

MYTH BUSTER

POMONA DCFS NEWSLETTER

JULY, 2010

Eliminating Racial Disproportionally & Disparity (ERDD)



Andrea Miles - Building Walls

The Department of Children and Family Services has come under much scrutiny for procedures and practices that have not always been parent friendly. As a parent of children who were in the

system, and now as a parent involved in the Department's Parents in Partnership program, I have viewed these issues from both sides. It is everyone's hope that by working together we can build bridges and knock down walls that have prevented effective collaboration and communication between families and the Department. The goal being to increase successful reunification of families.

My name is Andrea Miles. From the start of my life, I have built walls to protect myself and others. I was born in 1973, one of five children. By the age of five my parents were divorced. This was really hard on my mother and she was no longer prepared to take care of five children alone. By the age of seven my grandmother took me and my older brothers and moved to California. Faced with her own emotions my mother left us for sometime to be raised by my grandmother. This seemed normal to her, as she had been raised by family members other than her parents. This made me feel as if my mom didn't love me. I knew my grandmother loved us because she tried the best she could to raise us. As we grew I believe we all began looking for love and we thought we'd found it in the streets with gangs and drugs.

So I began to build walls not only to protect myself, but my brothers and my grandmother. By junior high school I started to associate with the wrong kids, who got in trouble in school with fighting and smoking weed and this continued until I got into high school. By then I was having sex and became pregnant with my first son by the age of 17, married at 18. By the time I was 19 my husband was

sentenced to 19 years in prison. By age 20, I was pregnant with my second son, and by 23 my third. Now I'm thinking, what will happen to my son's????

Still building walls not only to protect myself, but now for my own children....

After becoming a mother myself, I became upset with my parents because I didn't understand how one could leave their own child.

I continued to drink and do drugs until the day the police arrived at my house and found marijuana growing in the back yard. My husband and I were arrested and my children were removed by DCFS. I was angry and thought the Department was wrong, like many parents who have children in the system today. Who were these people to question my parenting, just because I chose to smoke marijuana? This day would change my life forever....

In spite of my anger with the department, I was willing to do whatever it took to get my children back, and break the cycle that had such negative impact on myself and my brothers. Because of this process everything changed, including my outlook on life. I could see now, if I continued to do these things, that's exactly where my sons were headed; and I knew I wanted better for them. Today I'm knocking down walls and building bridges to create a path to better things.

I'm a licensed preschool teacher. I am close to graduating with my Associate's Degree in Social Science. I am a Parent Partner with The Department of Children and Family Services' PIP Program. My oldest son is enrolled in college where he has received a full scholarship to play football. My second son is in high school with a 3.8-4.0 GPA. My youngest son is involved in both sports and school. I have a relationship with my God, and as for my relationship with my parents, I forgave them. My mother today is my best friend and extremely supportive in our lives... Cycles can be broken.

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...To break down these walls

DCFS staff must enhance their ability to better engage parents to assist them in reunifying quicker with their children.

Did you know that in the Pomona office we have 721 children are in out-of-home care? 300 are African-American, which constitute 40% of the population. There are 252 children receiving Family Reunification services and 91 are African-American, which constitute 36 % of the population.

Do we really engage mother, fathers to participate actively to get their children back? What is parent engagement? What does it look like? Are we taking the time to listen to parents? Do we sit- down with parents to explain the case plan objectives, or their court orders? Are we motivating them to work with us to explore ways to ensure their children's well-being and safety?

Parent engagement is crucial to shorten the timelines to reunification. Parents who actively participate in visiting their children and in completing the case plan objectives are more likely to reunify quicker with their children. Who is the motivating factor for these parents?

Pomona's Parents In Partnership (PIP) encourage staff to engage more parents in the reunification process and be innovative in promoting active dialogue between CSWs and parents by respecting each other's cultural differences in a non-judgemental way. .

DCFS has implemented a new program in several offices (Pomona, El Monte, Belvedere, Lakewood, Metro North, Santa Clarita, Palmdale, and Lancaster) to better engage with birth parents- Mothers & Fathers.

Parents in Partnership (PIP) is a collaborative effort between DCFS and parent partner

paraprofessionals to strengthen families and communities through the education, support and mentoring of parents. The hope is that through the PIP program, we will accomplish an increase in the number of parents who will have greater success in meeting their case plan goals and therefore attain reunification with their children.

Parents who attend the Parents' Orientation will learn about their rights and responsibilities, as parents. They will learn how to navigate the Child Welfare System. They will learn how to address the Department's concerns; the impact of separation on families and how to support children during time of DCFS involvement. Most importantly, they will learn how to work towards reunification with their children. Please invite parents to participate in Parent Orientations! They are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at PVYES, 720 N. Park Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767, from 4-6 p.m.

By
Axa Cazzaly, ARA Pomona



Eliminating Racial Disparity & Disproportionally (ERDD)

**2nd Wednesday of each month
From 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Our next regular meeting will be held

**JULY 14TH at Pomona DCFS
100 W. 2nd Street – 5th floor
Pomona, CA 91766**

**For additional information, please contact
Co-chairs**

**Diquitha Aubrey, (909) 868-4451 or
Iola Fountain, (909) 868-4411**