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# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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October 30, 2020

To: Supervisor Kathryn Barger, 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](#),<sup>1</sup> 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 July 31, 2020.

**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.*

### Countywide Prevention Plan

- Partnering with First 5 LA, the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development to lead activities across the six action areas outlined in the plan
  - ✧ Networking the Networks Working with First 5 LA, DPH, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), the Preven-

<sup>1</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports and Communication/OCP Background/Blue Ribbon Commission Final Report \(04-18-2014\).pdf.pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083549-867](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports%20and%20Communication/OCP%20Background/Blue%20Ribbon%20Commission%20Final%20Report%20(04-18-2014).pdf.pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083549-867)

tion and Aftercare networks (P&As), the Children's Data Network, and the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development to identify strategies for enhancing connections and coordination across existing prevention networks

- In September 2020, Los Angeles County was chosen by the federal Children's Bureau as a Tier 1 Child and Family Well-being System "Thriving Families, Safer Children" jurisdiction. Under this prestigious initiative, the County's DCFS and OCP will partner with Casey Family Programs, Prevent Child Abuse America, the federal Children's Bureau, numerous key constituents, those with lived experience, and community and private partners to achieve a best-in-class system of family and community well-being. The initiative will include: 1) the sustainable creation of a continuum of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention services; 2) the formation of cross-sector partnerships and collective-impact networks to facilitate strategic and collaborative program design; 3) the collective development of a prevention-metrics ecological framework to measure results embraced by partners and diverse stakeholder groups; and 4) the opportunity for technical assistance from national experts. Los Angeles' selection for this initiative reflects the strides we have made in enhancing prevention locally, and also represents a way for us to continue growing in these efforts.
- Worked with DCFS, First 5 LA, Children's Data Network, and other key partners to develop the Community and Cross-Sector Partnerships portion of DCFS's *Invest LA* plan. This section's focus is on ensuring meaningful partnerships with communities, achieving equity and cultural responsiveness, and aligning cross-sector investments.
- ✧ Prevention and Aftercare Network Capacity Working with the P&As to help reach families that could benefit from support as early as possible, and to expand the networks' capacity to serve more families
  - The OCP and DCFS identified an additional \$1.1 million in funding to support the P&A networks for this fiscal year, in response to a Board motion to expand prevention services approved in August.
- ✧ Home Visitation Working with DPH, First 5 LA, DMH, DCFS, the Probation Department, the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the Children's Data Network, the Center for Strategic Partnerships, the Los Angeles Best Babies Network (LABBN), and the LA County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium (Consortium) to support the availability of home-visitation services for vulnerable families

- On August 24, 2020, DPH submitted “[Expanding Reach and Increasing Diversity of Los Angeles Home Visiting Programs to Improve Access for Women at Highest Risk](#)”<sup>2</sup> to the Board, outlining a framework for extending our home-visiting system capacity to ensure diverse modes of intervention to meet the cultures, preferences, and needs of our community. The response was a collaborative effort with many partners including First 5 LA, DMH, and other stakeholders. Core partners continue to work with Jeanna Capito, supported by the Heising-Simons Foundation, to realize and implement plans within that framework. In addition, in an interrelated effort, LABBN continues to work with Gina Airey Consulting (with support from the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment and First 5 LA) to develop the strategic planning needed to expand LABBN’s capacity in support of this next-generation Los Angeles home-visiting system.
  - In September, doula services were added to the [Home Visiting eDirectory](#),<sup>3</sup> making it easier for families to connect to a wider set of culturally responsive options, and in particular increasing access to more culturally responsive services for Black/African-American mothers throughout Los Angeles.
  - The California Department of Public Health released a California Home Visiting Program Innovative Home Visiting Projects Request for Supplemental Information (RSI) open only to local health jurisdictions and funded by \$5 million in state General Funds set aside for innovation in home visiting. Los Angeles County’s Department of Public Health, through its Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health division, responded to the RSI on September 30, 2020, requesting the maximum annual amount of \$1 million to sustain the current African American Infant and Maternal Mortality (AAIMM) Doula Pilot Project serving a total of 500 Black/African-American pregnant clients county-wide—prioritizing Services Planning Areas (SPAs) 1, 6, and 8, where Black infant mortality is highest—with free, culturally congruent doula services through June 2023. The California Department of Public Health will send award notifications in November 2020.
- ✧ Early Care and Education (ECE) Working with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development, First 5 LA, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles (CCALA), DCFS, DPH, the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, DMH, the Child Care Planning Committee, the Alliance for Children’s Rights, the Advancement Project, the Southern California Chapter of the California Association for the Education of Young Children, the P&A networks, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and others to create a roadmap for improving access to early care and education programs

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<sup>2</sup> [http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1077140\\_ExpandingReachandIncreasingDiversityofLACHomeVisitingProgramstoImproveAccessforWomenatHighestRisk\\_Item14BoardAgendaofOct29.2019.pdf#search=expanding\\_reach](http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1077140_ExpandingReachandIncreasingDiversityofLACHomeVisitingProgramstoImproveAccessforWomenatHighestRisk_Item14BoardAgendaofOct29.2019.pdf#search=expanding_reach)

<sup>3</sup> <https://edirectory.homevisitingla.org/>

- As of September 20, 2020, Los Angeles County had a total of 4,871 licensed child-care programs open, including 3,880 family child-care providers and 991 centers. There are 31,482 spaces available for new children.
  - Los Angeles County received a total of 1,786 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act applications from child-care providers for operations grants, including 703 from child-care centers and 1,083 from family child-care homes. A total of \$5 million will be invested from CARES Act funds to stabilize the early care and education industry in the county through a partnership between DPH's Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE), CCALA, and the County's Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA).
  - DPH formed a COVID-19 response team to address early care and education issues. It meets weekly to address provider needs by offering webinars with important information and resources that can be distributed to families through the County's resource and referral agencies.
- ✧ Measuring Prevention Working with First 5 LA, DMH, DCFS, the Children's Data Network, the Chief Executive Office (CEO), the Chief Information Office (CIO), DPH, DHS, LACOE, and other data experts to develop a set of standardized measures of prevention to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention-plan implementation efforts
- Partners have finalized six data dashboards of indicators related to child protective services involvement, disconnected youth, infant mortality, families experiencing financial insecurity, maternal mental health, and community safety. These dashboards will be included in a preliminary countywide prevention metrics report scheduled to be released online in November 2020.
  - First 5 LA released its [Pathway to Progress: Indicators of Young Child Well-Being in Los Angeles County](#) report,<sup>4</sup> which includes indicators aligned with First 5's strategic plan's results for children and families, as well as with many of the indicators in the countywide prevention metrics. The report's results indicators capture population-level changes in conditions for children and families, and will be used to gauge how well systems are working; contextual indicators capture conditions within Los Angeles County that affect First 5 LA's work.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.first5la.org/article/pathway-to-progress-indicators-of-young-child-well-being-in-los-angeles-county/>

**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, DHS, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) filed a [joint response](#)<sup>5</sup> 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](#)<sup>6</sup> 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 and is now required for children's social workers and their supervisors in both DCFS's emergency-response and continuing-services sections. Nineteen virtual sessions have been scheduled through December, with another 49 scheduled for 2021. To date, 217 supervising social workers and 246 social workers have completed the training. OCP leadership attended the training held on August 4.

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

See "Risk Assessment and System Improvement Recommendation Implementation" on page 7 for a full description.

#### **4) Increase collaboration between DCFS and law enforcement.**

Work continues on developing a comprehensive DCFS/law-enforcement protocol. The workgroup includes the OCP, DCFS, County Counsel, and representatives from LASD, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the District Attorney, and other police agencies. The group has focused on identifying the roles of social workers and law-enforcement personnel in conducting joint investigations. The protocol will also include an easily understood section on the Electronic Suspected Child Abuse

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<sup>5</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports and Communication/Anthony A. Consolidated Report/OCP Coordinated Response to Anthony A Motion \(08-10-18\).pdf?ver=2018-10-24-073730-880](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports%20and%20Communication/Anthony%20A.%20Consolidated%20Report/OCP%20Coordinated%20Response%20to%20Anthony%20A%20Motion%20(08-10-18).pdf?ver=2018-10-24-073730-880)

<sup>6</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports and Communication/Anthony A. Consolidated Report/OCP Coordinated Six-Month Follow-up to Anthony A Report Recommendations \(02-14-19\).pdf?ver=2019-02-15-154851-040](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports%20and%20Communication/Anthony%20A.%20Consolidated%20Report/OCP%20Coordinated%20Six-Month%20Follow-up%20to%20Anthony%20A%20Report%20Recommendations%20(02-14-19).pdf?ver=2019-02-15-154851-040)

Report System (eSCARS) and its role in coordinating investigations by DCFS and law enforcement.

**5) Improve the Medical Hub system.**

See the “County Medical Hubs” section on page 16 for a full description.

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

- All DCFS supervising social workers have completed the Supervisor Core Academy training, except for those newly promoted since August.
- DCFS’s Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) division:
  - Presented case-review findings of children ages birth to five with a history of six or more referrals, of children ages birth to five with a history of five or fewer referrals, and of children with open Family Maintenance cases who also had high/very high SDM risk scores at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings were shared with the DCFS executive team and regional administrators/division chiefs, and the CQI team debriefed leadership at every DCFS regional office to support conversations around practice strengths and opportunities.
  - Began a new review of a representative sample (80% of the total) of children removed from parental care between July and September 2018 who did/did not achieve permanency within 12 months. Including over 800 cases, this review will be completed by December 2020; results are expected to be disseminated within the first quarter of 2021.
  - Developed a collaborative team with DCFS’s risk management, core practice model, office of outcomes and analytics, and training sections to form a practice collaborative team, which presents findings from collaborative reviews and holds interactive sessions with regional staff on improving the quality of practice.

**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, 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 those parents or youth who need them. These counselors were also available to consult with social workers on cases involving substance-abuse issues and to offer guidance on how best to handle them.

- Funding for the SUD–TIPS (Substance Use Disorder–Trauma-Informed Parent Support) program provided by DMH ended on June 30, 2020. A Board motion approved in August directed the OCP and DCFS to explore options for continuing this program using a scaled-down model. As a result, DPH and DCFS were able to identify funding for 8 part-time counselors to continue this work in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020–2021.

## 8) Reduce social worker caseloads.

DCFS continues to work with County Counsel, the Children’s Law Center, and Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers to use the Court’s stipulation process to expedite matters deferred as a result of the pandemic-related court closures. DCFS is also actively working with Public Counsel and the Alliance for Children’s Rights to finalize adoptions through stipulations and virtual hearings, reducing DCFS case numbers and social-worker caseloads. Further, since budgetary constraints presently complicate departmental hiring initiatives, regional managers are shifting existing staff resources between front-end investigatory and back-end maintenance work as necessary to maintain manageable workloads to meet evolving operational needs.

## Risk Assessment and System Improvement Recommendation Implementation

- Partnering with DCFS to implement the recommendations outlined by the OCP in its [report of May 2017](#)<sup>7</sup>
  - ✧ The National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD) has rolled out a series of trainings on the use of Structured Decision Making® (SDM) in Los Angeles County. These trainings are specifically designed for our region and include policy and practice changes implemented as a result of the SDM fidelity review. Initial training focuses on the screening, removal, and case-opening decision process; later trainings will focus on reunification, permanency, and case-closing decisions.
  - ✧ NCCD and DCFS developed a two-day remote “safety and risk” foundational training focused on best practices in safety assessment, safety planning, and risk assessment. NCCD began these sessions in June and completed them last week; more than 900 staff participated. DCFS training units staff observed and co-facilitated the sessions, and now are continuing to deliver this training.
  - ✧ NCCD has partnered with leadership at the DCFS child protection hotline and designed a curriculum specifically for hotline staff, focused on best practices in decision-making and in proper use of the SDM hotline tool, and on integrating them with best practices in interviewing reporters who call the hotline.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports and Communication/Safety and Risk Assessment/SDM and Predictive Analytics Report \(Risk Assessment Tools\) \(May 2017\).pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083910-100](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Reports%20and%20Communication/Safety%20and%20Risk%20Assessment/SDM%20and%20Predictive%20Analytics%20Report%20(Risk%20Assessment%20Tools)%20(May%202017).pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083910-100)

DCFS and NCCD have planned 12 trainings for hotline staff: 2 half-day leadership trainings in early November 2020, 9 one-day foundational trainings in November and December 2020, and one “training for trainers” in October 2020 so hotline staff can continue using this material with their staff.

- ✧ NCCD has been in discussion with County Counsel, with staff of the warrant desk, and with intake and detention control (IDC) to plan a one-day training on safety and risk assessment, bringing IDC staff up-to-date with emergency-response staff trainings and expectations. NCCD plans to offer this one-day training three times before the end of 2020.

### **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\*](#)<sup>8</sup> (December 2017).
  - ✧ A CWPHN Coronavirus Warmline launched in April 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 680 non-duplicated COVID-19–related initial PHN consultations were logged between mid-April and September 30, 2020. A total of 295 were received from July 1 through September 30, with 82% being first-time/initial calls. Approximately 77% of consultations were for children in foster care; the balance were for children in at-home placements. The majority of calls/questions were from short-term residential therapeutic programs (STRTPs); inquiries from children’s social workers and deputy probation officers accounted for 21% of the total, and those from caregivers for 20%. Interventions provided by the PHNs included sharing COVID-19 information and resources (81%), referring children to a primary care physician (58%), and making referrals to the DHS medical hubs, DPH provider line, or 2-1-1 (32%).

### **Electronic Data-Sharing Efforts**

- 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 6 County departments and DCFS, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the OCP finalized with participating departments, County Counsel, and the CEO
  - ✧ A revised Emergency Response Investigation Service (ERIS), which should help to streamline DCFS investigations and placement of children with relatives when a removal is necessary, is in its final stages. The new system—being completed by the Internal Services Department, the OCP, DCFS, and the CIO—adds data

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCF/PDF/Reports and Communication/Public Health Nurses in Child Welfare/01 Fourth 90-Day Report Best Use of PHNs \(12-08-2017\).pdf.pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083842-860](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCF/PDF/Reports%20and%20Communication/Public%20Health%20Nurses%20in%20Child%20Welfare/01%20Fourth%2090-Day%20Report%20Best%20Use%20of%20PHNs%20(12-08-2017).pdf.pdf?ver=2018-10-24-083842-860)



from other departments and includes changes suggested by users to improve system functioning.

- ✧ Beta-testing with emergency-response workers, dependency investigators, and supervisors is being done to ensure the system is functioning properly.
  - ✧ A web-based training has been produced and is being loaded into the County's online Learning Net system.
  - ✧ The revised system is anticipated to launch in three DCFS offices in November 2020.
- The OCP, County Counsel, and several state agencies worked with both California's Department of Justice and its Health and Human Services Agency to elucidate a part of the law regarding data matches. A joint letter by both agencies was released in September clarifying that California state law allows for direct system-to-system data matches across agencies so that jurisdictions can identify their "common clients" across departments. This clarification has significant implications for how California counties and the state work together to improve the coordination of care for clients served by multiple departments.
  - Working with the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (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.
    - ✧ In preparation for the pilot launch:
      - Worked with DPH and DCFS to finalize informational materials and workflows to guide the pilot
      - Worked with LANES to design, test, and deploy a streamlined "patient synopsis" that is customized to meet the needs of the child-welfare program
      - Finalized program-specific training and survey materials
      - Developed plans to evaluate the impact of LANES through administrative data and user evaluation
      - Conducted a "train the trainer" session, the first pilot training session, as well as multiple meetings with pilot users
      - Developed plans for phase two of the pilot, when the LANES alert/notification feature will be introduced

- ✧ The LANES pilot was launched on October 21, 2020, in three DCFS regional offices (Carson, Wateridge, and Pasadena) and one Medical Hub (MLK).
- The Education Coordinating Council (ECC), which functions under the OCP umbrella, has also made significant progress toward greater access to accurate and consistent education data for foster youth.
  - ✧ Between July and August 2020, LACOE trained staff at 10 school districts on the electronic Education Passport System (EPS). During this time period, district staff made 4,495 document searches and 1,152 student searches in EPS. To date, 73 districts have been trained on EPS by LACOE.
  - ✧ On October 23, OCP, DCFS, and LACOE launched a School Stability Transportation Module in EPS to help track school-of-origin transportation process indicators, including best-interest determination results. OCP and LACOE's Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) staff presented district and DCFS staff with an overview of the module at a school-stability training in September 2020; LACOE staff will provide additional training on the module to district staff as needed.

**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 project continues in 10 DCFS offices: Belvedere, West Los Angeles, West San Fernando Valley, Santa Fe Springs, Glendora, Vermont Corridor, Santa Clarita, Wateridge, Hawthorne, and Lakewood.
  - ✧ From January through September 2020, 3,273 children have been the subject of detention hearings in those offices; 82% of those children were placed with kin following removal from their homes.
  - ✧ Child Trends continues its longitudinal study of the project to evaluate its impact on placement stability, family reunification, permanency, and more. Results are expected in 2021.
  - ✧ DCFS and OCP have discussed expanding the project to the remaining DCFS offices. A plan has been developed and presented to the DCFS Executive Committee, which is currently considering the proposal.

## 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](#),<sup>9</sup> 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 October 4, 2020:
    - 2,708 children have been freed with a plan of adoption and are awaiting adoption finalization, down from 3,094 in July
    - 1,396 have been in adoptive placement for more than six months, up from 1,252 in July
    - At least 109 children have been freed and are *not* in an adoptive plan, up from 90 in July
    - 1,106 cases in the dependency court for 90 days or longer have not reached disposition, a decrease from that figure's high of 2,156 in July
  - ✧ The Workgroup continues to monitor this data monthly and discuss ways to reduce these specific numbers, along with the overall increase of children in the system—currently at approximately 38,000, the highest it has been in more than a decade.
  - ✧ National Adoption Day in the Juvenile Court is scheduled for Saturday, November 21, 2020.
  - ✧ The benefits chart created by OCP and other stakeholders has been modified following focus groups with youth and parents, and the OCP is developing an electronic version.
  - ✧ The OCP has been meeting with DCFS, the Alliance for Children's Rights, and Public Counsel to review the adoption process with the goal of developing ways to expedite it to reduce the possibility of future significant backlogs.

## Transitional Shelter Care (TSC) 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

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<sup>9</sup> [http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Permanency/Office of Child Protection \(OCP\) Stability and Permanency for TAY Report 09-04-2019 \(with attachments\).pdf?ver=2019-10-28-090046-917](http://ocp.lacounty.gov/Portals/OCP/PDF/Permanency/Office%20of%20Child%20Protection%20(OCP)%20Stability%20and%20Permanency%20for%20TAY%20Report%2009-04-2019%20(with%20attachments).pdf?ver=2019-10-28-090046-917)

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.”

- ✧ Most recently, despite the pandemic’s causing facility lockdowns because of periodic outbreaks, the unit—along with good work from the regions—has kept the number of youth at these facilities at a manageable level. In addition, Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services has joined the list of facilities available for youth. The unit and the OCP met with DCFS executive staff to discuss expanding the size of the unit as well as bringing its work to the DCFS regions.

**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, 36 school districts have signed the long-term ESSA transportation MOU—Alhambra Unified, Antelope Valley Unified, Azusa, 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, Los Angeles Unified School District (*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 also engaging with Basset, Bonita, and Long Beach Unified school districts to facilitate agreements.
    - The 36 districts whose boards have signed the MOU serve approximately 75% of the County’s foster youth.
    - In addition to an initial \$25,000 from the California Community Foundation, the ECC secured an additional \$25,000 from the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation for the ESSA Outreach Coordinator, Maria Casillas. She will continue to support districts in securing school-of-origin transportation funds for their 2020-2021 budgets and advocate with the state regarding the importance of providing sustainable funding for this unfunded federal mandate.
    - The ECC is working with DCFS and LACOE to strengthen procedures for notifying schools about a need for transportation, the student’s “best-interest” determination in choice of schools, and assessing the most practical method of long-term transportation.

- DCFS continues to streamline the notification process to school districts when youth are removed from their homes/placements and need school-of-origin transportation. While districts were previously notified when private-vendor rides were arranged for a youth, they now also receive emails when *referrals* for private-vendor transportation services are initiated, giving them time to explore more cost-effective long-term transportation options such as TAP cards for public transportation, utilizing/re-routing existing bus routes, etc.
- On September 29, LACOE, OCP, and DCFS implemented a virtual cross-training between school-district foster youth liaisons and DCFS education specialists on the school-stability transportation process, including information on ESSA and school-of-origin definitions, the notification process, stop-gap transportation, the best-interest determination process, and long-term transportation, as well as frequently asked questions from districts. The training was attended by 84 DCFS and school district staff, with representatives from 16 school districts. A recording of the training as well as contact information for DCFS education specialists and LACOE staff is uploaded to a [Google Drive](#)<sup>10</sup> available to all district and DCFS staff.
- Working with John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) and relevant County departments 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 are preparing outreach and reformatting materials in preparation for the 2020–2021 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. Last year, Los Angeles County achieved a 68% completion rate for the FAFSA, surpassing its 65% goal, increasing system-involved youths’ rate of completion by 7% compared to last year, and exceeding the rate of FAFSA completion by the eligible general population.
  - ✧ JBAY has transitioned all its financial-aid materials online for easy distribution and accessibility.
- As a result of COVID-19, DCFS, Probation, LACOE, LAUSD, and WDACS are working with JBAY and the OCP to develop creative solutions for reaching out to system-involved youth to provide support with completing the FAFSA virtually.
  - ✧ JBAY conducted a FAFSA “how-to” webinar geared toward those who work with foster youth. In total, 700 participants obtained step-by-step training on how to assist foster youth with accurately completing the FAFSA.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17HLMAEvhhuJ6JuAKsgPjNi5BEPuFZD9i>

- ✧ LAUSD hosted two remote college tours with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and Los Angeles City College; a total of 38 students attended.
- ✧ LAUSD held a FAFSA Challenge training with A-G counselors and student support counselors that resulted in 161 counselors being trained.
- On September 28, SB 860 *Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program [FYSCP]: postsecondary education financial aid applications* was signed into law. This bill clarifies the role of FYSCPs to include the coordination of efforts to support the completion of the FAFSA or the California Dream Act Application for foster youth who are high school seniors. The bill also requires the inclusion of FAFSA/California Dream Act Application completion rates for foster youth who are high school seniors in FYSCPs' bi-annual reports.

### **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, formerly the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network) to implement a healing-formed arts education pilot for middle and high schools with high numbers of foster and probation youth. The program will help youth build protective factors through the arts and will develop local networks of mental-health clinicians, artists, teachers, and other stakeholders within schools and their surrounding communities.
  - ✧ Due to school closures during COVID-19, DAC, DMH, and the ECC have pivoted programming to online.
    - Utilizing \$10,000 in philanthropic funds that the ECC secured from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, implemented a series of 12 drop-in virtual workshops for educators between July and August 2020, led by AHJN members, the Actors' Gang, and WriteGirl/Bold Ink Writers. These workshops allowed educators to build connections and learn new strategies for care, as well as to experience creative techniques for making a virtual classroom more engaging and interactive while incorporating healing-informed practices to promote and foster youth well-being.
    - DAC secured additional funding to provide virtual workshops to educators through December 2020, facilitated by AHJN members, Rhythm Arts Alliance, and artworxLA. Workshops will be offered to partner districts, including Antelope Valley Union High School, Pomona Unified, and Pasadena Unified, as well as districts that currently participate in LACOE's Technology Enhanced Arts Learning (TEAL) and the LACOE/DMH Suicide Prevention Ongoing Resiliency Training (SPORT) programs. DAC, AHJN, DMH, and OCP are working to integrate culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining themes into the training, including instruction:
      - Designed to accept and affirm the backgrounds of students of color (culturally relevant)

- That will connect to students' cultural knowledge and prior experiences (culturally responsive)
- That will sustain cultural ways of being in communities of color while supporting students to critique dominant power structures in society (culturally sustaining)
- The ECC is currently approaching philanthropic foundations to secure additional funding to support foster-youth engagement and mental health during this unprecedented time of crisis.
- This project won 2020's third-quarter Chair's Challenge (initiated by the current chair of the Board of Supervisors, Kathryn Barger) for its innovation in serving youth in our County.

### **Workforce Development**

- WDACS expanded its virtual presence for easy access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - ✧ WDACS launched a new user-friendly and informative [Youth@Work](#)<sup>11</sup> web page in early August. The site links inquiries of interest from youth and businesses to the appropriate America's Job Center of California (AJCC) based on geographic location.
  - ✧ The Youth@Work program designed new COVID-19 policies and procedures to ensure a broad understanding of the dangers of COVID-19 and related requirements for worksites. The AJCCs physically inspect each worksite to ensure compliance before a youth can report to work, and conduct site reviews throughout the duration of a youth's placement.
  - ✧ WDACS launched mandatory online support trainings to the AJCC network on virtual engagement and best practices for serving youth. The first training, *Virtual Rapport-Building with Youth*, was held on September 22 in partnership with Opportunity Youth Collaborative.
  - ✧ Remote work experience is now available to all employers who would like to host youth, with an emphasis on small businesses.
  - ✧ Project-based learning assists youth in fulfilling work assignments for private, public, and nonprofit organizations, and allows youth to collaborate with peers to complete community-service projects. In partnership with the Women's Leadership Project (WLP), a civic engagement and service-learning program based at several South Los Angeles high schools, youth virtually help prepare lesson plans, organize special events, prepare and participate in speaker series, and

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<sup>11</sup> <https://workforce.lacounty.gov/youthatwork/>

conduct research to further develop programming—all from the convenience and safety of their homes.

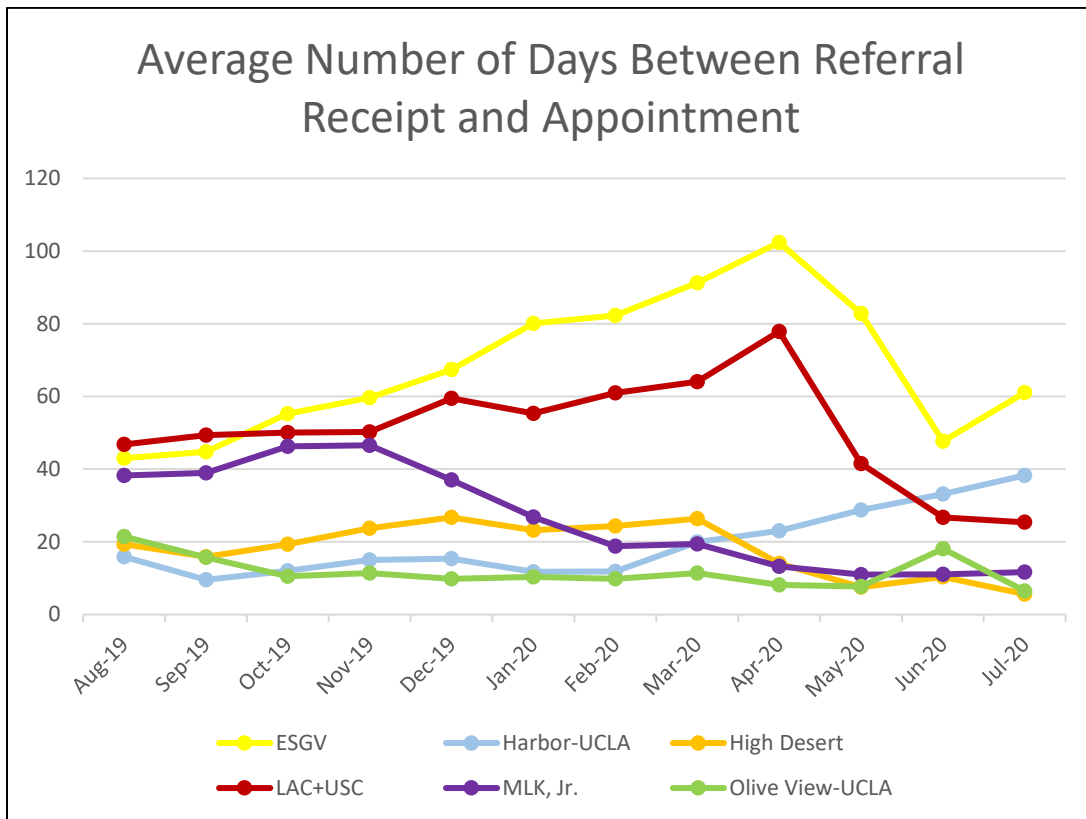
### **County Medical Hubs**

- 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:
  - ✧ DCFS and DHS developed and disseminated a flyer to DCFS caregivers regarding the importance of and access to flu shots for caregivers and foster youth. OCP worked with DCFS to adapt the letter into a one-pager that LACOE will disseminate to the county's 80 school districts.
  - ✧ Finalizing the interagency MOU between DHS, DCFS, DMH, and DPH on the County Medical Hubs, as well as the Working Agreement on Hub Services with Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA)
  - ✧ OCP is 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:
    - Determining what transportation resources DCFS and DHS have for caregivers/TAY to access Hub services and appointments
    - Developing youth-friendly materials to help TAY navigate the Hub and mental health systems
    - Implementing caregiver and foster-youth support groups and workshops
    - Compiling resource guides from DCFS, DHS, DPH, and DMH on available community resources, specialty services offered at specific DHS hospital sites/clinics, and Medi-Cal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) mental health resources, as well as developing regional user-friendly guides for caregivers/youth
  - ✧ Held a multiagency discussion about improving communications between DCFS and DHS around forensic evaluation results, and will:
    - Continue cross-trainings provided by DHS child-abuse pediatricians to DCFS social workers around basic signs of child abuse, when to access forensic services, and the communication process between social workers and Hub forensic providers when concerns exist
    - Develop a process for real-time multidisciplinary team meetings between DCFS, DHS, and other stakeholders to discuss high-risk cases in which forensic evaluations have been provided



- ✧ DPH hired Intermediate Typist Clerks (ITCs) for Hub clinics at LAC+USC, MLK, Harbor, and Olive View. Currently in training, they will assist the Hub PHN and Hub team.
- ✧ DPH also redesigned its data-collection tool to improve tracking Hub PHN activities and caseloads.
- ✧ DHS continues to improve the availability of forensic and IME appointments at each Medical Hub. The data in Figure 1 below illustrate the average number of days between IME referrals and IME completion dates for newly detained children over the last year. While some Hub clinics were affected by COVID-19 and staffing shortages earlier in the year, average IME completion timelines have improved over the last two quarters as a result of operational improvements and staff additions.

**Figure 1. Average Number of Days between IME Referrals and Completion**



Source: E-mHub/SAGA

\*Data reflect only those referrals where a scheduled appointment was made.

\*Data include calculations for "appointments completed within 60 days"; therefore, data lag 60 days.

## **Dental Screenings and Exams**

- Working with DCFS, DPH, DHS, and UCLA to develop a plan for increasing the number of foster youth receiving dental screenings and exams, when needed, within policy timeframes.
  - ✧ Working with the UCLA Dental Transformation Initiative, DCFS, and DPH's Oral Health Program to analyze Medi-Cal foster-youth dental-service utilization data from FYs 2012–2013 through 2016–2017, including a breakdown of dental exam and preventive dental exam service usage by age group and SPA. A preliminary analysis of the data has been completed by UCLA and is being vetted by DCFS and the DPH Child Welfare Public Health Nursing (CWPHN) program.
  - ✧ OCP is discussing with the Children's Data Network the possibility of acquiring more recent oral-health utilization data to integrate into the analysis and help determine if dental-service access can be improved in specific regions. OCP will also work with DCFS to analyze internal data to see if the County is meeting policy timeframes for foster youth to receive oral-health exams.

## **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 the evaluation, the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS). We anticipate a complete report by mid-2021. Efforts between August and October 2020 include:
  - ✧ Worked with DCFS's Bureau of Information Services (BIS) and DMH's Chief Information Office Bureau (CIOB), as well as DCFS and DMH program staff, to finalize processes for extracting and securely transmitting administrative and case data to CIBHS.
  - ✧ Completed the process of noticing youth and parents of youth who may be a part of the evaluation sample. A draft notice incorporated feedback from advocates, including the Children's Law Center and the National Center for Youth Law, to ensure its youth-friendliness. CIBHS is beginning to receive data from MAT providers; data analysis for the evaluation will begin in November 2020.

## **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 October 15, 2020, indicate that:
  - 1,603 children are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 8.36% of Los Angeles County foster children
  - 330 foster children are being administered antipsychotic medications, which is 20.59% of foster children on medications
  - 793 foster children are being administered two or more medications, which is 49.47% of foster children on medications
- Probation data as of September 30, 2020, indicate that:
  - 42 youth who are suitably placed are being administered psychotropic medications, which is 10% of those in suitable placement
  - 4 youth in suitable placement are being administered antipsychotic medications, which is 1% of suitably placed youth
  - 12 youth in suitable placement are being administered more than one medication, which is 3% of suitably placed youth
- Probation data as of September 20, 2020, indicate that:
  - 48 of 70 youth placed at Dorothy Kirby Center were being administered psychotropic medications, which is 68.57% of youth at that location; 25 of those youth were on more than one medication.
  - 137 of 317 youth in juvenile halls were being administered psychotropic medications, which is 43.22% of that population; 62 of those youth were on more than one medication.
  - 50 of 105 youth in probation camps were being administered psychotropic medications, which is 47.62% of that population; 11 of those youth were on more than one medication.
- ✧ The Psychotropic Medication Youth Engagement Worksheet (YEW) is being utilized in both systems. Probation has been completing an average of over 30 worksheets per month. The DPH PHNs have initiated 1,010 YEWs through September; 535 have been completed. DCFS and DPH have recently begun a pilot project in two DCFS offices through which a PHN will notify the children's social worker after two unsuccessful attempts to complete the YEW. No data is available yet.
- ✧ Representatives from DCFS, DPD, DMH and OCP met to discuss necessary lab tests for youth receiving psychotropic medications. It was decided that prescribing doctors will be asked to include information about lab tests on the JV-220A form, which is the form requesting approval to administer psychotropic medications. DMH and DCFS have sent notices to the prescriber community of this request. The

juvenile court has been asked to do the same, but has not responded. DMH reports that staff are seeing lab-test information on the request forms.

**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

- On March 20, 2018, the Board directed the OCP, in collaboration with multiple County stakeholders and others, to report back on a Countywide plan for dual-status youth. The work on this motion has been undertaken via monthly meetings of the 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 is putting the finishing touches on a comprehensive report and recommendations on delinquency prevention. The report has gone through multiple drafts and will be discussed at the subcommittee's upcoming meeting in November.
  - ✧ A complete draft of the WIC 241.1 protocol was distributed to stakeholders in December 2019. After stakeholder vetting, it was presented to the Juvenile Court for review and approval in February 2020. Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Victor Greenberg indicated a few weeks ago that it is still being worked on by the court. It remains unclear when the court will finish this effort.

### 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](#),<sup>12</sup> 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. The second supports a youth preference for placements in the most homelike environment possible, and the finding that CSEC placed in foster-family agency homes stayed significantly longer in those placements if specialized services were also provided to them.

- ✧ The existing CSEC training contract held by Probation will expire at the end of February 2021. A revised statement of work for a CSEC trainer has been

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<sup>12</sup> [https://youthlaw.org/publication/csec\\_la\\_childwelfare\\_juvenilejustice/](https://youthlaw.org/publication/csec_la_childwelfare_juvenilejustice/)

completed, is now being vetted with DCFS and Probation for finalization, and will be in place by March 2021.

## **Additional OCP Activities**

### Recent Specialized Efforts

- Conducted a webinar on upfront family-finding for Kansas juvenile-court judges on August 18
- Conducted training on psychotropic medication usage for system youth for New Mexico juvenile-court judges on August 19
- Presented on OCP activities to UCLA's Pritzker Family Program on September 23
- Participated in the Congressional Caucus on Adoption's Angels in Adoption program's webinar on permanency for older youth on October 14

### Ongoing Collaborative Efforts

- Participate on the June 9 Board motion COVID-19 court technology workgroup
- Participate on DCFS' and LACOE's partnership workgroup to ensure child safety during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Participate on the advisory board for DCFS's *Invest LA* initiative
- Partner with DCFS to co-lead its *Invest LA* community and cross-sector partnerships investment area team
- Participate on DCFS' leadership, advisory, and identification of evidence-based practices teams for Family First Prevention Services Act plan development
- Participate in the steering committee to establish a family treatment court in Los Angeles
- 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 in the Youth Justice Work Group that is developing recommendations for the most effective structure needed to best serve probation youth
- 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 on the Los Angeles Team for the Thriving Families, Safer Children federal grant, along with other key stakeholders

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 at (213) 893-1152 or via email at [mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov), or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at (213) 893-0862 or via email at [cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov).

MN:eih

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