October 31, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
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 (BRCCCP), *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 BRCCCP 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 updates on its progress to your Board quarterly since August 1, 2016; this is a follow-up on its progress since the last update submitted on July 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*. Workgroups have been formed with the Prevention & Aftercare Networks and in the areas of home visitation, measuring prevention, and advising the development of the *Portrait of Los Angeles* report.

- Working with the Department of Public Health (DPH), Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships (CSPPP), First 5 LA, Department of Mental Health (DMH), 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 progress report on these efforts was submitted to the Board on October 10, 2017.
  - A conceptual plan for countywide universal home visitation is being developed; we anticipate sharing it with the Board in January 2018.
• Working with DPSS, First 5 LA, SHIELDs for Families, CSPPP, and DPH to develop a pilot project for connecting families to home visitation and other prevention services

◊ The pilot’s launch is anticipated in DPSS’s GAIN Region V office in South County in November 2017

• 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 Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funding for expanding prevention services provided by the Prevention & Aftercare Networks, and for expanding home visitation services.

Risk Assessment Recommendation Implementation

• Partnering with DCFS to develop a workgroup for implementing the recommendations outlined by the OCP in its report of May 2017

◊ A planning meeting is scheduled for November 2017, and the workgroup will begin convening in January 2018.

• Met with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 721 to further discuss the current state of risk assessment practices and the potential use of a predictive analytics model being developed by the Children’s Data Network

Public Health Nurses (PHN) Consolidation into the Department of Public Health (DPH)

• Finalizing a plan that identifies the best use of PHNs in child welfare moving forward; this report should be submitted to your Board by November 2017

• The Children’s Data Network’s evaluation of the effectiveness of the children’s social worker/PHN joint-visit pilot should also be completed by November 2017.

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

◊ Phase I development of the system for law-enforcement data is now underway; it is anticipated that it will be completed this winter.
As a follow-up to the Legal Hackathon held on April 24, 2017, County Counsel developed a draft written communication for departmental staff of the various agencies included in the data-sharing protocol that outlines what information can be shared on common DCFS and Probation clients across County departments.

✧ Once finalized, this document will be shared with affected County departments, and trainings will be developed for staff as needed.

**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.
  
  ✧ Results to date show that both offices have been consistently placing children with relatives at rates of 80% or higher.
  
  ✧ Expansion of the pilot project is now underway with the Vermont Corridor and West LA DCFS regional offices.

**Addressing Psychotropic Medication Use in Child Welfare**

- Worked with the Juvenile Court, DMH, DCFS, Probation, and multiple stakeholders to revise and develop new forms and protocols that went into effect in April 2017 for approving and monitoring the use of psychotropic medication for youth in out-of-home care; they include more comprehensive information about youths' histories, behavior, and alternative treatments and/or other services received.
  
  ✧ Meeting with stakeholders to monitor the implementation of these developed protocols, timelines for completion of the authorization process, follow-up medical/psychiatric appointments, and the appropriate consideration of alternatives to psychotropic medications.
  
  ✧ Distributed the online training program developed by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for stakeholders to use in training their staff on these procedures.

- Began discussions on determining how best to prepare transition-age youth (TAY) to make medical decisions for themselves once they leave care.

- Filed final report with the State Auditor on August 23, 2017, that outlines all actions taken in response to the recommendations in its August 2016 report, *California’s Foster Care System: The State and Counties Have Failed to Adequately Oversee the Prescription of Psychotropic Medications to Children in Foster Care*.

- Working with stakeholders to identify children and youth who are receiving psychotropic medications outside of the Court approval process.
Education Coordinating Council (ECC) Efforts

- Continued 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 is intended to be a “bridge solution” and learning opportunity while long-term transportation agreements between DCFS and the districts are drafted and finalized. The pilot will run through June 30, 2018.

  ✷ An MOU outlining funding and roles/responsibilities for the pilot has been signed by DCFS, LACOE, and LAUSD.

  ✷ LACOE executed a contract with a private vendor for safely transporting youth as a stop-gap measure or as long-term transportation to their schools of origin when no other method is possible. This service will be available throughout the pilot period for all school districts in the County.

  ✷ LACOE hired an additional full-time transportation coordinator (for a total of 3) and completed training its staff on processes and procedures for transporting foster youth to their schools of origin.

  ✷ DCFS has trained 817 new Children’s Social Workers (CSWs) on the importance of maintaining foster youth in their schools of origin upon their being removed from their homes or changing placements, foster youth’s legal right to remain in their schools of origin, the process of working with youths’ Education Rights Holders on this issue, and the use of resources such as TAP cards (for public transportation) and caregiver Education Travel Reimbursement payments to transport these youth. DCFS also introduced these CSWs to the transportation pilot and released a bulletin communicating pilot details to Regional Administrators and SEIU Local 721.

  ✷ LAUSD convened a group of its front-line workers and staff to address transportation to schools of origin for foster youth, developing processes and procedures to use existing and modified bus routes to transport these youth. Since the beginning of this school year, LAUSD has transported over 450 youth to their schools of origin using these methods.

  ✷ Designed an evaluation to help understand, analyze, and effectively incorporate lessons learned from the pilot into long-term ESSA transportation plans. The evaluation is being conducted through the Children’s Data Network by Dr. B.K. Elizabeth Kim, professor of social work at the University of Southern California. This evaluation will also fulfill the requirements of the May 2, 2017, Board motion requesting an outcome report on the pilot program 30 days after its completion. The evaluation will use surveys and focus groups to analyze lessons learned and barriers to countywide
implementation. Furthermore, quantitative data from all three pilot parties will be collected and used to examine metrics such as numbers of youth served and average distance traveled.

✧ The ESSA Transportation Workgroup, which includes multiple public and private stakeholders, continues to develop a sample transportation plan that will serve as a template for long-term interagency agreements between DCFS and the County’s 80 school districts. The sample plan will include clear written procedures to govern how transportation for children to remain in their schools of origin will be arranged, provided, and funded for their duration in foster care. It is anticipated that the sample transportation plan and guidance document will be completed by May 2018.

- Worked with the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES) and County Counsel, the CEO, the CIO, and DPH on a proposal for providing access to public health nurses working on child welfare cases, for care-coordination purposes, to information included in the local Health Information Exchange system, LANES, that was developed for entities that provide health care to County residents who are receiving Medi-Cal or who are uninsured.

✧ The proposal was approved by the LANES Board.

✧ Working with partners to develop the security and technology requirements needed for the system.

- Finalizing an interagency MOU for Continuum-of-Care Reform (CCR) with DCFS, Probation, DMH, and LACOE. The ECC’s role is to work with its members and stakeholders—including school districts, advocates, and County departments—to gather input and advocate for best practices regarding 1) addressing the educational and emotional needs of system-involved youth in schools, 2) coordinating school-based mental health services with other mental health supports, 3) utilizing SELPA/school district special-education dollars for foster and probation youths’ mental health needs, and 4) creating transparency into how schools are providing and funding mental health programs, as well as the quality of and access to these programs for system-involved youth.

**Transitional Shelter Care (TSC) Pilot**

- Continuing to convene bi-weekly meetings with stakeholders—including DCFS, Probation, the Juvenile Court, Children’s Law Center, 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 the regional social worker and team for partners to participate in identifying solutions to the issues raised.
A new pilot is underway that involves 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.

**County Medical Hubs**

- Continuing to participate in meetings with DCFS, DMH, DHS, and DPH to discuss how to ensure the most effective and efficient use of the County Medical Hubs

- Working with stakeholders on how 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 to develop a method for tracking efforts to comply with this policy

- Working with stakeholders and a consultant to assess the current state of Hub services, resources, and people served

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

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

- Participating 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 stage possible

- Working on developing a plan for increasing permanency for TAY before they age out of foster care. Meeting with DCFS managers and multiple stakeholders to identify ways for expanding and coordinating existing permanency efforts, while also developing new strategies for helping foster youth achieve permanency at the earliest possible point.

- Developed and disseminated a survey to collect data on current philanthropic funding for system-involved TAY. This will help the County engage, identify, and better understand the resources available for these youth in the community.
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.

Additional OCP Activities

- Foster Youth Bill of Rights Committee, judicial subcommittee co-chair
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges conference, Washington, DC, presenter on family-finding pilot project
- St. Anne’s Annual Summit, panelist for impact of trauma in early childhood
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder Conference, presenter
- NEXUS Annual Conference, presenter
- Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, presenter on psychotropic medication procedures for foster youth
- Family Engagement Learning Community Convening, panelist
- California Legislative Staff Education Institute Visit, contributor

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 November 2017.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (213) 893-1152, or via email at mmash@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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