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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Facing Challenges and Looking Forward to Continued Success

This fall I completed my first year as director of our department...the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. It has been an honor. It was also a year filled with success, new opportunities and challenges.

I continue to be impressed every day with the fine work that is being done by our department. We have highlighted some of our major accomplishments and awards in 2007 on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

Looking forward to 2008, I'm sure we will have continued successes, but we will also face new issues, including the financial constraints confronting the majority of public child welfare agencies in California and nationally. This means we must be more creative with both our short-term and long-term strategies.

As you know, we are in the midst of implementing the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project. I believe that one of the keys to success with the Waiver in the new year will continue to be a reduction in caseloads and workloads. Most of our caseloads and workloads did not get to the point they are at overnight, and reducing them will take time.

It's a cyclical process—to achieve the outcomes of safety, permanency and a reduced reliance on out-of-home care, we need to continue with our proven strategies and add new ones to meet the needs of our most high risk children and families. To implement new strategies, we need flexibility in our funding via the Waiver.

For the Waiver to produce additional funding that will support the new strategies and lower caseloads and workloads, we need to serve more children in their own homes and communities, reunify children more quickly with their families or find new permanent families for children in less time. This will result in less children in care for shorter periods of time. In the end, we will end up with successful new strategies and approaches, social workers with smaller caseloads and reduced workloads and safe children living in permanent families. But remember, to get where we want to go tomorrow, we have to start where we are today.

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We're in the Waiver Now...

Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Begin First Sequence Waiver Initiatives

On June 26, 2007, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project plan and three first-sequence initiatives:

- **Expansion of Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM)** - FTDM will be expanded with the addition of 14 Supervising Children's Social Workers to the current team of 62 FTDM facilitators. The goal of this initiative is to provide permanency planning conferences every six months for children with no identified permanency resource who reside in group homes or whose placements have lasted longer than two years to ensure that plans for reunification, adoption or guardianship are expedited.
- **Expansion of Family Finding and Engagement (FFE)** - FFE will be expanded by creating Specialized Permanency Units beginning with the Metro North and Pomona offices. Children's Social Workers in these units will carry reduced caseloads of our most challenging and disconnected youth.
- **Upfront assessments for mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence with expanded Family Preservation Services** - Upfront assessments of high-risk referrals with substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health involvement will be conducted by Shields for Families in the Compton Office to prevent unnecessary foster placement and divert families to expanded Family Preservation Services.

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SUCCESS, INNOVATION,

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES CELEBRATES A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OUR MISSION AND GOALS

As we look back at the past year, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has a lot to be proud of. We have worked diligently to further ensure that children grow up safe, physically and emotionally healthy, educated and in permanent homes.

As we focused on our three key outcomes of **improved permanency; improved safety; and reduced reliance on out-of-home care**, we continued to strengthen the five major strategies used to reach our goals. By doing this we improved our outcomes and garnered national recognition for our innovative programs. These strategies include:

- Structured Decision-Making (SDM) to give a risk-assessment tool to social workers;
- Team Decision-Making (TDM) to make an immediate decision regarding a child's placement;
- Permanency Partners Program (P3) to find more permanent placements for youth;
- Point of Engagement (POE) to provide more thorough evaluations and needed services to children and families within their homes and communities;
- Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR) to assist in reunifying children with their families early, while working on alternate permanency plans for children who cannot return home safely.

WE ARE SUCCESSFUL

- There has been a significant decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care from more than 50,000 in the mid-1990s to an all-time low of 19,881 at the end of September 2007.
- We have decreased number of children in long-term foster care by 20%.
- The number of children in out-of-home care who are reunified within 12 months increased by 30%.
- We have increased the number of children adopted within 24 months of placement by 30%. ***There were 2,121 child welfare adoptions and an additional 845 independent and stepparent adoptions.***
- We increased in the number of Family Maintenance cases to the total number of cases by more than 6%.

WE ARE INNOVATIVE

Implementation of the Title IV-E Waiver - This flexible funding will allow us to better serve children and families and focus on keeping children in their own families and communities whenever possible.

Focus on Prevention - Through the Prevention Initiative, DCFS is working with communities, other County agencies and the providers that serve families to keep families out of the child welfare system and keep families safe and stable.

LEADERSHIP AT DCFS

Tackling the Issues of Homelessness and Runaways - More than 1,165 families on Skid Row were served in 2006. In late 2005, DCFS developed a task force to better explore the issues surrounding runaway youth. We improved our tracking of runaway youth to make it more accurate. DCFS now has a section devoted exclusively to runaway and homeless issues.

Partnership with Law Enforcement - The DCFS Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) has offered collaborative work with the Los Angeles County Sheriff and local law enforcement agencies. The team rescues children from homes where gangs, drugs and weapons pose a threat to their safety. Drug Endangered Children (DEC) staff work with law enforcement specifically in assisting in raids on methamphetamine labs and rescuing children from these dangerous environments and ensuring medical evaluation and treatment. In 2006, more than 1,500 children were assisted through the services of MART and DEC.

Improved Health Care - To better serve the health needs of children in foster care, the DCFS, in conjunction with the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH), established the six Medical Hubs. The Hubs offer forensic, medical and mental health expertise and assessment capacity available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to ensure safety and permanency for children.

Finding Homes - We expanded the Family Finding and Permanency Partners Program to include all regional offices. More than 1,130 youth have been served by P3 since its inception in 2004.

Reaching Out - DCFS expanded resource family and youth mentor recruitment in the community through a series of informative community forums and faith-based breakfasts in all Service Planning Areas.

WE ARE A LEADER

The National Association of Counties recognized seven DCFS programs including MART, Joint Referral Response, Concurrent Planning Redesign, Point of Engagement, P3, D-Rate Program and Residential Wraparound.

The Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission recognized a number of DCFS programs and projects, including POE and P3. The Commission also honored Heart Gallery Los Angeles for its innovation in finding homes for children waiting to be adopted.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services honored DCFS for the Concurrent Planning Redesign.

DCFS' Permanency Resources Unit received a national 2006 Adoption Excellence Award in the category "Decrease in the Length of Time that Children in Foster Care Wait for Adoption."

In conjunction with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, DCFS received an award at the California Mental Health Advocates for Children conference for being "Transformer of the Year" for efforts to improve their systems as a result of the Katie A. lawsuit.

Over the past year the DCFS Public Affairs section received a national Communicator Award for the DCFS billboard campaign and a first place and "Best In Class" award for the "DCFS News" newsletter from the National Association of County Information Officers.





Gail Yockey, winner of the Ford Focus, at 'All for the Love of Kids.'



Hundreds enjoy themselves at 'All for the Love of Kids.'

SPA SPOTS

DCFS Director Accepts CARRY Award on Behalf of Department

On October 19th, the Coalition for At-Risk Youth (CARRY) held its 2nd annual gala honoring Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services Director Trish Ploehn. The director was presented with CARRY's Orchid Award for her outstanding support and commitment to Los Angeles County foster youth. Others recognized notables were R&B Grammy winners and lead vocalist for the Fifth Dimension Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis, Jr., and Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, Ph.D. Ploehn dedicated her Orchid Award to DCFS' dedicated staff who have worked along side of her in making this award possible.

"DCFS is filled with thousands of hard-working and committed staff," said Ploehn. The director also recognized that improving the lives of children and families was a collaborative effort with community partners who have heard of a child in need and then done something about it.

CARRY is a coalition dedicated to changing the lives of foster youth suffering from debilitating skin disorders and physical illnesses. The foundation provides services to foster youth in the form of pro-bono medical treatment and financial assistance. Education, counseling, and career development are other services offered. CARRY's first annual gala raised over \$250,000 thanks to its motivated leaders including physicians, attorneys, entrepreneurs, and entertainers. For more information on CARRY please visit them at www.foratriskyouth.org.

'All for the Love of Kids' Raises Nearly \$48,000 for Trust Fund

A beautiful sunset evening full of magical fun and fundraising was held on the transformed rooftop of the Edwards Renaissance 14 Cinemas parking structure in Alhambra on August 9th during the 12th annual "All for the Love of Kids" fundraiser presented by Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich. Nearly \$48,000 was raised for the DCFS Families and Children's Trust Fund. One of the evening highlights was when Lancaster CSW Gail Yockey won the drawing for a 2007

In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcsf.lacounty.gov.

Ford Focus which was generously donated by philanthropist Ian Teague's Claremont Ford.

DCFS and co-host Supervisor Antonovich presented scrolls to outstanding resource parents Denise and Joe Witmeyer who have been fostering and adopting DCFS youth for more than 30 years. They were introduced by their adult daughter who was one of their foster children. The Rotary Club of Los Angeles was also presented with a scroll for their ongoing financial support of the DCFS Trust Fund. Los Angeles County Police Chief Margaret York accepted the scroll on behalf of the Rotarians.

KNBC Channel 4 News Anchor Jennifer Bjorklund kept the evening moving along as mistress of ceremonies. She humorously raffled and auctioned off many items including trips, bicycles and dinners while being assisted by two pint-sized audience members. Guests were also serenaded by DCFS' own singer Andrea Palm and pianist Aris Banico.

As the sun set, the evening concluded with movie passes being provided to guests for a screening of "Shrek IV" which were generously donated by Regal Entertainment.

Older Youth the Focus of Azusa Pacific Event

More than 300 guests attended the Glendora and El Monte offices' second annual community outreach conference on July 18th at Azusa Pacific University entitled "Connecting for Success." The event was aimed specifically at teens, age 14 years and up, as well as their caregivers.

The focus of the day was teaching caregivers how to better support the youth if they age-out from care and motivate caregivers and youth to plan for their futures after high school. Guest panelists included former foster youth Onitsha Newsom, a DCFS employee who now works with older youth, Independent Living Program coordinator Phyllis Wilcher and Transitional Housing Coordinator Armen Gukasyan. Educational issues were the major focus of the discussion. The audience was also entertained by motivational speaker MC Blvd., aka Robert Hajar, who also shared his life story. The teens appeared to be moved by



Members of the faith-based community participate in a South Bay outreach event.



MC's own efforts to change his life.

At an educational fair, guests were given the opportunity to speak with representatives from local colleges, junior colleges, the Los Angeles County Department of Rehabilitation, trade schools and other community providers regarding post-high school resources. Following the event, Azusa Pacific University took the young people attending the event on a tour of the campus during which they could speak to admission staff about the process of applying to college. Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovitch's Senior Deputy Jay Gomez presented both DCFS and Azusa Pacific University with scrolls honoring their efforts on behalf of the community. 🙏

South Bay Community Holds Outreach Event

The DCFS Torrance Office continues to make ever stronger connections with the South Bay community. DCFS and the South Bay Community Partnership Council's Faith-Based Committee hosted their second annual Family Fun Day event on September 15th, in Lawndale. It was a huge success with almost 3,500 local residents attending.

The importance of finding permanent homes, mentors and providing support for at-risk families was a major message of the day's event. Community members who wished to foster, adopt or mentor a child were successfully recruited. Many of the guests stepped forward to reach out to the 900 children served by the office, including 35 people for mentoring, 11 guests for becoming resource parents, nine families who want to adopt and 17 individuals who signed up as weekend host/advocates.

This event also educated and created awareness of the services and resources offered by congregations and community-based agencies in the South Bay area including providing support services for vulnerable children and their caregivers in the South Bay area. Resources included mental health services, substance abuse and domestic violence programs, kinship support services, family support services and emergency services.

The family and child-oriented event included a variety of activities besides the informational booths. There were arts and crafts, games, and much more. Over 700 youth received prizes for participating at the booths hosted by

local congregations and organizations. The entertainment was never ending and a huge success. The stage was filled with Hawaiian dancers, Aztec fire dancers, the Krump dancers from Faithful Central Bible Church, the Ballet Folklorico dancers, International Children's Choir of Long Beach, Bob Baker Marionettes and even a fashion show.

Foster parents, adoptive parents, relative caregivers and mentors were recognized for their commitment to making a difference in the children's lives. Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe's Children's Deputy Nick Ippolito and Miriam Long, Children's Deputy for Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke accepted Certificates of Honor on behalf of their Supervisors. The event hosts were the Faith-Based Committee of the South Bay Community Partnership Council and the DCFS Torrance office. 🙏

Emancipation Division Gets New Name – Youth Development Services

The DCFS Emancipation Division has changed its name to Youth Development Services. Although the program continues to offer Independent Living Services (ILP), it has added new programs and providers in an effort to provide complete comprehensive life skills to youth aging out from DCFS supervision.

Rhelda Shabazz, Youth Development Services Division Chief said, "The change came in April 2007 because we wanted the name of the program to reflect the complete comprehensive services that are provided to youth, not just the emancipation piece." Children's Court Presiding Judge Nash also agrees with emphasis on youth services, and not emancipation.

The Transitions Housing Program Plus and the Transitional Permanent Housing are examples of new programs that accompany the change. Services include housing assistance, independent living skills, and work assistance. Certain services can be provided to foster youth up to the age of 25.

In addition to the Community College Foundation, Para Los Niños and the Chancellor's Office of Community College have been added as new providers to facilitate with life skills for foster youth. Youth Development Services also has an ILP Coordinator in each DCFS Office and nine Transitional Resources Centers within the community. The

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SPA SPOTS



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resource centers are located in South Los Angeles, Whittier, Antelope Valley, Long Beach, San Fernando Valley, Pasadena, Covina, Edelman’s Children Court and Metroplex.

Referrals for the Youth Development Services are easily accessible through L.A. Kids. Foster youth who have aged-out of the foster care system can access services via the public web-site www.ilponline.org.

“We want to get the word out that our program name has changed, but we are still here to provide support for CSWs and to provide effective transitional independent services and resources,” Shabazz said. 🍷

Safely Surrendered Baby Law Materials Have a New Look

Since the Safely Surrendered Baby Law was established six years ago, a total of 61 infants have been successfully surrendered and their lives saved. During the first 10 months of 2007 alone, 14 infants were turned over to the care of DCFS for adoption. These successes can be attributed to a growing awareness in the community of the Safely Surrendered Baby Law. To keep the public aware of the law, new posters and brochures have recently been created and are now available for distribution to the public.

Under the law, parents may surrender their newborn infants at hospital emergency rooms or Los Angeles County Fire stations within the first 72 hours after birth without facing criminal prosecution for child endangerment as long as the child does not test positive for drugs. All parental information is confidential. Infants will receive the medical care they need if necessary before the DCFS takes custody. The department moves the babies into approved adoptive homes as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, parents who have surrendered their infants have 14 days to reconsider their decision.

To learn more about the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, please call (877) BABY SAFE or (877) 222-9723. To order materials, log on to the program’s website in Los Angeles County at www.babysafela.org. 🍷

New Data Offer Important Information on Resource Parents

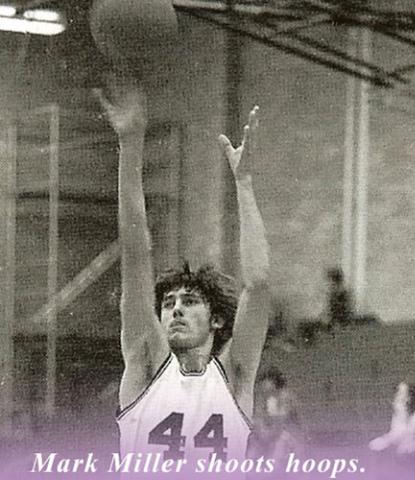
As part of the department’s efforts recruiting and supporting resource families in the Santa Clarita and West San Fernando Valley, the Resource Development and Support workgroup has been working diligently to provide better matching between foster children and resource families. The offices are attempting to identify resource families who were previously active and still wish to care for children and those who are no longer interested, but are still on the resource family placement list.

To gather information, the committee has developed a checklist survey that asks resource families which groups of children they prefer caring for. Caregivers are also asked if they want to continue providing foster care to DCFS children or want to be removed from the foster parent placement list. As an enticement to resource families to respond to the survey, they will be entered into a raffle drawing for a prize when their completed paperwork is received.

The resource families have been categorized by zip codes. Three zip codes that reflect the highest number of resource families have been identified and mailed surveys. The responses have been overwhelming and valuable information has been gathered that until now had been unknown. The offices are also analyzing the data to see where there are the greatest needs for developing resource families.

Another result of the expanded mailings is the development of a new system that enables the Technical Assistants to expedite their foster placement searches and improve the matching of foster children and resource families. As a result of sharing this updated resource family data with recruitment agencies like ChildShare, recruitment efforts are not only enhanced, but are also being redirected to those zip codes that have been found lacking in resource families.

The Santa Clarita and West San Fernando Valley regional offices have also been offering additional support services to resource parents and foster youth. They hold bimonthly trainings for resource parents on topics such as understanding Individual Education Programs, domestic violence, bullying,



Mark Miller shoots hoops.



Youth perform at this year's 'Rising Stars' fundraiser.



Metro North staff and community partners attend 'A Taste of SPA 4.'

psychotropic medications, parenting teens, recognizing and preventing teen dating violence, child abuse reporting for non-mandated reporters and Regional Center services.

Inspirational events have also been a successful part of the region's program including a donor appreciation celebration, "Be A Hero" career day for foster youth, a kinship support group kick-off party and an appreciation luncheon for foster and kinship caregivers.

For more information on these activities, please call Jamie Lynn Cantor at (661) 702-6280. 📞

DCFS Training Head Recognized by Alma Mater

DCFS Director of Training Mark Miller was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame at his alma mater, Westmont College in Santa Barbara on October 6th. Miller was quite a superstar while at college. During his four years at Westmont, Miller scored 1,671 points which landed him second in career points. Miller also holds the college record for field goals at 662. He is one of three Westmont alumni who scored over 1,000 rebounds. Miller scored the fourth highest point total in a single game with 42 points against Westmont's rival, the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). At the time, the UCSB team included future Los Angeles Lakers Don Ford.

Miller described his induction as "humbling" and that it has reminded him of the importance of giving back. He goes on to say that the best part of the entire experience was having his father at the ceremony to present him with his honor.

When Miller graduated from Westmont College in 1977, he took his energy and pride on the basketball court and applied it to his work with DCFS. He uses the teamwork and dedication skills learned while playing basketball at Westmont in his career at DCFS. Miller recently completed his 24th year of service with DCFS that began as a CSW in Emergency Response.

Miller further continues to contribute to the community as a basketball coach at Bonita High School. Miller assists the varsity team and rotates responsibilities between freshman and junior varsity teams annually. 📞

'Rising Stars' Honors Music Legend Kashif and KABC News Anchor Phillip Palmer

The 5th annual "Rising Stars" fundraising event to benefit foster youth and the performing arts was held on October 27th at the Norris Center for the Performing Arts in Rolling Hills Estates. The 2007 honorees included six-time Grammy nominee, R&B Hall of Fame inductee and former foster youth Kashif and ABC7 News Anchor Phillip Palmer.

Sponsored by The Teague Family Foundation, "Rising Stars" is held in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and the Norris Center for the Performing Arts. All proceeds go towards college scholarships for graduating foster youth and performing arts scholarships for underprivileged youth. This year's event featured a live Moulin Rouge-themed stage show with performances by several of the Norris' scholarship recipients.

The "Rising Stars" event was created in 2003 by philanthropists Janet and Ian Teague, whose efforts have provided thousands of dollars in scholarships to foster youth who want to attend college. 📞

Metro North Office Holds 'A Taste of SPA 4' to Celebrate Cultural Diversity

On October 16th, 100 DCFS Metro North staff and their community partners arrived at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel to participate in "A Taste of SPA 4" cultural diversity training. The community partners in attendance included representatives from community based agencies, resource families, faith based programs and members of the local press.

The coordination and implementation of this event was a collaboration between DCFS staff and administration, as well as members of the Community Partners Council and Training Workgroup. Training Workgroup members Lola Greenspan, MFT; Koreatown Youth and Community Center, and Carolyn Wheeler, MFT, Star View Community Services; shared the stage as MCs of the event. The speakers included clinicians and community leaders representing the different cultures in SPA 4. 📞

ON THE LINE

“On the Line” is a “DCFS News” column featuring Los Angeles County and Family Services’ social workers whose achievements and practice epitomize the best in social work.

Social Worker Uses TV Program to Help Find Permanent Homes

Will Wong of the DCFS Adoption Division Placement and Recruitment Unit, epitomizes the thorough social worker who not only uses his professional skills, but also uses research, common sense and just some good old fashioned hunches.

For the last five years, Wong has partnered with Fox 11 TV News Anchor Christine Devine to co-produce the Freddie Mac Foundation’s news spot “Wednesday’s Child” which profiles older and special needs children or large sibling groups who are available for adoption. Devine describes Wong as tenacious. Wong said that working with the children on the segments has given him a better understanding of not only the kids themselves, but also the social work profession’s need to collaborate with the community at large.

Wong becomes very animated when talking about “Wednesday’s Child.” In addition to finding permanent homes, it raises awareness about adoption and the need for adoptive parents. It also dispels rumors and stereotypes of foster kids. It also gets community partners involved including allowing the news spots to be videotaped in local businesses. The program would not have the impact it has if we did not have generous and strong community support, said Wong.

“Will puts his heart into every ‘Wednesday’s Child’ shoot and takes true pride in every successful match. The program is the success it is because of Will’s dedication and his excellent working relationships with the Freddie Mac Foundation and the crew at Fox 11 news,” said DCFS Recruitment Administrator Sari Grant.

One of Wong’s most memorable social work experiences involved a “Wednesday’s Child” episode. A year ago, a sibling set of three turned into four when birth mom gave birth again on the eve of the older three’s “Wednesday’s Child” taping. There was a common opinion that a home could not be found for all four children and that the baby should be separated to increase the chance for adoption.

The group was presented together and was matched through “Wednesday’s Child.” The adoption is scheduled to finalize before the end of this year.

Adoption is not the only DCFS section that has benefited from Wong’s work with “Wednesday’s Child.” Wong explains that the Permanency Partnership Program (P3) and Mentoring have gained support simply by showing youth in need. Old connections have been

rekindled when family or former caregivers see their children on the television. Others, while not interested in adopting, have decided to mentor after seeing a segment of the show.

Will Wong joined DCFS eight years ago. But social work was not in his initial life plan. Wong grew up on the tough south side of Chicago. He is first generation American-born of Chinese parents who fled communist China’s Cultural Revolution. The streets were tough, but the tight-knit Chinese community surrounding the Wong restaurant kept an eye on the latchkey youngster. Wong went on to earn a degree in political science and East Asian studies from the University of Illinois. It wasn’t until he moved to Los Angeles that Wong became interested in social welfare.

While writing grants and contracts for San Diego State University, Wong began volunteering with the Los Angeles Police Department Reserve Corps to network. Working in LAPD’s “Youth At Risk” program, Wong found great meaning in helping set young people onto the right path. Wong began taking social work classes which brought greater perspective to the volunteer work he continued for 10 years. Concurrently, he was working in residential treatment at Leroy Haynes’ Center in LaVerne where Wong earned what he calls his “street degree” in social work. After four years there, Wong decided to get his MSW degree where he was in the first graduating class of California State University, Los Angeles. He came to DCFS as a Title IV-E Cal SWEC student.

Will Wong plans on staying with DCFS for the long run. He hopes to continue his growth professionally and personally. “The Department really does have a lot of various programs to explore and opportunities to do different things,” he said. For more information on “Wednesday’s Child,” please call Will Wong at (626) 229-3783. 📞



Will Wong

Concurrent Planning Gets Streamlined in Glendora

The purpose of the Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR) has been to change the way the department handles cases that have a strong possibility of going towards a permanent plan.

The Glendora office has taken some steps to make the CPR process flow more smoothly in their office. Staff found that the problem had been that social workers are very busy with day-to-day tasks. Therefore, the exact requirements in compiling the paperwork packets to move the termination of parental rights (TPR) part of the case forward in a timely fashion was difficult at best. This resulted in cases being rejected by the Dependency Investigator (DI) who could not complete the next step with incomplete paperwork. Consequently, TPR cases were not identified and the case stalled.

Meanwhile, social workers continued to struggle to complete this not-too-familiar process. The results were court continuances, sanctions and further delays in adoptions.

In November 2006, Glendora Acting Administrative Regional Administrator Bill Mairs came up with an idea to further streamline the TPR process and address some of these challenges. His idea involved creating a specific clerical position that would become responsible for putting together the case packet from the CSW and send it on to the DI.

The result was a better, and more consistent and timely flow of material. Re-training Court Processing Unit staff created the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) clerical position. The new unit now identified TPR court minute orders. Meanwhile, the DI packet list was simplified to speed up work. DI staff was also increased in anticipation of the greater workload. However, this process revision still did not completely avoid the "no reject" policy and automatic assignment of these cases.

While Glendora was working at streamlining their CPR, DI Supervisor Maricruz Trevino and out-stationed County Counsel Jason Noyes learned of a "conference"

procedure used in the Pomona Office. The conference idea included the CSWs and SCSWs from Family Maintenance and Reunification (FM&R), Adoptions workers and County Counsel, meeting to discuss and agreeing to a case transition plan that included a guaranteed "no reject" by the DI.

The Pomona idea was incorporated into the Glendora plan and the streamlined TPR was complete. Today in Glendora, all new .26 TPR Adoption cases are identified automatically, assigned and immediately put into TPR mode. The FM&R CSW is freed from the legal burden of terminating parental rights and permanency work with the child and family.

Adoptions ARA Lola Fountain advised the Glendora staff that the further success of the CPR project depends on the timely completion of the Permanent Planning Assessment as early as possible to be ready for TPR. This includes the timely assignment of an Adoption CSW for permanency work, completion of the home study or recruitment of a prospective adoptive family. Workers also plan regular meetings with the child and current caregiver, irrespective if the child is attached to a prospective adoptive family or not, to discuss and prepare for the permanent plan. The purpose of these visits is to discuss at an age appropriate level what permanency means to the child.

Structure and consistency continues in the Glendora CPR as a TPR conference is scheduled by clerical staff to take place within 10 days of receiving the case. For consistency, Tuesdays and Thursdays have been set aside specifically for these case-planning meetings. Documents are exchanged, tasks assigned, legal notice issues are identified and the DI process commences.

The effort by the Glendora office illustrates two significant factors: a focused effort to increase success in TPRs and all involved staff working together in a close way as much as possible. By enhancing direct communication, many barriers that have delayed the process in the past have been eliminated. 🧑‍🤝‍🧑

Typical case conference meeting in the Glendora office. Seated left to right are; Magdalena Elorriaga, DI CSW; Sharon Sedillo, FM&R CSW; John Reina, FM&R SCSW; Jason Noyes, Deputy County Counsel; Glenda Quintanilla, Adoptions SCSW; Sandra Blancarte, Adoptions CSW; Evelyn Hoskins, CQI Clerk; and Gina Prophet, DI SCSW.



First Sequence Waiver Initiatives Begin

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This past summer, 142 DCFS and Probation managers met with 97 community partners to convene the second DCFS/Probation Title IV-E Waiver Learning Organization Group (LOG) to recap where we've been (pre-Waiver), where we are now and how we got here, and where we ought to go next and why (using data to identify priorities). DCFS Director Trish Ploehn presented an overview of the DCFS service delivery system and how various programs fit together to meet our identified outcomes.

Deputy Director Angela Carter presented an overview of the joint Chief Executive Office (CEO) and Healthy Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Children/Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project, which will allow qualified community based agencies in each of the eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) to partner with DCFS and other County departments to:

- ✔ Prevent child abuse before it occurs and provide services to reduce the number of children requiring DCFS supervision;
- ✔ Provide community connections for those families who choose voluntary services, and;
- ✔ Provide preventive services and activities to reduce further maltreatment and reduce the impact of abuse.

The project is currently targeted to start next year. Once approved, informational presentations will be made to all regional office staff.

Deputy Director Lisa Parrish, the department's Waiver Coordinator, discussed the Waiver as a reinvestment opportunity and emphasized that the Waiver provides an opportunity to build upon and expand the great work already being done by our department.

Chief Deputy Director Susan Kerr presented the department's plan in response to the Katie A. class action lawsuit. The plan calls for a number of systemic improvements to better meet the mental health needs of certain children in foster care or at risk of foster care placement who have mental health needs. This includes the expansion of medical hubs and Wraparound slots (please see "Katie A. Class Action Lawsuit Review" posted on LA Kids for more detailed information).

Our Probation partners, including Deputy Director Jitahadi Imara and Placement Services Bureau Chief Carol Sanchez, presented Probation's new placement model, with an emphasis on enhanced cross-systems case management and the expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT).

If you have any questions, contact the L.A County Waiver Demonstration Project Coordinators at waiverinfo@dcfs.lacounty.gov and waiverinfo@probation.lacounty.gov. 📞

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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To help with these challenges, in 2008, I plan to continue tapping into the creative thinking of line workers and supervisors. I came from the line and I realize the wealth of great ideas that rest there. This is not about instructions coming from the top; it's about ideas and solutions coming from the people who know best what is needed...you. It's about looking at what is working and, in these challenging fiscal times, expertly utilizing the resources we already have.

Director of DCFS is a title I hold proudly. I hope all of you are also proud of being an employee of this

department and take great satisfaction in the fact that you are working to improve the lives of children and families. I know it is not always easy, but I believe that as we stay focused on and committed to what is important – helping children and strengthening families – we will have even greater success in 2008. Happy holidays and a wonderful new year to each and everyone. 📞

Patricia S. Ploehn, LCSW
Director

DCFS



ALL
STARS

DIRECTOR'S
EMPLOYEE
RECOGNITION
AWARD

Submit Your
NOMINATION

Here is your opportunity to nominate a fellow employee for their outstanding work and dedication to the department, children and families we serve.

Nominate that special employee who epitomizes customer satisfaction by supporting the department's goals of safety and permanence.

Nomination forms can be accessed on L.A. Kids in the Press Room, located on the L.A. Kids home page. For more information, please call Lois Shirk in the Office of Public Affairs at (626) 938-1763.

All nomination forms should be faxed to the Office of Public Affairs at (213) 738-9257.



DIRECTOR'S EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

Every month, DCFS employees are honored as part of the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program. All of these employees are honored for enriching the lives of the children and families and contributing to our goals of permanence, safety and reduced reliance on out-of-home care. Recipients are chosen by a rotating panel of all levels of DCFS staff and given special certificates. Photos of all recipients are also mounted on the wall outside of the Director's office at DCFS Headquarters and posted on L.A. Kids. We're still looking for "DCFS All Stars" to honor and all staff are encouraged to send in nominations using the form on the L.A. Kids web site.

For more information, call Lois Shirk in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886. To learn more about these outstanding recipients, check out L.A. Kids.

Congratulations to all of the honorees!

Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award

May: David White, CSA II, Training Section
June: Nelson Sanchez, ARA, Lancaster West Office
July: No Nominations
August: Wendy Tashiro, CSA I, Lancaster Office

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award

May: Ron Oroz, SCSW, El Monte Office
June: Nilaja Bush, CSW III, Compton Office
July: America Sosa, CSW III, Child Protection Hotline
August: Robert Munoz, CSW III, Lakewood Office

Outstanding Support Service Staff

May: Anna Maria Brown, STC, Adoption, Borax Office
June: Deborah Perez, Adoption Assistant, Adoptions, Pasadena Office
July: Bertha Parra, STC, Santa Fe Springs Office
August: Leroy Cloud, Human Service Aid, Wateridge Office

Outstanding Team Award

May: Court Shelter Care/Transportation Section, Juvenile Court
June: No Nominations
July: No Nominations
August: No Nominations

UPCOMING EVENTS

CELEBRATION 2008

"Celebration 2008 – Honoring the Academic Achievements of Foster Youth" will honor foster and probation youth on Wednesday, June 4, 2008, for their outstanding scholastic achievement for the 18th year. The 2008 event will again be held at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

All Children's Social Workers and Independent Living Coordinators are urged to have youth on their caseloads apply for the many scholarships available.

Applicants must have a minimum grade point average of 2.7. They also must be eligible to graduate in 2008 and be starting school in fall of the same year.

Information about "Celebration 2008" will be posted on the L.A. Kids website or call (213) 351-0102. We look forward to seeing more DCFS staff in attendance, cheering on these incredible youth and celebrating their success!

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