

The PiP Post

Parents working with other parents toward the goal of reunifying or maintaining their family

Los Angeles County PiPs are leading the way!

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Mark's Story

My name is Mark, and I am a recovering addict. I'm 54 years old and I used drugs for 35 years. I now have 8 years clean. I started out using drugs when I was 12 years old when I smoked my first joint. At the age of 16, I tried heroin. I used drugs to get away from reality. I couldn't handle being just me. I have been married 4 times and my last marriage was for 10 years.

On July 30, 2006, DCFS and the police raided my house. They ransacked my home and found all the drugs and paraphernalia I had. DCFS took my kids into custody. On the way to jail I had chest pains and they took me to the hospital and they let me go. They didn't arrest me at that time. I went back to the house and my kids were gone. I didn't know what to do.

On August 13, 2006, my wife passed away from congestive heart failure. When she died it was probably one of the worst things that had ever happened to me and I decided I didn't want to live



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In Collaboration with DCFS, we will use our experiences to help support, educate, and empower parents in their efforts to successfully navigate the DCFS system



VERMONT THANKSGIVING

The Vermont PiP team, Millie, Raul, Demetria and Betty had their 2nd annual Thanksgiving basket giveaway. The Vermont PiP's wanted to celebrate those parents that have successfully reunified with their children by giving away six Thanksgiving turkeys with all its trimmings. The PiP's collected donated food from the Vermont office staff and the PiP team donated the turkeys.

L.A County PiPs are leading the way!

In December, child welfare representatives from the states of Ohio and Colorado traveled to L.A. County to visit our Parents in Partnership program to learn how we operate and to exchange ideas. These states are in the beginning stages of implementing parent partner programs. Casey Family Programs reached out to our program because we are a model for parent advocacy. Visitors were interested in how the program has expanded to cover all 16 regional offices in the County, the program's sustainability, training, psycho-educational groups, and supervision. The visitors observed several of the program deliverables, including office and court lobby work and a mock parent orientation presented by Raul Aguirre and Millie Sally at the Vermont Office. In addition, the visitors met with the County Wide Lead Parent Partners and were provided an overview of our program's training academy. Derrick Perez-Johnson, Program Manager shared, "The outcome is that we developed a partnership with other states to share ideas for further program development and implementation. I'm still in touch with Denver, they are also working on developing a mentoring program for their transition age youth." L.A County PiPs are leading the way in making changes in the child welfare system by advocating for parents.



PiP members, their Coordinators, and their Manager attend their 1st annual retreat. The retreat promotes team building and promotes morale among team members.

PiP Annual Retreat Teaming up!

On November 17th, PiPs from all around the County came together for the programs first retreat at Montrose Bowl in the city of Glendale. The purpose of the retreat was for the regional PiP teams to come together and build morale. At the retreat, PiPs reconnected by having fun bowling and having lunch together. The event was a success with over 35 PiPs in attendance. PiPs enjoyed a slideshow celebrating the invaluable work they do every day in their regional offices, the community, jails and other areas. Ebony Armstrong, Countywide Lead Parent Partner shared that her favorite moments included seeing PiPs dance to music from the jukebox and watching teams from the North, South, and East regions of this vast county come together and enjoy each other's company.

PiP Celebrates Reunification Week

Family Reunification Week is an annual event to celebrate the thousands of families that have overcome severe obstacles and safely reunified with their children. According to DCFS Director Phillip Browning, over 6,000 children and families are safely reunified each year. On Tuesday, September 9th, several families and a social worker were identified as family reunification heroes for their positive contribution to the lives of children and families. This year, Countywide Lead Parent Partner (CWLPP) Ambyr Rose was honored as a Family Reunification Hero by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. In addition, the program celebrated the Grand Opening of the Parent Partners at Edelman Court with a reception and ribbon cutting. Parent partners were recognized at the event and some of them shared their inspiring stories of overcoming hardships and success. The Parents in Partnership Program made a significant presence at the celebration and parent partners were featured in a range of media outlets further demonstrating the importance of the work that PiPs do in helping parents to reunify with their children. Program Coordinator Marcela Pizarro was quoted saying “Parents Partners provide hope to many families who have an open DCFS case that they too can get their children back [translated from Spanish]” as reported to TV Estrella on October 9, 2014.



Judge Nash and Ambyr Rose
2014 Reunification Heroes



Grand Opening of Parents in
Partnership at Court

PiPs organize Clothes Closet for community

The South Parents in Partnership (PiP) team saw the need to store items donated by the community. The Parents in Partnership members are constantly being sought out to find resources that parent participants need in their households when reunification is near. PiP members normally reach out to the community and search for resources to obtain these goods for DCFS parents. Many times the process of obtaining the needed items could take days or weeks. The delay may prevent reunification if the parents do not have the required beds or cribs they need in their home for the children to return home. PiP members, Jennifer Olague and Desiree Burlile reached out to Pastor Tim Fearer from First Presbyterian Church of Downey. Pastor Fearer and his congregation graciously allowed Parents in Partnership the opportunity to store donated items in their church. The donated items that will be stored in the closet consist of cribs, furniture, car seat, diapers, wipes, beds and adult clothing. The Parent Partners are working with the community to have the storage closet completely stocked with the necessary goods. Jennifer and Desiree will be responsible for processing the referrals and maintaining the closet's inventory.



Mark's story continued from page 1

anymore. So I tried several different times to commit suicide. I overdosed on heroin twice. I took a handful of sleeping pills. When I couldn't kill myself I decided that I needed to change what I was doing and where I lived. So I went back to Riverside where I was born and raised. I ran into some old friends and picked up some drugs and started selling drugs and using drugs again. One day I went to downtown Riverside to sell a large quantity of drugs. I walked right into the middle of a neighborhood sweep. Police Officers took me into custody, put me in jail. They charged me with possession with the intent to distribute, manufacturing of controlled substances and several other felonies. I was in county jail for about 10 months and went to Warm Springs Rehab for 90 days. Afterward I went back to Riverside. I came up from Riverside to the Antelope Valley and showed up to court for the final adoption hearing. The judge asked who I was and when my attorney said dad, the judge said we have to stop and start all over. The judge gave me reunification services. I would make phone calls from Riverside to the social worker and she'd put me on hold and would three-way me with my kids and listen to my conversations. We went back to court and the judge ordered my kids to be brought back from Washington to the Antelope Valley. They told me I could see my kids for three hours a week. I would ride my motorcycle from Riverside to the AV once a week to see my kids for three hours. I wanted to get my kids back. After 6 months the social worker and the judge told me if I could find a place in the Antelope Valley to take my kids, I could have them back. At the time a friend of mine had an apartment and said we could stay with him. He live scanned and passed. We moved in with him, my kids had a bedroom all to themselves and I slept on a mat by the back door. Six months later we went back to court and the judge closed my case. I had no idea what I was doing and I'm pretty much still lost some time. But I stayed clean through all of this.

Now I am raising my two youngest kids, Eric, who is 16 and Krystal who is 15 by myself. It can be challenging at times but I love my kids and it is something I promised my wife I would do before she died. I have been with the Parents in Partnership program for almost 5 years now. If you are reading this I have been where you are! Don't give up!



Belvedere office: A Christmas Story



Lucia is a single mother of six children, four of the children have special needs. An outlet contacted the Belvedere PiP team asking them to refer a parent that was in need of Christmas gifts. The outlet then directly contacted Mrs. Lucia and asked her what she needed for her children. The outlet scheduled to deliver the wrapped gifts on 12/19/14. The day of the delivery Lucia and the children waited all day for the delivery, but the outlet never came with the gifts. The family was devastated. On 12/23/14 Lucia told the Belvedere PiPs the unfortunate story. PiP members, Denise, Monique, Araceli and Jennifer drove to the different offices where PiP's are located to collect leftover funds from their Christmas fundraiser. Hours later Lucia was provided with toys, clothing, AMC tickets, 6 back packs, a Christmas tree with ornaments and a Christmas meal. Lucia was excited, and overwhelmed with gratitude due to the generous act the PiP team did for her family. Lucia reported, "My children received a lot of Christmas gifts thanks to the Parents Advocate, Monique and her co-workers. I am very grateful for Parents in Partnership program that care for my children and me."



If you are a parent who currently has or has had involvement with the Los Angeles County Department of Children Services, Parents in Partnership can help you. Feeling frustrated, angry or just confused? Call a Parent Partner that has been through the DCFS system and understands what you're going through! The PiP Warm Line in your area is a great place to get your questions answered, receive guidance, or just have someone listen that knows what you're going through.

A Parent's Letter

"My name is Celia Calderon. I am a 28 year old single mother of 3 beautiful kids. My son's name is Mario, he is 10. My other son is Jason he is 5 and my daughter Seline is 4, ... so in April of 2013 I got an open case with the Department. It [has] been really hard all this time without my kids. I had a really bad addiction to alcohol so I had to do a lot of things to prove to the Department. I would get better to take care of my children. I took parenting, domestic violence, anger management, life skills, drug abuse, counseling... I still went into an inpatient 3 months program after a year and few months completing these classes. I heard about the Parents in Partnership one day they went into my outpatient program. I started to hear all the help that they offered. A lot of us parents are ignorant with all this that has to do with the Department, regarding if you see your worker is not helping you, you can ask for change of worker. If the supervisor is not helping you can also go through the chain of command. They also helped me how to go based on the time frame and how much time I have to keep fighting for my kids. Monique and Denise from Parents in Partnership have helped me get through a lot on this case. They have supported me so much and I'm really thankful for their help. Every time I have a question, I know I can count on them. Thank you Parents in Partnership."



Parents in Partnership 2014 Data Report

- Parent Partners had contact with 6,311 parents through the DCFS Warm Line
- Parent Partners had contact with 8,560 parents in DCFS office lobbies
- Parent Partners had outreach contact with 1,540 parents
- Parent Partners had follow-up contact with 70,600 parents
- Parent Partners participated in 1,750 Team Decision Making/ Child and Family Team Meetings
- Parent Partners held 620 parent orientations (474 in English and 146 in Spanish), in which 3,965 parents participated (3,072 in English and 893 in Spanish)
- Parent Partners held 317 support groups, in which 1913 parents participated (234 in English with 1,607 parents participating and 83 in Spanish with 306 parents attending)
- Parent Partners had contact with 850 parents solely through CSW Referrals
- Parent Partners had contact with 235 parents through Department 426 (Lancaster Courthouse) lobby outreach
- Parent Partners had contact with 4,377 parents through Edelman's Juvenile Court
- Parent Partners held 9 parent orientations in CRDF Lynwood (LA County women's jail), in which 146 mothers participated
- Parent Partners held 13 parent orientations and 30 support groups in Pitchess Detention Center, in which 161 incarcerated fathers participated

Pitchess Milestone for Incarcerated fathers!

February 20th marked a special milestone for the PiP's incarcerated father's program. A year ago, the first orientation was held at Pitchess Detention Center. Every Thursday, Mark Birdsong and Ryan Bennett travel from the Antelope Valley to Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic to facilitate support groups with the incarcerated fathers. Mark Birdsong shares, "It is the most satisfying feeling to walk into the room and know that we are making a difference to guys that have no idea where to turn to for help." To date, PiP has worked with 161 fathers that have been incarcerated in that facility. According to Mark, "I know of 10 fathers that are on track to get their kids returned to them and have their cases closed". Further, Mark has been working with a father whose case is out of the Lancaster office who attended the first orientation at Pitchess and whose case will be closing in July with full custody of his children. What a great success! All fathers are encouraged to contact the PIPs in the office that their case is located in.



Ryan Bennett, Deputy Kevin Lutz and Mark Birdsong



Parents in Partnership

Participating Offices

- Belvedere Office ~ 5835 S. Eastern Ave. ~ Commerce, CA 90040 ~ Warmline 323-725-4670
- Chatsworth ~ 20151 Nordhoff St. Chatsworth, CA 91311m ~ Warmline 818-717-4014
- Compton Office (East) ~ 921 E. Compton Blvd. ~ Compton, CA 90221 ~ Warmline 310-668-6599
- Compton Office (West) ~ 11539 Hawthorne Blvd ~ Hawthorne, CA 90250 ~ Warmline 310-263-2184
- El Monte Office ~ 4024 Durfee Ave. ~ El Monte, CA 91732 ~ Warmline 626-455-4712
- Glendora Office ~ 725 S. Grand Ave. Glendora, CA 91740 ~ 626-691-1827
- Lancaster Office ~ 300 E. Avenue K6, Lancaster, CA 93535 ~ Warmline 661-471-1002
- Metro North Office ~ 1933 S. Broadway, Suite 6 ~ Los Angeles, CA 90007 ~ Warmline 213-763-1757
- Palmdale Office ~ 39959 Sierra Hwy ~ Palmdale, CA 93550 ~ Warmline 661-223-4232
- Pasadena Office ~ 532 E. Colorado Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91101 ~ 626-229-3473
- Pomona Office ~ 801 Corporate Center Drive ~ Pomona, CA 91768 ~ Warmline 909-802-1452
- Santa Clarita Office ~ 28490 Avenue Stanford ~ Santa Clarita, CA 91355 ~ Warmline 661-702-6280
- Santa Fe Springs Office ~ 10355 Slusher Dr., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670 ~ 562-903-5085
- South County Office ~ 4060 Watson Plaza Drive ~ Lakewood, CA 90712 ~ Warmline 562-420-6328
- Torrance Office ~ 2325 Crenshaw Blvd. ~ Torrance, CA 90501 ~ 310-972-3133
- Vermont Corridor Office ~ 8300 S. Vermont Ave. ~ Los Angeles, CA 90044 ~ 323-965-7068
- West LA ~ 5757 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 200 ~ Los Angeles, CA 90036 ~ 323-900-2320