



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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June 30, 2017

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

PAVING THE ROAD TO SAFETY FOR OUR CHILDREN: A PREVENTION PLAN FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY

On June 25, 2013, the Board of Supervisors (Board) established the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection (BRCCP) to review previous child welfare system reform efforts, barriers to effective systemic performance, and policies and practices within the system. On June 10, 2014, the Board adopted the recommendations contained within the BRCCP final report, *The Road to Safety for Our Children*, and took action to establish the Office of Child Protection (OCP) to prioritize and improve child safety through better communication, coordination, and accountability across agencies involved in the child protection network.

One of the BRCCP's recommendations was to "develop a comprehensive prevention plan to reduce child abuse and neglect," and the OCP has been working diligently for more than a year to create that plan (Attachment I). It formed a Prevention Workgroup—including representatives from the Chief Executive Office, the departments of Child Support Services, Children and Family Services, Public Library, Mental Health, Parks and Recreation, Probation, Public Health, Public Social Services, and Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, First 5 LA, the California Youth Connection, the Commission for Children and Families, the Children's Data Network, the Community Child Welfare Coalition, Casey Family Programs, the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, philanthropy, education, and other children's rights and legal advocacy organizations—that has met regularly since April 2016. The OCP also convened several community providers to better understand what is working in current prevention efforts, and what can be improved upon.

The overarching philosophy of this plan is: *connecting families early on to positive family supports will reduce the number of children and families touched by the child welfare system, as well as decrease the length and intensity of interactions for those who must*

be involved. The plan calls for an expansion of the community-based family-strengthening approach, used in Los Angeles County for decades, that offers key supports designed to improve parenting skills, enhance child development, increase economic stability, and build a strong foundation for positive future outcomes. The implementation of this plan includes weaving together existing networks employing this approach so that County leadership can support shared planning with communities and provide more seamless ways for families to access services before their issues escalate. Using a network model ensures that prevention activities permeate our county's diverse communities, being sponsored by grassroots neighborhood organizations that are close to and trusted by local residents.

This model should be coupled with improved access to formal government services, when needed, so families have a full spectrum of support available. We want to encourage a culture where communities are equipped to provide families the types of support and connections that reduce their need for more intensive services, and where it is both accepted and expected for families to reach out for help when necessary.

Because of the existing Prevention and Aftercare networks' demonstrated efficacy in implementing key prevention strategies across the County and in developing robust linkages with individuals and service providers alike, we will partner with them to implement this plan, relying on them to serve as the leads for expanding prevention efforts that support families and strengthen neighborhoods and communities.

The plan's seven strategies are:

1. Map out and then weave together existing prevention networks.
2. Expand the capacity of the Prevention & Aftercare networks.
3. Create a universal home-visitation system.
4. Improve access to early care and education programs.
5. Monitor the overall well-being of communities.
6. Develop standardized measures of prevention to evaluate our efforts.
7. Implement prevention strategies identified by County departments.

Additionally, we will work to create a governance structure to align prevention efforts and identify ongoing funding to ensure that efforts continue to grow and coordinate with each other, and that they are sustainable well into the future. We will also convene a data advisory committee to standardize reporting on prevention and make the data more publicly available, and continue to pursue opportunities with public, private, community, and philanthropic partners for expanding innovative methods and effective models of prevention across the county.

We believe this plan includes essential strategies for reducing the number of children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system, as well as the number of families requiring services from other systems. Many components of these strategies have begun, and we look forward to continuing to make progress on the plan's implementation to ultimately achieve the positive outcomes for children and families we all want.

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

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First 5 LA
OCP Prevention Workgroup