January 31, 2018

To: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair  
    Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
    Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
    Supervisor Janice Hahn  
    Supervisor Kathryn Barger

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, one key recommendation was to “establish an entity to oversee one unified child protection system.” On June 10, 2014, your 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. The OCP has submitted quarterly updates on its progress to your Board since August 1, 2016; this is a report on its progress since the last update submitted on October 31, 2017.

Countywide Prevention Plan

- Implementing the OCP’s plan, Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children: A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County. All workgroups aligned with the strategies for action have been formed and are tackling their specific charges: networking the networks and measuring prevention are being led by First 5 LA, expanding home visitation is being led by the Department of Public Health (DPH), expanding early care and education is being led by the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development, prevention and aftercare network capacity and implementing the Portrait of Los Angeles County report recommendations are being led by the OCP.

  - The Portrait of Los Angeles County report that captures countywide data in the areas of health, education, and income stability, and which calculates a Human Development Index score for cities and neighborhoods throughout the county, was released and shared with your Board on November 28, 2017.

  - A launch event attended by over 170 community, civic, and philanthropic partners was held on November 29, 2017, to discuss the Portrait’s key findings and how its data will be used by partners in their planning processes.
Working with DPH, the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships (CSPPP), First 5 LA, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Public Library, Probation Department, Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Children’s Data Network, and the LA County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium on developing a plan for expanding home visitation services available to vulnerable families.

- A conceptual plan for countywide universal home visitation was developed collaboratively by the partners listed above and vetted with 81 member representatives of the LA County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium and other home-visiting program stakeholders.

- This conceptual plan will be shared with your Board in February 2018.

Developed a draft pilot project with DCFS’ Hotline and the Prevention & Aftercare Networks to serve families referred to the Hotline whose concerns do not warrant a DCFS investigation, but where there is an identified need that could be addressed through prevention supports.

- If approved, the pilot is anticipated to begin on July 1, 2018.

- Worked with DMH to identify additional funding for expanding home visitation services and the Prevention & Aftercare Networks.

- Over the next two years, DMH is proposing to use $78M in Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funding for expanding prevention services provided by the Prevention & Aftercare Networks ($28M across 2 fiscal years) and for expanding home visitation services ($50M across 2 fiscal years). Home visitation program and Prevention & Aftercare Network provider staff will receive training on trauma-informed care and technical support for collecting outcomes measures during Fiscal Year (FY) 2017–18 to enhance the type of services to be provided in FYs 2018–19 and 2019–20. DMH will review outcome data collected for these providers at the close of FY 2019–20 and explore opportunities for future funding contingent upon successful outcomes and funding availability.

Risk Assessment Recommendation Implementation

- Partnering with DCFS to implement the recommendations outlined by the OCP in its report of May 2017.

- DCFS has hired the National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD) to convene a workgroup to assist with the implementation.

- Met with the Director of DCFS, key DCFS leadership, and NCCD to determine next steps in moving forward a plan for implementation.
Public Health Nurses' (PHN) Consolidation into DPH

- Submitted a plan to your Board on December 8, 2017, that identified the best use of PHNs in child welfare moving forward and included an evaluation of the children’s social worker/PHN joint-visit pilot conducted by the Children’s Data Network
  - A meeting with DPH and DCFS is scheduled on February 1, 2018, to develop next steps for implementing the plan’s recommendations.

Electronic Data-Sharing Efforts

- Working with DCFS, the Chief Information Office (CIO), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on the production of an electronic portal that would facilitate the electronic sharing of information relevant to an investigation of child abuse or neglect across 7 county departments and DCFS, based upon an MOU that the OCP finalized with the participating departments, County Counsel, and the Chief Executive Office (CEO)
  - Phase I development of the system for law-enforcement data is being completed.
  - User testing of the system with a subset of Emergency Response case workers and their supervisors is underway.
  - A training plan and materials have been drafted that will be rolled out before the launch of the system.

Increasing the Use of Relative Placements

- Continuing to monitor the progress of the family-finding pilot project launched in the Santa Fe Springs and Glendora DCFS offices in November 2016 that prioritizes placing children coming into foster care with relatives (the pilot is still showing rates of 80% or higher for placing children with non-offending parents, relatives, and non-related extended family members)
  - Expansion of the pilot is underway with the Vermont Corridor and West L.A. DCFS regional offices.
  - Working with DMH to identify additional resources that would increase family-finding efforts and provide counseling services for families participating in the pilot project
  - Holding ongoing discussions with Child Trends, which is conducting a project evaluation that should be completed by summer 2018

Addressing Psychotropic Medication Use in Child Welfare

- Worked with the Juvenile Court, DMH, DCFS, Probation, and multiple stakeholders to revise and develop new protocols that went into effect in April 2017 for
approving and monitoring the use of psychotropic medication for youth in out-of-home care; these protocols support revised Judicial Council forms that include more comprehensive information about youths’ histories, behavior, and alternative treatments and/or other services received

✧ Continuing to meet monthly with stakeholders to oversee implementation of the revised psychotropic medication protocols

✧ Conducted a random review of files for dependent children taking psychotropic medications to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly revised approval and monitoring processes; a similar review will be conducted for youth in the delinquency court

✧ Began working with stakeholders to determine how best to prepare transition-age youth (TAY) to make medical decisions for themselves once they reach the age of majority. All key stakeholders have submitted recommendations incorporating their respective roles and responsibilities for preparing these TAY. The workgroup is currently vetting these recommendations to develop a multi-agency plan for ensuring that these youth are properly and consistently prepared to make these decisions.

**Education Coordinating Council (ECC) Efforts**

- Continuing to partner with DCFS, Los Angeles County school districts, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to develop processes and policies for implementing the foster youth school-stability provisions included in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). ECC/DCFS/LACOE/Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are implementing a transportation pilot to keep foster youth in their schools of origin. The pilot, which runs through June 30, 2018, is intended to be a “bridge solution” and learning opportunity as long-term transportation agreements between DCFS and the districts are drafted and finalized.

✧ Since September 2017, at least 70 students from a variety of school districts have been or are being transported through this pilot. Substantial new procedures have been developed as well, including an electronic system that allows child welfare to notify school districts when students are detained or change placement. In addition, systems changes, such as enhanced engagement with children’s Education Rights Holders, are being implemented in the field.

✧ The ECC secured $30,000 of philanthropic bridge funding for this pilot. DCFS and LACOE receive hundreds of notifications a week when youth are being removed from home or changing placements. DCFS has committed to hiring eight more Education Consultants to handle this work over the long term; however, they will not be fully hired nor trained until fall 2018. The philanthropic bridge funding provides additional capacity to process notifications and coordinate transportation until the Education Consultants are fully staffed. The ECC is continuing to explore additional funding opportunities for the needed additional capacity.
The ESSA Transportation Workgroup, convened by the ECC and LACOE and including multiple public and private stakeholders, continues to develop a sample transportation plan to serve as a template for long-term interagency agreements between DCFS and the County’s 80 school districts. The sample transportation plan and guidance document should be completed by May 2018.

- Developing a pathway for DPH public health nurses serving DCFS children to use the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES) portal—the system designed to enable local information exchanges across health providers—to view timely health information about child-welfare clients as needed to coordinate care and ensure effective treatment. They will also be able to incorporate essential health information and documents from the LANES system into the Health and Education Passport in the youth’s child-welfare file, as appropriate.

- A proposal to build an electronic connection between LANES and DPH was approved by the LANES board

- Representatives of LANES, DCFS, DPH, County Counsel, the CIO, and the CEO are currently working on developing applicable security and privacy protections

- Working with FosterEd and other partners, including philanthropy, to develop a career/college pathway pilot project for TAY that will launch this fall. Partners plan to work with the Palmdale School District, Lancaster School District, and Antelope Valley Union High School District to place five education liaisons in middle and high schools having high concentrations of system-involved youth to implement educational teaming practices and address college preparation. Partners recently learned that this project has been awarded a grant from the W.M. Keck Foundation.

**Transitional Shelter Care (TSC) Pilot**

- Continuing to convene bi-weekly meetings with stakeholders—including DCFS, Probation, the Juvenile Court, Children’s Law Center of California, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the Violence Intervention Program (VIP), County Counsel, and others—to discuss the multidisciplinary teaming pilot led by DCFS’ Accelerated Placement Team to stabilize and find permanency for hard-to-place youth (i.e., overstays and chronic repeaters) at TSCs

- Includes discussion of individual cases with regional social workers and their teams so partners can participate in identifying solutions to the issues raised

- Tested a pilot involving Engagement Placement Stabilization (EPS) meetings for youth who are overstaying, followed by a hearing in Dependency Court where the Court reviews efforts to place these youth and encourages youth to work proactively with DCFS to assist in their placement efforts. While EPS meetings have expanded, court hearings occur only on an as-needed basis.
A meeting has been scheduled for February 1, 2018, to review the work of the TSC committee with DCFS Director Bobby Cagle, DMH Director Dr. Jonathan Sherin, and CDSS Deputy Director Greg Rose. This discussion will include how best to institutionalize the work of the committee as well as the potential impacts of converting group homes to Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) and the 72-hour TSC contract's expiration in 2019.

**Self-Sufficiency for Transition-Age Youth (TAY)**

- Continuing to participate in the TAY Self-Sufficiency Workgroup, led by the CEO, to help develop a multi-year countywide strategy to support the self-sufficiency goals of TAY foster youth at the earliest stages possible.

- Continuing to develop a plan for increasing permanency for TAY before they age out of foster care.

- Met with DCFS Permanency and Adoptions/Post-Adoptions section managers, the Probation Department’s Permanency Placement unit and TAY managers, and various stakeholders—including staff from Public Counsel, the Children’s Law Center of California, the Alliance for Children’s Rights, and Casey Family Programs—to gather information on best practices and barriers to increasing permanency for TAY before they age out of foster care.

- Collected various permanency data indicators from DCFS and the University of California, Berkeley, to determine a baseline for Los Angeles County foster youth achieving permanency.

- Compiled information on the various monetary benefits available to TAY and those benefits’ eligibility requirements to determine if they inadvertently affect permanency efforts negatively by creating incentives for delaying it.

- Obtained data gathered by Southern California Grantmakers on philanthropic funding activities for system-involved TAY.

**County Medical Hubs**

- Continuing to partner with DCFS, DMH, DHS, and DPH to ensure the most effective and efficient use of the County Medical Hubs.

  - Worked with a consultant and stakeholders to complete and review an assessment of the current state of Hub services, resources, and patients served.

  - Working with stakeholders to develop and/or improve policies and procedures to ensure that all detained children receive their initial comprehensive medical examinations within the 30 days required by County policy, and that the Hubs are properly used for forensic medical examinations.
Working with DCFS and DHS to track and analyze Hub referral and service data to comply with this policy

Working with stakeholders to ensure that the Hubs are appropriately incorporated into countywide prevention efforts

**Partnership Conference**

- Initiated discussions with the Juvenile Court and California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), to reinstate the longtime County Partnership Conference at CSULA. This conference, which first occurred in 1995, annually brought together about 1,000 child welfare and juvenile justice stakeholders to participate in workshops and hear keynote speakers on relevant subject-matter topics.

- Planning is underway for a June 7, 2018, conference at CSULA

- Working with CSPPP to raise philanthropic funding that would lower the cost burden for child welfare system stakeholders interested in attending the conference

- Working with partners on finalizing the conference agenda, which will likely include a plenary discussion among key County leaders

**Additional OCP Activities**

- Continuing to serve as the judicial subcommittee co-chair for the Foster Youth Bill of Rights Committee work led by the County’s Commission for Children and Families

- Panelist for an action session—*What if Foster Care Worked? Reinvigorating and Transforming a System Through Innovation to Help Children Find Success*—held at Baker McKenzie’s 2017 Children’s Rights Summit on December 5, 2017, in San Jose, CA

- Speaker for a national webinar sponsored by the Alliance for Children’s Rights on November 15, 2017—*All in the Family: Recruiting, Engaging and Supporting Kin*

- Keynote speaker at the Georgia State child welfare conference on November 29, 2017—*Kinship Care: Making It Happen and Why*

- Panelist for two presentations at California’s Beyond the Bench Conference on December 18–20, 2017:
  - *The Intersection of Child Safety and the Judicial System*, conducted with Dr. David Sanders
  - *From Vision to Reality: Achieving the Vision of the Continuum of Care Reform Through Engagement, Recruitment, and Support of Family*
• Working with staff from the County’s Auditor-Controller’s Office on proposed legislation to amend Welfare and Institutions Code section 827 to grant County Auditor-Controller investigators access to juvenile court records when relevant to investigations of waste, fraud, or abuse

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. The Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships will submit a separate update to the Board in February 2018.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (213) 893-1152 or via email at mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at (213) 893-0862 or via email at cmiller@ocp.lacounty.gov.

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