1, 2016; this is a report on its progress since the last update submitted on April 30, 2021.

GOAL 1: PREVENTION *Provide children and families with the upfront supports and services they need to prevent them from entering the child welfare system and/or limit their involvement with the system once they are known to it.*

In June 2017, the OCP released a [prevention plan](#)—written in collaboration with dozens of County departments, advocates, and community stakeholders—for enhancing prevention efforts across the county. Many successful initiatives came out of this work, moving us closer to the goal of providing primary prevention supports to families who want them (these efforts are highlighted in our annual prevention reports). More recently, additional endeavors have begun taking shape that hold the promise of moving this work to its next phase of implementation.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all reports mentioned in this document are available through the embedded links and on the Office of Child Protection website at <http://ocp.lacounty.gov/>.

From this point forward, we will report on our work through updates on these key initiatives, all of which include cross-departmental and cross-sector partnerships that are necessary for broadening the scope and deepening the foothold of prevention priorities in future.

- **Supporting Los Angeles County’s Transition to Prioritizing Well-Being**

- ✧ Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)—In June, California released its revised FFPSA Prevention Plan, vastly improved from the previous version in large part because of advocacy by the OCP, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Probation, Children Now, and countless community partners and advocates. Most notably, the state widened its eligibility criteria, making it possible for Los Angeles County to use FFPSA funds to maintain and further build community pathways to prevention services so that families do not need to reach the “crisis level” of a DCFS child abuse/neglect investigation to access crucial mental health, substance-abuse, and parenting resources. This change also opens further opportunities to divert families referred to the Child Protection Hotline into community-based programs instead of court-mandated intervention. The state similarly expanded the number of evidenced-based programs that can be used, helping the County to preserve crucial supports—home-visiting services for expecting and parenting youth, Partnerships for Families, Alternative Response Services, and prevention and aftercare options, etc.—as well as draw down more federal funding for administrative and training costs.

In June and July, DCFS, in partnership with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, the OCP and others launched six implementation workgroups to delve deeply into the key fiscal, practice, technology, continuous quality improvement (CQI), training, and communications questions that are paramount to the successful maximization of the FFPSA funding stream.

All together, these changes and activities will substantially increase access to substance-abuse, mental health, and in-home parenting resources for families *before* an open DCFS case is needed.

- ✧ Thriving Families, Safer Children (TFSC)—TFSC, a public/private partnership at the local, state, and national level focused on strengthening child and family well-being, finalized its community co-creation plan for Los Angeles County in July. The plan was developed by members of the TFSC team with lived experience in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems, along with partners from philanthropy and government. The plan’s first phase will conduct “visioning sessions” throughout the county during the fall of 2021 with residents and grass-roots community-based organizations to understand their aspirations and strategies for improving child and family well-being. This input will be used to align, invest in, and amplify community co-designed initiatives at the local, state, and national levels to create systems change in Los Angeles County and beyond.

✧ Information, Referral, and Connection System—The Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Chief Information Office (CIO) are collaborating with the OCP, County departments, and other stakeholders to include a TAY [Transition-Age Youth] Hub in the procurement of a new information and referral service to be integrated with an enhanced Los Angeles County Community Information Exchange (LACCIE) that will initially be rolled out to meet the needs of transition-age youth. This new approach leverages and combines existing CIO platforms/resources with new information and referral services to create a new countywide Information, Referral, and Connection (IR&C) system. An evaluation committee is currently scoring the RFP proposals received; we anticipate that a vendor will be selected in the fall of 2021.

- **Ensuring That Community-Based Resources Thrive**

- ✧ Home Visitation—Partners are working together to expand home-visiting programs to all mothers across the county who want to participate.
 - Allocated \$600,000 in one-time prevention funding to the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide home-visiting services to at least 50 high-risk pregnant and parenting families, including foster youth in Service Planning Areas 4, 7, and 8; DPH also continues its efforts to secure ongoing and stable funding for home-visiting services in light of recent cuts
 - As a result of advocacy efforts by DCFS, OCP, Children Now, and countless community partners, two additional home-visiting models (Nurse Family Partnership and Parents As Teachers) are now all eligible for a 50% federal match as well as potential state FFPSA-related funds. This change dramatically improves the sustainability of services currently being offered to expectant and parenting youth in foster care and members of the community who can benefit from preventive access to home-visiting resources before an open DCFS case is needed.
 - In June, the DPH Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Division (DPH–MCAH) was notified that due to uncertainties around Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) CalWORKs funding in the state budget, DPH–MCAH would receive an approximate \$4.6 million decrease in funding for the CalWORKs home-visiting program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022. DPSS will provide additional budget detail after the state budget is signed. There is a possibility that Los Angeles County could receive additional funding, as has happened in previous years; however, DPSS does not expect to receive official budget notification from the state until August/September 2021.
 - The California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative, spearheaded by the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), represents an exciting opportunity to transform the Medi-Cal system and increase focus on the social determinants of health and equity. First 5 LA and DPH continue to analyze the provisions within CalAIM that may be suitable for home-visiting and doula programs, including enhanced care management

in lieu of services and population health, and how to strategically approach these opportunities.

Through DHCS's managed-care procurement process, First 5 LA and other stakeholders are tracking the contracting provisions for managed-care plans that will go into effect in 2024. First 5 LA and DPH have also engaged the Medi-Cal managed-care plans operating in Los Angeles County to identify ways to support those plans to implement state policy changes so that the changes are as successful as possible.

- First 5 LA and DPH continue to partner with health plans to support home visiting. For example, First 5 LA is currently negotiating a contract with Blue Shield Promise Health Plan through which Promise would partially reimburse First 5 LA for the costs of home-visiting services to its members. First 5 LA is working with other plans as well to create standardized referral pathways between health care providers and home-visiting programs, particularly to increase prenatal enrollment in services.
- ✧ Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Families—The recently passed FY 2021–2022 California state budget includes several provisions that are key to supporting pregnant and parenting people and their families. Of particular note are the new Medi-Cal doula benefit, the provision to add Community Health Workers as an eligible provider population, a dyadic care benefit, and a provision to extend postpartum support eligibility to 12 months.
- ✧ Early Care and Education (ECE)—DPH's Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE) is working with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development and the Child Care Planning Committee to increase access to early care and education programs for interested parents. Recent OAECE activities and COVID-19 responses include:
 - As of May 31, 2021, 4,756 licensed family child-care homes were open—80% of the family child-care homes in Los Angeles County. Also, 1,812 early care and education centers (70%) were open while 30% remained closed.
 - OAECE is the lead on the *Strategy 8: Child Care in the Pathways for Economic Resilience* report and has developed an implementation plan in partnership with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development with these five recommendations:
 - Recommendation 1: Provide child-care vouchers to the least resourced workers and low-income families.
 - Recommendation 2: Provide child-care stabilization grants and technical-assistance support to family child-care providers and centers.

- Recommendation 3: Expand early care and education facilities by supporting early care and education providers in navigating licensing, zoning, permitting, and other regulatory processes that pose barriers.
 - Recommendation 4: Improve the compensation and qualifications of the workforce so there is a sufficient supply of qualified early educators by continuing to advocate for increased compensation through restructuring of the state subsidy reimbursement system.
 - Recommendation 5: Reduce barriers to professional development opportunities.
- In FY 2020–2021, 1,219 early educators received OAECE’s Workforce Pathways LA stipends for completing professional-development or college courses, obtaining a Child Development Permit, or achieving a college degree.
 - OAECE partnered with PEACH (Partnerships for Education, Articulation, and Coordination through Higher Education) and Child360 to develop Workforce Pathways LA’s ECE college and career advisement toolkit, and conducted a training for the ECE support system on June 4.
 - Workforce Pathways LA’s Joint Committee on Professional Development completed an ECE professional-development landscape analysis and convened a forum to share the landscape report on June 28.

GOAL 2: SAFETY *Minimize, if not eliminate, the risk that a child known to one or more entities in our system will be harmed.*

Implementation of Anthony A. Report Recommendations

On August 10, 2018, the OCP, DCFS, the Health Agency, the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department (LASD) filed a [joint response](#) to the Board’s motion to review the case that included the death of 10-year-old Anthony Avalos. The report contained eight recommendations for systems improvements. A [six-month follow-up report](#) on efforts to implement these recommendations was submitted to the Board on February 14, 2019. Implementation efforts to date on the recommendations are below.

1) Reevaluate DCFS’s Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) process.

The revised VFM policy was released on August 3, 2020, and now governs how VFM cases should be handled.

2) Improve the skills of staff interviewing children.

A training video on different aspects of interviewing was released in June 2020 and is now required for children's social workers (CSWs) and their supervisors (SCSWs) in both DCFS's emergency-response and continuing-services sections. Of 558 SCSWs, 497 have completed the training, representing 89% of the total. Of 2,620 CSWs, 1,425 have completed the training, representing 54% of the total; full completion is targeted for December 31, 2021.

3) Retrain social workers on the proper use of Structured Decision Making® (SDM).

See "Risk Assessment and System Improvement Recommendation Implementation" on page 8 for a full description.

4) Increase collaboration between DCFS and law enforcement.

- DCFS and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) continue to work together on the Antelope Valley Joint Response/Joint Investigation project. The project is currently focused on DCFS offices and LASD stations in Lancaster, Palmdale, and Santa Clarita.
 - Meetings occurred with the Lancaster, Palmdale, and Santa Clarita teams in June, resulting in the creation of a glossary of terms commonly used by each agency that will be shared and used as a training tool. The agencies are developing that training, tentatively scheduled to roll out in October.
 - A meeting is planned for August during which co-location agreements for Santa Clarita and Lancaster DCFS and LASD will be finalized.
 - Data shows that in May 2021, 118 Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Report System (eSCARs) reports were received in Lancaster that generated 29 joint children's social worker/LASD responses. Ten were received in June, with 33 joint responses.

5) Improve the Medical Hub system.

See the "County Medical Hubs" section on page 18 for a full description.

6) Improve the investigation skills of social workers at the front end and beyond.

- The Continuous Quality Improvement Division (CQID) completed Phase I of a Federal Measure P1 *Permanency Within 12 Months* review. A quantitative analysis of the sample was completed and shared with the executive team, regional administrators, division chiefs, and regional staff. Phase II of this review includes a qualitative "deep dive" for a sub-population of this sample consisting of

interviews with assigned staff. A Qualitative Review Tool was finalized during this period and will be implemented during Phase II, which is slated to begin during the third quarter of this year.

- CQID led briefings and facilitated discussions to share findings from three mini-reviews completed during the first quarter of 2021 that focused on a cohort of 25 children ages 0–5 receiving family-maintenance services when a parent had previously failed to reunify with the child. The CQID’s Continuous Quality Improvement Specialists (CQISs) completed briefings with CSWs and SCSWs on each case, as well as with the executive team, regional administrators, and division chiefs. The CQISs also worked with the regional CSWs and SCSWs on an additional 65 children meeting these same criteria to examine the strengths in multi-disciplinary teaming and where opportunities for improvement exist.
- CQID continued to lead departmental efforts to improve two Child and Family Services Review items for the California Department of Social Services’ Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). A “Practice Tips” newsletter was developed around the two items and shared with regional staff through presentations at staff meetings and to the PIP advisory team.
- CQID teamed with the Risk Management Division to develop a summer series focused on building assessment skills using protective factors. CQID is also partnering with DCFS’s Office of Equity to develop a CQI equity-feedback loop upon the implementation of a risk-stratification model during the third quarter of the year. Lastly, the CQID is partnering with the Internal Controls Assurance Services (ICAS) section to conduct a two-part state audit replication study. Upon ICAS’ completion of the replication audit, CQID will complete a qualitative review to gain an in-depth understanding of items offering opportunities for improvement.

7) Improve the capacity to assess needs and progress made throughout the span of the case.

DPH’s Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (DPH–SAPC) unit, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and DCFS partnered to outstation substance-abuse counselors in DCFS regional offices to provide on-site support and connections to further substance-abuse supports for parents or youth who need them. These counselors were also available to consult with social workers on cases involving substance-abuse issues and offer guidance on how best to handle them.

- A scaled-down version of the SUD–TIPS (Substance Use Disorder–Trauma-Informed Parent Support) program is in place for FY 2021–2022, as DPH was able to continue funding for two full-time counselors doing this work. They are stationed at Client Engagement and Navigation Services (CENS) area offices and serve all DCFS regions.

- Since the program's re-instatement last year, approximately 300 referrals have been processed to connect parents to substance-abuse treatment services within their communities.
- DCFS is continuing to explore whether the SUD-TIPS program will be eligible for FFPSA reimbursement, which may allow DCFS to fund additional CENS positions.

8) Reduce social worker caseloads.

- Since December 2020, the department has hired 232 CSWs. In December 2020, the average caseloads were 19.7 for the continuing-services section and 7.7 for emergency-response referrals. In May 2020, caseloads decreased to 18.2 for continuing services and slightly increased for emergency-response referrals.
- To help further reduce caseloads, the department is in the process of hiring 35 CSW candidates who receive stipends from the California Social Education Center (CalSWEC) at the University of California Berkeley.

Risk Assessment and System Improvement Recommendation Implementation

- Partnering with DCFS to implement the recommendations outlined by the OCP in its [report of May 2017](#)
- Evident Change and DCFS developed a two-day remote "safety and risk" foundational training focused on best practices in safety assessment, safety planning, and risk assessment. Of the 3,642 staff existing staff required to complete risk assessment training, 3,585 (98%) of them did so; make-up trainings are scheduled for July and August for the remainder as well as for 206 new-hires.
- Evident Change worked with the DCFS policy unit to finalize changes to the Structured Decision Making[®] sections of the reunification, case-closure, and permanency sections of DCFS policy. This effort was completed in June. An updated training on the SDM tools associated with these same decision points has begun: Trainings for assistant regional administrators and supervisors are being delivered from July through October; social-worker trainings will begin in October and continue through 2022. More than 2,000 workers will be trained, some by Evident Change and some by DCFS trainers.

Use of Public Health Nurses (PHNs) in Child Welfare

- The Child Welfare PHN (CWPHN) Steering Committee continues to meet and address issues resulting from the consolidation of the child-welfare PHNs into DPH, and has begun working to implement some of the recommendations from the OCP's report on the [Best Use of PHNs in Child Welfare](#) (December 2017).

- ✧ A CWPHN Coronavirus Warmline launched in April 2020 to support the needs of DCFS and Probation families, clients, employees, contractors, and facility staff after hours and on weekends and holidays. A total of 1,116 non-duplicated COVID-19–related initial PHN consultations were logged between mid-April 2020 and the end of June 2021.
 - From April 1 through June 30, 2021, 13 consultations were received, approximately 77% for children involved with the foster-care system and 23% for children in home-of-parent placements. Most calls/questions were from short-term residential therapeutic programs (31%), followed by parents and relative caregivers (each 23% of the total). DPH is attributing this massive drop in calls to the overall decrease in COVID-19 cases, the positive impact of vaccinations on virus transmission, and the increased knowledge base on prevention measures, isolation, and quarantine that parents, resource parents, workers, and staff have gained since the pandemic began.
- ✧ For 2021, the CWPHN Early Intervention Program sponsored by SEIU Local 721 received its annual allocation of \$8.25 million, and statutory code allowed for the suspension of the program’s sunset date. The CWPHN Advisory Committee completed the draft of the statement of work and submitted it to the DHCS in the spring of 2021. While awaiting comments and feedback from DHCS, the Advisory Committee has continued to refine program specifics. DPH will work with DHCS to settle on a final statement of work and amend the Medicaid waiver accordingly to secure matching Medicaid funds through the remainder of 2021. The combined annual general fund allocation and matching funds will enable the County to create a sustainable future funding source, staffing pattern, and service-delivery plan for early intervention services in the County’s child-welfare system.

Electronic Data-Sharing Efforts

- Emergency Response Investigative Service (ERIS)—Working with DCFS, the CIO, and County Counsel on a web-based portal to facilitate the electronic sharing of information relevant to investigations of child abuse or neglect across six County departments and DCFS, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the OCP finalized with participating departments, County Counsel, and the CEO
 - ✧ Launched a revised ERIS in December 2020 designed to help streamline DCFS investigations and the placement of children with relatives when a removal is necessary. The new system—created by the Internal Services Department, the OCP, DCFS, and the CIO—adds data from other departments and includes changes suggested by users to improve system functioning.
 - 18 DCFS regional offices and command post have implemented the new system. The Vermont Corridor office is scheduled to launch on August 6, 2021.

- Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES)—Working with LANES (a health information exchange system), DPH, County Counsel, DCFS, and the CEO to provide child-welfare teams with health information from LANES to support health-care coordination and effective treatment for DCFS youth. Using LANES, child-welfare PHNs are able to view, download, and print timely, comprehensive health records for their clients and update children’s social workers and caregivers, as appropriate, about client needs.
 - ✧ Access to LANES was extended to all County child-welfare public health nurses, as well as their intermediate typist clerks (ITCs). Since that time, the OCP has:
 - Coordinated efforts between DHS and LANES to roll out a LANES training for ORCHID users (Online Real-time Centralized Health Information Database) and worked with DHS to develop materials. The first such training was held July 14 with Medical Hub staff.
 - Worked with DPH and DCFS to gather feedback from this larger pool of users to provide to LANES. As a result, LANES modified the landing page through which nurses access LANES records to enhance usability.
 - With DPH, convened CWPHNs for a check-in meeting to help address challenges, answer questions, and give a demonstration of the new landing page. The OCP updated the User Guide and FAQ to specifically respond to the issues presented.
 - Conducted an audit of a random sample of 100 child welfare clients' LANES records that identified a need to modify the roster being provided to LANES to improve the data-matching process; worked with DCFS’s Business Information Systems Division (BIS) and LANES to modify the roster.
 - Worked with DPH to develop a process for identifying heavy emergency-room users among child-welfare clients
- Electronic Education Passport System (EPS)—The Education Coordinating Council (ECC), working with DCFS and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), has made significant progress toward greater access to accurate and consistent education data about foster youth.
 - ✧ LACOE is working on implementation of a new case-management module for Los Angeles County’s Community Schools Initiative, and has completed enhancements to the DCFS caseload-management and tutoring modules.
 - ✧ LACOE is in the process of hiring an EPS change-management consultant to engage users and improve the functionality of the system.

GOAL 3: PERMANENCY *No child leaves the system without a permanent family or a responsible caring adult in his or her life.*

Increasing the Use of Relative Placements

- The upfront family-finding (UFF) project continues in the 10 original DCFS offices: Belvedere, West LA, West San Fernando valley, Santa Fe Springs, Glendora, Vermont Corridor, Santa Clarita, Wateridge, Hawthorne, and Lakewood. It recently expanded to the Pomona DCFS office.
 - ✧ From January through June 2021, 1,914 children have been the subject of detention hearings in the 10 original offices. (No data from Pomona has yet been received); 84% of those children were placed with kin following removal from their homes.
 - ✧ Discussions are currently ongoing as to whether or not the UFF project meets the criteria to qualify for funding under FFPSA.

Permanency and Self-Sufficiency Planning for Transition-Age Youth (TAY)

- On September 4, 2019, the OCP submitted a report to the Board of Supervisors, [Increasing Stability and Permanency for Transition-Age Youth](#), which contained recommendations from the OCP Permanency Workgroup on data, family reunification, DCFS's Youth Permanency Units, and the Dave Thomas Foundation's foster-child adoption project, "Wendy's Wonderful Kids," plus a draft analysis of programs and benefits available to eligible youth.
 - ✧ The OCP Permanency Workgroup continues to meet monthly. DCFS provided the following data as of July 1, 2021:
 - 2,192 children have been freed with a plan of adoption and are awaiting adoption finalization
 - 797 have been in adoptive placement for more than six months
 - 516 adoptions were finalized this year through May of this year
 - 657 cases in the dependency court for 90 days or longer have not reached disposition
 - ✧ The Adoption Process Workgroup, convened by DCFS to review and refine adoption processes, continues to meet twice monthly. The group has also spawned a TPR subcommittee to review the WIC 366.26 process on the termination of parental rights.
 - ✧ The benefits chart created by OCP and other stakeholders has been completed and can currently be found on the [Permanency](#) page of the OCP website, under "Relevant Publications and Reports." It will ultimately be housed within DCFS.

Discussions are currently occurring with potential funders to develop an interactive electronic version.

- ✧ DCFS is in the planning stages of creating permanency roundtables designed to identify and remove barriers to permanency, particularly for youth who have been in the system for more than 24 months. Data at present shows that the most significant numbers of these youth are Latino and African-American. The implementation of these roundtables is targeted for the last quarter of 2021.

Transitional Shelter Care Facility (TSCF) Pilot

- Bi-weekly meetings continue with stakeholders—including DCFS, DMH, Probation, the Juvenile Court, the Children’s Law Center, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), County Counsel, and others—to discuss the multidisciplinary teaming pilot led by DCFS’ Accelerated Placement Team (APT), along with DMH, to stabilize and find permanency for hard-to-place youth (overstays and chronic repeaters) at 10-day Temporary Shelter Care Facilities (TSCFs). The APT has named the special social workers staffing this effort “the OCP unit.”
 - ✧ Data from the last quarter shows the number of high-risk program youth returning to a shelter:
 - 0 reentries for OCP clients during the month of April
 - 2 reentries for OCP clients during the month of May
 - 0 reentries for OCP clients during the month of June
 - With a total of 49 youth currently in the program, the return rate was **4%**
 - ✧ For this quarter, five new youth who were overstays at TSCFs joined the program; of these, 80% have remained in their placements and have not returned to TSCFs.
 - ✧ The OCP team also assisted DCFS regional offices with finding placements for some youth with significant challenges who are not part of the program. The team was successful in placing 100% of these youth in stable placements.
- Youth Summaries
 - ✧ **TC**—TC is a non-minor dependent with significant developmental delays and mental health issues. Before entering foster care, she had been in a long-term guardian placement that was terminated by her caregiver. TC experienced extreme difficulties adjusting to foster care and was placed in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). Her program counselor advocated for her to be in a Regional Centers home more suited to her complex needs. With better support available, TC has remained stable and was able to graduate from high school in June.
 - ✧ **AP and GP** (an update from our last progress report on 4/30/2021)—In 2008, AP came to the attention of DCFS due to his mother’s history of illicit drug use. AP

and his sibling are both Deaf, and the mother also neglected medical and educational needs and left them unsupervised for extended periods of time. In 2015, AP and his sibling entered a legal guardianship with foster caregivers who were Deaf and proficient in American Sign Language. However, in 2019, a physical-abuse allegation was substantiated against the legal guardians and they relinquished guardianship, citing AP's frequent emotional and behavioral outbursts.

AP was placed in a TSCF as a result of behaviors such as destruction of property, running away, and suicidal ideation; he also experienced multiple psychiatric hospitalizations. AP continued to run away, endanger himself by jumping out of windows, and put himself in risky situations at night in the city streets. He was hospitalized almost weekly and starving for a connection.

Once AP entered the pilot program, he was placed with a resource family; however, he continued to display behavioral difficulties and was removed from that home. In April 2020, AP was re-placed in an STRTP where he was linked to outpatient mental health and psychiatric services, wraparound services, and in-house treatment services.

Within a few months, AP showed significant improvements in his behavior. He was able to communicate his needs to his treatment team and began engaging in behavioral-specialist sessions and Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. As a result, AP maintained a stable placement.

The pilot team encouraged family visits and his mother began participating in his CFT meetings, as well as working closely with a wraparound parent partner. On April 22, the court released AP to his mother's care under family maintenance services. His sibling, GP, now has extended visits with his mother and siblings, and continues to show improvement. DCFS will be recommending that GP, too, return to his mother's care at his upcoming court hearing. If this occurs, the entire family will have been reunited.

GOAL 4: WELL-BEING *Ensure that system-involved youth achieve the physical, emotional, and social health needed to be successful.*

Efforts to Improve School Stability

- Continuing to partner with DCFS, Los Angeles County school districts, and LACOE to implement the foster-youth school-stability provisions included in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - ✧ To date, 39 school districts have signed the long-term ESSA transportation MOU—Alhambra Unified, Antelope Valley Unified, Azusa, Basset Unified, Beverly Hills, Burbank, Centinela Valley Union High School District, Charter Oak, Claremont, Compton, Culver City, Duarte, El Monte City, El Monte Union High School District, El Rancho Unified, Glendale Unified, Hacienda La Puente, Inglewood, Lancaster, Lennox, Long Beach Unified, Los Angeles Unified (*which*

serves approximately 40% of the County's foster youth), Monrovia, Montebello, Mountain View Elementary, Norwalk La Mirada, Palmdale, Paramount, Pasadena, Rosemead, San Marino, South Pasadena, South Whittier, Torrance, Walnut Valley, West Covina, Westside, Whittier Union High School District, and William S. Hart.

- ✧ The ECC is engaging with other districts—including Pomona, East Whittier City, and Little Lake City—to facilitate additional agreements. The 42 districts whose boards have signed the MOU plus the districts with which ECC is engaging serve approximately 83% of the County's foster youth.
- The ECC is also working with partners to secure state sustainable funding to cover foster youth school-stability transportation costs for DCFS and school districts.
 - ✧ The ECC convened a workgroup of representatives from DCFS, LACOE, the CEO's legislative affairs unit, school districts, the Alliance for Children's Rights, and California Youth Connection to craft a strategic plan to secure sustainable state funding. The workgroup analyzed the current legislative landscape, developed a two-year timeline, and has begun identifying potential "champions," collecting additional data needed to educate state stakeholders, and engaging other counties in this effort.

School-Based Healing-Informed Arts Education

- Working with the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), DMH, and the Arts for Healing and Justice Network (AHJN) to implement a healing-informed arts education pilot for middle and high schools with high numbers of foster and probation youth. The program helps youth build protective factors through the arts and develops local networks of mental-health clinicians, artists, teachers, and other stakeholders within schools and their surrounding communities.
 - ✧ Between January and June 2021, the Creative Wellbeing Team provided a total of 20 virtual workshops to 398 district staff/educators, giving participants a chance to experience healing-informed strategies for self-care for youth and adults, engage in topics around cultural relevance, and understand how to incorporate healing-informed arts practices to promote well-being in the classroom. Multiple sessions were offered to three partner districts (Pasadena, Pomona, and Whittier City) and additional educators were reached through a series open to all districts. Many educators voiced an immediate need for additional self-care space opportunities.
 - Creative Wellbeing workshops were embedded into districts' designated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) professional-development offerings at Pomona and Whittier City.
 - ✧ The Creative Wellbeing Team, in partnership with DCFS, implemented five self-care workshops for youth and staff at the Delilu and Dream Home Care STRTPs.

- ✧ Greater Public Schools Now awarded AHJN \$35,000 to provide six additional healing-informed arts workshops to staff and youth in those same STRTPs.
- ✧ DAC secured funds for the 2021–2022 academic year to fund full program implementation at three school districts, two STRTPs, and additional professional-development and self-care spaces for County departments, community-based organizations, and schools who work with system-affected youth.
- ✧ DAC, AHJN, DMH, and OCP continue to update the Creative Wellbeing development curriculum to include culturally relevant healing-informed art practices and to integrate lessons learned from program implementation during the pandemic. DAC finalized stakeholder-engagement protocols for AHJN providers, districts, STRTPs, and youth, and conducted a listening session with AHJN providers to gather feedback on the existing curriculum. DAC will continue scheduling feedback sessions with districts and STRTPS and continue to recruit youth with lived experience to act as content advisors on the curriculum refresh and provide feedback.

Educational Equity

- Created a workgroup with DCFS and LACOE partners to focus on the issue of equity in education for system-involved youth
 - ✧ Working with DCFS to examine the race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation/gender identity and expression (SOGIE) data gathered at various touchpoints in the DCFS process. Based on this information, the group will then assess what data would ideally be captured to provide an accurate and inclusive representation of the youth Los Angeles County serves in its child-welfare system.
 - ✧ Working with DCFS, LACOE, and youth leaders to examine access to educational resources as well as chronic absenteeism, and to look at potential solutions.

Increasing Access to Higher Education

- Working with John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY), LACOE, relevant County departments, and community-based organizations to facilitate enhanced support for post-secondary educational attainment for youth in the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems, and to implement SB 12 provisions
 - ✧ DCFS, Probation, and LACOE participated in 2020–2021’s California Foster Youth FAFSA® Challenge (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), designed to increase system-involved youths’ access to financial aid for college by increasing FAFSA completion rates.
 - ✧ The goal for Los Angeles County’s 2020–2021’s FAFSA Challenge was a completion rate of 70% for eligible system-involved youth; at the Challenge’s conclusion, Los Angeles County had achieved a 53% completion rate. Although this is lower than last year’s rate, it is, however, consistent with trends showing

an overall decrease in FAFSA/CADAA (California Dream Act Application) completion for *all* youth because of the impact of COVID-19. For California students in general, the completion rate was also 53%. Considering that foster-youth completion rates lagged behind those of the general population for years, this is still progress.

- ✧ On another positive note, DCFS's Independent Living Program (ILP) reported its FAFSA completion rate at 79%. ILP's definition of "foster youth," though, varies from that used by the FAFSA Challenge; its data solely captures youth who have been declared dependents of the child-welfare system and who are under a suitable-placement order. The Challenge, by contrast, defines foster youth based on school districts' Local Control Funding Formula definition: all youth with open foster-care legal cases no matter where they live, youth in the juvenile-justice system living in a suitable placement, and youth age 18 to 21 who are enrolled in high school, are non-minor dependents under the placement responsibility of child welfare, probation, or a tribal organization, and are participating in transitional living case plans.
- LACOE analyzed the 2020–2021 FAFSA Challenge results and found data suggesting that male students and African-American students need additional support in preparing for postsecondary education, as these groups completed FAFSA/CADAA applications at significantly lower rates than their peers. Additional disparities include:
 - Latino students' odds of completing the FAFSA/CADAA were 48% greater than African-American students.
 - African-American students had the lowest completion rates—38% lower than all other student groups.
 - Male students were 44% less likely than their female peers to complete the application(s).
 - Latina female students were 88% more likely to complete the application(s) than African-American female students.
- The California Department of Social Services has approved the FAFSA/SB 12 Workgroup's recommendations to amend the Transition to Independent Living Plan (TILP) to reflect the information called for by SB 12.
- With the passage of AB 153, the SB 12–mandated identification of the person or persons responsible for assisting the child or non-minor dependent with applications for postsecondary education and related financial aid is now a required element in reports to the juvenile report. An extensive stakeholder review process for how this information will appear is planned for 2022, with changes going into effect in 2023.

Workforce Development

- The Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) and L.A. Compact released a final case study, *Improving Equitable Employment Outcomes for Transition-Age Foster Youth in L.A. County*, on lessons learned and recommendations for the coordinated referral process for foster youth to workforce centers. The initial referral system was paper-based; the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), in conjunction with DCFS, developed the automated system in 2020 to provide easier access to the centers for foster youth.
- WDACS surpassed its goal to serve 10,000 youth countywide, serving 10,224 in program year 2020–2021, even amid the pandemic.
- The Youth@Work program served 70 Probation youth in probation camps and juvenile halls in program year 2020–2021; these youth were also referred to community services upon their release.
- Under the Countywide Youth Bridges Program, WDACS continues to enroll Youth@Work participants to assist with the Parks and Recreation Department's Everybody Plays program. An additional 200 youth have been placed across 61 parks and 28 aquatic centers to continue summer programming, assisting with recreational activities, youth education, and other parks programs.
- Earlier this year, WDACS implemented a program partnership in the Antelope Valley to target foster youth with an interest in social services. Under this career-pathway program, youth receive weekly peer support and can participate in up to 700 hours of work experience to develop their skills and knowledge. The second foster-youth social services cohort has now begun, with 11 youth participating and successfully advancing through their paid work experience. Youth participants continue to have weekly check-ins with their peer navigators for guidance, and have indicated that they are finding it a rewarding experience. In the upcoming weeks, a school counselor will speak with cohort youth on pathways to earning a degree in social and human services.

Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP) Task Force

- Following a fatal incident at the Wayfinder Family Services STRTP in January 2021, the directors of DCFS and DMH asked the OCP to coordinate the creation of a short-term workgroup composed of health and human services department heads, judicial personnel, law-enforcement leadership, community partners, commissioners, advocates, youth, community members, and providers to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding needed systemic improvements.
- From February through June 2021, the OCP, in partnership with DCFS and DMH, convened a large group of stakeholders, individuals with lived experience, and interested and relevant parties through a series of listening sessions, multiple workgroups, and a central task force to develop recommendations for improving the

STRTP model and the continuum of care in Los Angeles County to better support high-need foster youth.

- On June 30, 2021, the task force submitted [*A Report from the Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program \(STRTP\) Task Force*](#) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. The task force's recommendations include several to improve local practice; those lie within the existing authority of the County and can be implemented by its child-serving departments in a relatively short timeframe. Also included are longer-term solutions, many of which depend on state statutory and budgetary/funding action.

County Medical Hubs

- Working with DHS, DCFS, DMH, and DPH to implement a detailed workplan to improve the overall Hub system, focusing on timely access to forensic exams and initial medical exams (IMEs) in the short term (Phase I) and potentially broadening Hub services in the longer term (Phase II). Examples of recent improvements include:
 - ✧ DHS updated its forensic referral triage policy to reflect the expected clinical practice that has been in place for the past few years. This revised policy has been approved by the lead forensic pediatrician at each DHS Medical Hub site and vetted with the DCFS Medical Director.
 - ✧ Finalized an interagency MOU between DHS, DCFS, DMH, and DPH on the County Medical Hubs. The departments are now reviewing it for signature by each department director.
 - ✧ Working with DCFS, DHS, DMH, and DPH to develop further supports at the Hubs for caregivers and transition-age youth (TAY) that were identified through the 2019 Hub caregiver and community convenings, including developing community-specific resource guides for the Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Harbor-UCLA, and Olive View-UCLA Medical Hubs that can be provided to caregivers. The resource guides include information on food pantries as well as financial, education, and parent supports.

Dental Screenings and Exams

- Working with DCFS, DPH, DHS, and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) to increase the number of foster youth receiving dental screenings and exams, when needed, within policy timeframes.
 - ✧ The California Community College Chancellor's Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program and the OCP launched a virtual training for social workers and caregivers covering keys to good oral health for children and youth, establishing a dental home, and information on community resources. This quarter, 61 social workers completed the training. The OCP is working with DCFS and FKCE to reach more caregivers about this training and oral-health resources, including 1) developing and disseminating a flyer in both English and

Spanish with information about the training and its registration process; and 2) working with the DPH Oral Health Program (OHP) to disseminate OHP's extensive library of oral-health resources to social workers.

- ✧ Working with UCLA, DPH, and DCFS to develop a policy brief from Medi-Cal data on foster youth dental-service utilization across five fiscal years, including recommendations to improve oral-health access and outcomes for foster youth.

Mental Health Coordination

- Working with DCFS and DMH to implement an independent evaluation of the Multi-disciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) and the overall front-end assessment process to help inform how mental health services can be streamlined for DCFS-involved youth. DCFS and DMH are jointly funding the evaluation, and the OCP is managing the independent contractor implementing it, the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS).
 - ✧ CIBHS has completed a draft evaluation report and is vetting the report with DCFS, DMH, and County Counsel.

Addressing Psychotropic Medication Use in Child Welfare

- Monthly meetings of the Psychotropic Medication Workgroup continue, overseeing the implementation of all protocols related to the use of psychotropic medications for youth in out-of-home care in both the child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems.
 - ✧ Quarterly updates of psychotropic medication data were received from DCFS and Probation.
 - DCFS data as of July 9, 2021, indicate that:
 - 1,573 children are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 8.5% of Los Angeles County foster children
 - 316 children are being administered anti-psychotic medications, which is 20.09% of foster children on medications
 - 764 children are being administered two or more medications, which is 48.57% of foster children on medications
 - Probation data as of June 30, 2021, indicate that:
 - 37 youth who are suitably placed are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 11% of those in suitable placement
 - 4 youth in suitable placement are being administered anti-psychotic medications, which is less than 1% of that population

- 14 youth in suitable placement are being administered more than one medication, which is 4% of that population
 - 38 youth placed at Dorothy Kirby Center are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 73.08% of that population; 22 of those youth were on more than one medication
 - 107 youth in juvenile halls are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 45.33% of that population; 34 of those youth were on more than one medication
 - 43 youth in probation camps are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 43.43% of that population; 12 of those youth are on more than one medication
- ✧ The Psychotropic Medication Youth Engagement Worksheet (YEW) is being administered in both systems. Probation continues to file 25 to 30 each month, while PHNs from DPH's Child Welfare Public Health Nurse unit have initiated 1,456 YEWs with 862 completions from program launch through May 2020.

California Opioid and Stimulant Learning Collaborative

With support from DCFS, Probation, DMH, DPH, the Juvenile Court, the Children's Law Center, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc., and others, the OCP, as lead, applied in December 2020 to participate in a new statewide effort managed by the California Department of Health Care Services, California Health Policy Strategies, LLC, and Health Management Associates to establish regional learning collaboratives—"Effective Child Welfare and Justice Systems for Families Impacted by Opioid and Stimulant Use."

Los Angeles was selected as one of the 13 participating counties for this project; meetings began in February and will last through August 2022. The learning collaborative's overall goal is, "Sustainable, family-centered, evidence-based, integrated practices across local justice, child-welfare and behavioral health systems for families and children impacted by opioid use disorder (OUD) and stimulant use."

Specific areas to be addressed by the Los Angeles team include:

- Developing a systemwide understanding and utilization of Plans of Safe Care, which federal law requires for newborns prenatally exposed to substances
- Advocacy for implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)
- Educating stakeholders on the neuroscience of addiction and medication-assisted treatment
- Training for system personnel on how this work fits within various legal requirements such as "reasonable efforts"

Report on Child Deaths

- On June 21, 2021, at the request of DCFS Director Bobby Cagle and the Board of Supervisors, the OCP filed a report on the three Carrillo/Denton children found dead on April 10, allegedly at the hands of their mother. The [report](#) contains four recommendations:
 - 1) DMH and DCFS should explore the feasibility of expanding the pilot project wherein a DMH clinician is outstationed at DCFS offices for the purpose of consulting with emergency-response social workers on their open investigations.
 - 2) DHS should update the referral criteria for Medical Hub forensic examinations and ensure that all DHS and DCFS personnel receive training on the updated policy.
 - 3) DCFS and DMH should collaborate in the development of training and resources for perinatal mental health treatment.
 - 4) DCFS, law-enforcement agencies, County Counsel, and the District Attorney should commence a conversation on what information could be shared from their respective investigations and when.

GOAL 5: CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES *Rethink structures, programs, and processes, on an ongoing basis, that impact multiple entities, to take advantage of new thinking and learning that meaningfully improves our child protection system.*

Dual-Status Youth Motion

- Pursuant to the Board motion of March 20, 2018, the OCP, in collaboration with multiple County stakeholders and others, continues activity through its Dual-Status Youth Workgroup's two subcommittees—Delinquency Prevention and WIC 241.1 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT).
 - ✧ The Delinquency Prevention Subcommittee, led by Professor Denise Herz of California State University Los Angeles, filed its final report, [Delinquency Prevention Recommendations for the County of Los Angeles](#), on April 30, 2021. The 64-page report, plus an appended piece from the Children's Data Network, *The Intersection of Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice: Key Findings from the Los Angeles Dual System Youth Study*, contain numerous recommendations on what the County can do to reduce delinquency and dual-system contact.
 - ✧ The WIC 241.1 MDT Subcommittee submitted a complete redraft of the WIC 241.1 protocol to the juvenile court's then–Presiding Judge, Victor Greenberg, in February 2020. Judge Greenberg retired this month without approving or implementing the draft. Discussions with the new Presiding Judge of the Juvenile court, Akemi Arakaki, are being initiated.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

- In the recently released evaluation [*Commercially Sexually Exploited Girls and Young Women Involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Los Angeles County: An Exploration and Evaluation of Placement Experiences and Services Received*](#), two recommendations out of a total of eight were identified as short-term fixes that would help improve CSEC placement stability.

The first recommendation was to ensure that all service providers are properly trained on issues facing CSEC, such as non-judgmental communication skills, trauma and mental health, and recognizing signs of AWOL (absence without leave). The second supports a youth preference for placements in the most homelike environment possible, given the finding that CSEC placed in foster-family agency homes stayed significantly longer in those placements when specialized services were also provided to them.

- ✧ The new CSEC training contract was executed with Cast (Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking) on May 1, 2021.
- ✧ A third review was completed on the revised CSEC housing statement of work that consolidates Foster Family Agency (FFA) and Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) requirements. The statement of work and sample contract—which also incorporates FFA- and ISFC-required language—is expected to be sent to County Counsel for its review by the end of this month.

Additional OCP Activities

Recent Specialized Efforts

- Participated in interviews on June 23, 2021, to provide input into the development of DCFS's new focus on prevention and well-being
- Panelist for a presentation to the County's Commission for Children and Families on July 12, 2021, on the newly released [STRTP Task Force Report](#)

Ongoing Collaborative Efforts

- Participate in the CEO's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative's Planning and Data workgroup to help develop the countywide ARDI strategic plan
- Participate in DCFS's and DMH's workgroup to implement the County's Family Urgent Response System (FURS)
- Participate in the UCLA Pritzker Center's collaborative on Racial Equity Child Welfare Efforts in Los Angeles County
- Participate on the Domestic Violence Child Welfare Policy subcommittee

- Participate on DCFS' and LACOE's Partnership Workgroup to ensure child safety during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Participate on DCFS' Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD) workgroup
- Participate on the Project ABC Governance Board on serving young children and their families
- Participate on DPH's Office of Violence Prevention leadership committee
- Participate on the CIO's Business Management Committee and on its Information Management Committee for Countywide data-sharing
- Participate in DCFS's Administrative Review Round Tables (AART) and Child Fatality Roundtables

In summary, the OCP is working hard to accomplish its goals, as are the relevant County departments and a host of key community partners. We look forward to reporting further progress in our next quarterly update.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me via e-mail at mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov.

MN:eih

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