

DCFS News

Spring 2012

Philip L. Browning
Director

DCFS EXECUTIVE TEAM

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Administration

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Dawna Yokoyama
Acting Deputy Director
Service Bureau 4

Jennifer Lopez
Acting Deputy Director
Bureau of the Executive Office

Rhelda Shabazz
Deputy Director
Bureau of Strategic
Management



Philip L. Browning sworn in as DCFS Director by Chief Deputy Executive Officer Patrick Ogawa, with (from L to R) Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky, CEO William T Fujioka, and Executive Assistant Maria Duron.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Hello,

I want to thank all of you who have welcomed me as the new Director of the Department of Children and Family Services. I have been touched by the many thoughtful e-mails and personal notes you have sent me to congratulate me on this new challenging assignment. As you know, I came to the Department last August while our Board of Supervisors was conducting a nationwide search for a new DCFS Director. The Board has recently come to the decision that it would be best for the Department for me to remain at its helm and for us to continue on the path we started six months ago. This path is one that puts Common Sense, Critical Thinking, and Accountability at the core of our decision-making process.

A key component of this decision-making process includes systematically reviewing our

data and outcomes to ensure we are deploying our resources in the most effective way. My priority is for every social worker, support staff member, and manager to put child safety first, while using our wealth of innovative programs to strengthen families, promote permanency, and enhance self-sufficiency. I appreciate the confidence the Board has shown in my leadership, and I look forward to us working together and treating every child we serve as our own.

As I have visited our DCFS offices I have seen exceptional staff who are faced with difficult decisions regarding families and children each day. Many of you have indicated the need for additional training, new mobile technology and balanced caseloads among offices. I continue to receive suggestions and ideas about how we can make DCFS a more productive place to work and better serve children and families. I appreciate all the feedback which I hope will be incorporated into our new DCFS Strategic Plan which should be ready in draft form in a few weeks.

On another note, I hope you enjoy the new look of our newsletter. "DCFS News" will be published

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Mr. Browning with Board Deputies: (L to R) Sylvia Drew-Ivie (2nd District), Springsong Cooper (1st District), Helen Berberian (5th District), and Lisa Mandel (3rd District).



Mr. Browning with (L to R) Children's Commissioner Carol Biondi, Casey Family Programs Sr. Director Bonnie Armstrong, and Children's Commissioner Trisha Curry.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE *Continued from Page 1*

on a quarterly basis and replace the "Good Word" e-newsletter. In today's edition, DCFS managers have provided articles on some of our most important initiatives, including the Core Practice Model/Katie A, the IV-E Waiver, Data-driven Decision Making, AB12, the Pomona Family First Project, and Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity. I hope you will take a few minutes to read this newsletter and provide sugges-

tions on how we can provide information and news of interest to you.

I want to thank the Board of Supervisors and the CEO for their confidence in me but most importantly I want to thank each of you for your hard work for the families and children we serve each day in Los Angeles County. 🍷



The Core Practice Model: DMH and DCFS Partner to Promote Quality Practice



*Adrienne Olson, Division Chief,
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How can we best serve children and families beset by some of life's biggest challenges—child abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, and alienation?

The Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services and Mental Health have come together in a historic alliance to enhance practice as a vehicle to achieve better outcomes for those children and families who have come to their attention. The two departments have endorsed a shared approach to practice, referred to as the Core Practice Model, and have begun a large scale training and coaching effort to reform the way social workers, mental health clinicians, and community partners work with children and families on a case by case basis.

This new model promotes collaboration through a child and family team process that is grounded in a strong engagement with families and a focus on addressing the underlying needs of children through a strength-based approach. Coaching for child welfare social workers and mental health clinicians will be used to drive this change in practice, and a kickoff was held in the Compton DCFS office on February 14th.

The Core Practice Model is a central element of the County's response to the Katie A. class action lawsuit and is expected to strengthen both systems' performance (e.g., child and family engagement, teaming, needs/strengths-based assessment) and outcomes for children and families (e.g., well-being, school performance, health). These changes will be measured and promoted via an intensive case review and quality improvement process, known as

the Quality Services Review (QSR), which has already begun and will continue until several key benchmarks are achieved. 🍷

Title IV-E is Enhancing Child Safety, Permanency, and Well-being.



*Alan Weisbart, Children
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Participating in the Title IV- E Waiver continues to enable DCFS to make critical changes in the services provided to children and families in Los Angeles County. The Waiver allows DCFS the flexibility to reinvest funds to provide services based on each family's individual needs to improve safety, shorten timelines to permanency, improve child and family well-being, and enhance self-sufficiency. Since the start of the Waiver on July 1, 2007, the number of children in out-of-home care decreased 25.1%; the number of children in group homes decreased 29.6%; no recurrence of maltreatment increased 0.2%, and reunification within 12 months increased 5.9%.

On December 13, 2011, DCFS received approval from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to implement additional and expanded Waiver strategies. These strategies build on existing strategies to improve staff skills and performance, and expand the co-location of staff with other agencies partnering in child protection and well-being, in order to integrate and coordinate services, enhance access to information and ensure greater accountability. 🍷

Data-driven Decision Making uses Data to Inform Practice, Policy, and Critical Decisions.



*Mary Lau (pictured left),
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The Department's newly instituted Data-driven Decision Making process is based on successful models used in other child welfare jurisdictions such as New York, Philadelphia, and Georgia, as well as local Los Angeles County public services, including the Departments of Public Social Services and Mental Health.

The Data-driven Decision Making process primarily uses data from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to help inform practice, policy, and other critical decisions. The Department's approach focuses on results that will improve performance. Monthly management forums are convened to discuss data and how data help us understand our strengths, challenges, strategies, and best practices.

This process will enhance our ability to spot data trends, and make adjustments to policy and practice in real time. It will strengthen departmental data collection and analysis infrastructure so that data can be used to enhance strategic and operational decision-making throughout the Department.

Guiding Principles behind Data-driven Decision Making

1. Create a continuous learning environment.
2. Process must include the rigor to know the story behind the data. Numbers alone are not sufficient.
3. Requires willingness to learn, grow, and change.
4. Divisions and regions must be unified, and address data cohesively.
5. Senior managers should advocate for the children, families, and communities their offices or divisions are responsible for serving.
6. Data should be transparent and shared with internal and external stakeholders.
7. Accountability: Expectation to know your data; be prepared to explain and take action, and demonstrate active follow through.
8. Requires not just point in time data, but trend data.

In addition, the Business Information Systems (BIS) Division is developing a DCFS Dashboard to help staff understand our performance indicators. The Dashboard contains data related to key performance indicators around safety, permanency, and well-being. The Dashboard allows for drilling down from the bureau level to office, to ARA, to SCSW, to CSW level.

- Data for the Dashboard comes from the statewide system: CWS/CMS.
- The Dashboard is updated on the 11th of each month, however, a 3-Month Daily Report is refreshed daily to provide up-to-date information.
- The Data Dashboard maintains an inventory of measures related to Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being. 🏠

Director Philip Browning and DCFS managers discuss Data-driven Decision Making



Los Angeles County Implements Assembly Bill 12 Giving Foster Youth the Option to Remain in Foster Care through Age 20!



*Harvey Kawasaki, Division Chief, DCFS Youth Development Services
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Recognizing that 18 is too young for most youth to be without support, the Governor signed into law AB12, the California Fostering Connections to Success Act, in September 2010, giving eligible foster youth in California the option to remain in foster care and receive services and supports until the day before their 21st birthday.

Starting January 1, 2012, foster youth may voluntarily remain in placement after turning 18, enabling them to maintain a support system as they transition to adulthood. Participating youth will receive help with their education and employment goals, and have the opportunity to develop lasting relationships with caring adults. New housing options are also available to youth 18 and older who volunteer to remain in care after turning 18. Note: only those foster youth that turn 18 on or after January 1, 2012, are eligible for these extended foster care services.

Los Angeles County has fully implemented AB12, and during 2012, nearly 2,000 foster youth will be eligible to participate in the program, receiving benefits. A community collaborative training approach is in progress to ensure that social work staff, youth, caregivers, and providers are fully aware of how these benefits will ensure a brighter future for our youth. Anyone interested in learning more about the program is encouraged to link to the following website: www.afterca.org. 🍷

The Pomona Family First Project Demonstrates How Best to Stabilize Families



*Maryam Fatemi, Deputy Director, Service Bureau 3
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In 2004, the Board of Supervisors directed our Department to implement a project to demonstrate how best to stabilize families and obtain permanent homes for children through evidence-based and best practice child welfare services models. The Pomona Family First (PFF) Unit, in Service Planning Area 3, was the Department's response. The results are now in and the results are impressive.

In the earliest phases of implementation, the PFF Unit, then comprised of six Children's Social Workers (CSW), each with a caseload of no more than 15 newly detained children and their families with no prior DCFS case history, worked diligently to incorporate the four core Family to Family strategies into their day-to-day work, becoming early practitioners of certain engagement and teamwork strategies that are now reflected in our Core Practice Model.

Beginning in 2009, with partial funding and support from the California Department of Social Services, Dr. Ruth Chambers from California State University – Long Beach used a mixed-method research design with quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate PFF effectiveness. The summary of findings, presented by Dr. Chambers to the Research and Development Committee of the CalSWEC Board on February 2, 2012, foreshadows the amazing possibilities of a full and well supported implementation of the Core Practice Model.

According to Dr. Chambers' summary, the PFF Unit social workers, from a qualitative perspective, "expressed satisfaction with having the time to foster and build trusting relationships with family members."

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Pomona Family First Project *Continued from Page 4*

Family members interviewed as part of the study indicated “that they were treated with respect,” that “their worker had realistic expectations of them,” that they “felt like they were a part of the decision-making process,” and that they “were treated fairly and humanely.” The parents interviewed as part of the study reported that their needs were met in a culturally sensitive way.

Dr. Chambers’ quantitative findings were based on a closed case record review, that compared 50 families who received PFF services and 50 families who received traditional child welfare services, by the same CSWs prior to PFF implementation. The noteworthy case outcome findings include the following:

- PFF families had a much shorter time of involvement with DCFS; an average of 479 days as compared to 960 days for the comparison group.
- The average length of placement for PFF children was 408 days, as compared to 792 for the comparison group.
- PFF children had significantly fewer placement moves; an average of 1.18 as compared to 2.36 for the comparison group.
- PFF children were 12 times more likely to be returned home at the time of case closure than the comparison group and 23 more times likely to still be at home one year after case closure, than the comparison group.

The PFF Unit made great efforts to ensure that a single CSW stayed with a case for the life of the case to ensure continuity of care and services. Another critical PFF strategy for success was purposeful face-to-face contact with children and families at a frequency greater than our policies require. The findings pertaining to these two areas are eye-opening. Dr. Chambers found that for every new caseworker assigned to a case, the case stayed open an additional 115 days and the children could expect one additional placement move. When a new worker was assigned to a case, the children stayed in placement an additional 121 days. For every two visits a social worker provided, the number of days the case was open was reduced by 100 days.

Dr. Chambers also looked at PFF Unit and control group placement costs. The average total placement costs were significantly less for PFF families than the comparison group (an average of \$14,450 as compared to \$34,285). Additionally, overall costs per child were significantly less for the PFF Unit (an average of \$8,847) as compared to the comparison group (an average of \$22,225).

Congratulations to the Pomona Family First Unit for demonstrating what’s possible with the right combination of caseloads and child and family-centered practice. 🍷



Celebrating National Professional Social Work Month (March 2012) Social Worker of the Past: Dr. Dorothy Height

“We have to improve life, not just for those who have the most skills and those who know how to manipulate the system, but also for those who often have so much to give but never get the opportunity.”

Dr. Dorothy Height was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1912, and was educated in the public schools of Rankin, Pennsylvania, a small town outside of Pittsburgh. Dr. Height won an oratorical scholarship, which along with a record of scholastic excellence, allowed her to enroll in New York University where she earned her bachelor and master's degree in four years. Dr. Height did further postgraduate work at Columbia University and the New York School of Social Work. Ms. Height was among the coalition of African American leaders who pushed civil rights to the center of the American political stage after World War II, and she was a key figure in the struggles for school desegregation, voting rights, employment opportunities, and public accommodations in the 1950s and 1960s. Dr. Height was often times known as the “Godmother of the Civil Rights Movement.” President Barack Obama stated that “She never cared about who got the credit. What she cared about was the cause. The cause of justice, the cause of equality, the cause of opportunity, freedom’s cause.” 🍷

Sources: Washingtonpost.com, NASWFoundation.org



Eliminating Racial Disparity and Disproportionality- Improving Outcomes for African American Youth

*Nina Powell-McCall, Children Services Administrator III,
Family and Community Partnership Section
poweln@dcfs.lacounty.gov*

DCFS is continually working to improve outcomes for all children, youth, and families we serve. However, a disproportionate number, currently 33% of children residing in out-of-home care, are African American; although African American children comprise a small percentage (9%) of the Los Angeles County child population. Research suggests different reasons for the existence of disproportionality and disparities in child welfare, but there is no exact formula for addressing this reality.

In response to this anomaly, DCFS met with community partners to share data, ask for input, and develop strategies on Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD). We have worked with national experts to help facilitate honest conversations and participated in training to help us better understand issues of power, race, and culture. We are continuously engaging former foster youth, families, community service providers, advocates, public health and social service agencies, and others to help us jointly understand why disproportionality and disparities exist and how to address this problem.

DCFS and Juvenile Court have been key partners in moving this work forward and formed a leadership group committed to ERDD.

The leadership group, also known as the Los Angeles Policy Workgroup on Disproportionality and Disparity, meets monthly to discuss issues related to ERDD. The workgroup is led by Judge Michael Nash and includes Deputy Director Rhelda Shabazz, Children Services Administrator III Nina Powell-McCall, representatives from Children’s Court, Children’s Law Center, community partners, the Department of Mental Health, parents, former foster youth, and various other stakeholders.

Recently, the workgroup asked for feedback and suggestions on how to reduce the number of African American children in care. Responses were collected, grouped by topic, and shared back with the workgroup as “Action Items.” The workgroup then formed sub-groups to discuss key strategies as they related to the respective Action Items. Through this caucus time, the workgroup proposed attainable objectives and agreed to set timelines for their completion. Each sub-group will report back on its progress in the coming months and throughout the year.

For additional information on this workgroup or ERDD, please contact Nina Powell-McCall at (213) 639-4810, poweln@dcfs.lacounty.gov or Luis D. Salazar at (213) 351-5760, salazl@dcfs.lacounty.gov. 🇺🇸

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Mr. Browning with DPSS Managers.



Mr. Browning with (L to R) Sheryl Spiller, Acting Director DPSS; Lisa Garrett, Director of Personnel, Department of Human Resources, and Steven Golightly, Director of Child Support.



Mr. Browning with DCFS Managers.



The Social (Worker) Network



When the IKEA Life Improvement Challenge hosted a competition to win \$10,000 in IKEA products and supplies for a design makeover, **SCSW Roberta Thomas**, out-stationed with the South County office, set out to win the necessary votes. Roberta works as a Field Instructor with the Education and Licensure Program responsible for recruiting and training more than 200 social workers pursuing their Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work annually. She and the California State University Long Beach Inter-University Consortium Intern Unit, especially intern Tracy Souder, spearheaded the drive, asking all DCFS staff to vote for a makeover for the South County child visitation room. Their hard work paid off with 2,800 votes and a \$10,000 award from IKEA. "This win was the direct result of incredible teamwork and collaboration with staff from all DCFS offices voting, as well as friends and family. We never would have won if we didn't have the approvals and the encouragement from our top level administrators including CSA III Maria Camarillo and Division Chief Mitch Mason," said Roberta. The interns from CSULB have maintained the children's room for over seven years and this award is due in large part to their efforts over the years to find resources for the children. 🍷

For the past four years, the Santa Fe Springs office has operated an emergency food bank called the "Hope Chest" with the support of their faith based partners. Their social workers provide groceries for hundreds of families in dire need of immediate food until more permanent resources can be arranged. Following a DCFS Team Decision Making meeting, a grandmother on a fixed income needed help with food after two of her grandchildren were placed with her. Her social worker packed up five bags of groceries and a box of toiletries for her to take home. When groceries were delivered to one family, their little girl grabbed a can of peaches and said, "Look mom, we got fruit!" The Hope Chest was started by Children Services Administrator I **Julie Clemens**, who believes in "paying it forward." When Julie was about 9 years old, her family was homeless, moving from motel to motel. Her church provided two bags of groceries including a box of brownie mix. Julie has never forgotten how excited she was to have brownies and can relate to the little girl and the can of fruit. Says Julie, "It is an honor and a privilege to help our families." 🍷

Congratulations to our DCFS colleagues who successfully passed their exams and are now clinically licensed professionals: Meghan Dawson, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW); Hyonok Oyama, LCSW; Evangelina E. Reina, LCSW; Mark White, Marriage Family Therapist; James Simon, LCSW; Cristina Quesada Richards, LCSW; Rabia Mirza, LCSW; Veronica Santos, LCSW; Jessica Ambroz, LCSW, and Candis Nelson, LCSW. 🍷

DCFS staff or clients may be eligible to receive up to \$5,700 in **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** from the IRS. EITC is for working people earning less than \$49,078. This year, the credit can be from \$2 up to \$5,751. The credit amount change is based on: if you are single or married; if you have no, 1, 2, or 3 or more children; and, the amount you earned. To see if you qualify, visit www.irs.gov/eitc. To learn where you can get free assistance with income tax preparation at multiple sites throughout Los Angeles, call 323-980-1221. 🍷

In 2011, **Revenue Enhancement** completed the conversion of 6,667 cases to the new federal and state funded Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) Program enacted by California Assembly Bill 12. This was a 12-month project requiring the review of closed services and foster care cases to obtain former Title IV-E eligibility documentation. The process resulted in 45.27% of the cases converted to federal funding and 54.73% to state funding. Congratulations to the Kin-GAP and Quality Assurance staff. This remarkable accomplishment was achieved through knowledge, skills and teamwork. 🍷

THE LAST WORD

Director's Employee Recognition Awards



Outstanding Administrative Manager
Preston Oppenheimer, ARA, Lancaster Office



Outstanding Direct Service Staff
Trish Knechtli, CSW III, Santa Clarita Office



Outstanding Support Service Staff
Bobbie Ewell, Community Worker, Palmdale Office



Outstanding Team Staff
The Torrance Facilitation Team
Carlos Torres, Howard Kunitz,
Mayda Hernandez, Tasgerginnae Tanner



Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Gloria Molina
First District

Mark Ridley-Thomas
Second District

Zev Yaroslavsky
Third District

Don Knabe
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich
Fifth District



DCFS Workers Recently Celebrating 25 Years of County Service

Isabel Bautista
Leda Brown
Debrina Campbell
Paulina Chien
Melissa Cowart-Freeman
Sol Del Valle
Tiffany Duong
Fernando Duran

Laura Gonzalez
Patricia Gutierrez
Lisa Juarez
Rosa Leon
Andrea Palm
Ester Price
Carol Ann Scott
Rene Williams

Congratulations to Recent DCFS Retirees

Robin Cooper
Pamela Dubin
Violet Godwin-Tipton
Alice Gonzalez

Toni Harris
Carmelita Sierra
Norma Suarez
Robert Weaver



The DCFS Business Information Systems Major Accomplishments Award recognized four projects: Oracle Migration, Borax/ Broadway Relocation, DCFS Migration to ISD, and APPS Migration Project, and was shared by (from L to R) Yvonne Mora, Jeusell Lee, David Diamond, Dawna Yokoyama, Cecilia Custodio, Jason Ly, and Crystal Cooper-Smith

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