



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**October 25, 2017**

**9:30 a.m.**

Room 739, Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Present: Helen Berberian, representing Brandon Nichols  
Jesus Corral, representing Terri McDonald  
Sylvie de Toledo  
Monica Garcia  
Leslie Heimov  
Katie Fallin Kenyon, representing Kim Belshe  
Brian McDonald  
Bryan Mershon, representing Jonathan Sherin  
Bruce Saltzer  
Fabricio Segovia  
Erika Torres, representing Michelle King  
Rachelle Touzard, representing Debra Duardo

Staff, Speakers,  
and Guests: Stefanie Gluckman  
Barbara Spyrou  
Mandi Enders  
Erica Ontiveros  
  
Martha Matthews, Public Counsel  
Alaina Moonves-Leb, Alliance for Children's Rights  
Mark Rodgers, Bonita Unified School District  
G. Kaliah Salas, Department of Mental Health  
Kathryn Stroupe, Department of Mental Health  
Kaile Shilling, Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network  
Jessica Petrass, John Burton Advocates for Youth  
  
Emily Williams, Second Supervisorial District  
Michelle Vega, Fifth Supervisorial District

Chair Mónica Garcia brought the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked the Department of Children and Family Services for sponsoring today's meeting costs. She then asked ECC members, meeting speakers, and audience members to introduce themselves.

### Accomplishments

- ECC Executive Director Stefanie Gluckman congratulated Chair Garcia on having been once again voted in as president of the Los Angeles Unified School Board.

- Included in today's meeting materials was the executive summary of *Trauma and Resiliency: A Systems Change Approach*, presenting emerging lessons and potential strategies from the trauma-informed care workgroup led by John Ott and the Center for Collective Wisdom. The ECC provided input for this report and participated in workgroup meetings.
- Also included in meeting materials was the Office of Child Protection's October 5 report to the Board of Supervisors regarding the implementation plan and timeline to comply with school-stability provisions in the 2015 *Every Student Succeeds Act*. Further details will be presented later in the meeting.
- Electronic information exchange will be the focus of the ECC's January 2018 meeting.

### Educationally Related Mental Health Services and Continuum-of-Care Reform

Much work around continuum-of-care reform, mandated by the state in 2015, is being done within the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Mental Health, and the Probation Department. In that context, the ECC focuses today on educationally related mental health services, which are needed by many foster youth in group homes, short-term residential therapeutic programs, and other placements.

Using language already approved in its strategic plan, the ECC is joining an interagency memorandum of understanding on continuum-of-care reform, agreeing to work with its members and stakeholders—including school districts, advocates, and county departments—to gather input and advocate for best practices with regard to:

- Addressing the educational and emotional needs of system-involved youth in schools
- Coordinating school-based mental health services with other mental health supports
- Using Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) and school-district dollars for foster and probation youths' mental health needs
- Creating transparency as to how schools provide and fund mental health programs, as well as the quality of and access to these programs for system-involved youth

Martha Matthews from Public Counsel and Alaina Moonves-Leb from the Alliance for Children's Rights reviewed their "Continuum-of-Care Reform, Education, and Mental Health" presentation, copies of which were included in meeting materials.

Educationally related mental health services, or ERMHS, began being required in 1986 with the passage of California's AB 3632, through which departments of mental health received state funding to pay for therapy and residential placement for students needing these services to benefit from their education. Although that legislation was repealed in 2011, both federal and state law still require those services, which are now provided and paid for by a student's school district. Examples include:

- Individual, group, family, or parent counseling or therapy
- Positive behavior intervention services
- One-to-one behavior aides
- Therapeutic behavior services
- Medication management

- Day treatment
- Residential treatment
- Case management

Continuum-of-care reform will ultimately replace group homes with short-term residential therapeutic programs, or STRTPs. Youth entering these facilities are likely to have incomplete educational records, many transfers, attendance gaps, and so on; high-level mental health needs, including the need for ERMHS; and/or inadequate or out-of-date Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), or no IEP at all. In addition, they have a right to immediate enrollment in a local school if they are not remaining in their school of origin (where they attended when permanently housed, or another school attended within the last 15 months).

“The predictions that we’re using for STRTPs are based on our actual experience with RBS, or Residentially Based Services, some years back,” said Matthews.

Los Angeles County participated as a demonstration site for the Residentially Based Services framework established by California’s AB 1453 in 2007. The RBS approach combined short-term residential intervention with an extended period of intensive home- and community-based services, with both elements provided by the same team of professionals to ensure continuity of the therapeutic relationship with youth and their families across environments of care. This intensive period of residential and community-based assistance addressed the issues that had led to placement, increased family resiliency, and helped to forge a permanent and positive connection between the youth and family.<sup>1</sup>

“The evaluation of that program,” Matthews went on, “found great outcomes . . . *except* in education, where there was no progress. Well, the RBS providers met with school district people to find out why, and I give credit to that group, pulled together by Patty Armani, for most of the best practices in our handout.” Those include:

- The early and ongoing assessment of education needs
- Agencies, school districts, and education rights holders working together to get special education assessments and IEPs promptly initiated and completed, even if youth change schools while their assessments are pending
- Education rights holders, placement staff, and schools working together on interim educational planning and support to avoid gaps in enrollment
- Coordinating school-based mental health supports with placement- and community-based mental health services
- Agencies and placements providing intensive support when youth change schools or placements mid-year; ongoing monitoring of attendance and behavior
- Being sure to consider trauma and/or unaddressed special needs/learning disabilities as possible causes of attendance or discipline problems

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<sup>1</sup> *Implementing Group Care Reform in California: The RBS Case Study*. Casey Family Programs.  
<http://www.casey.org/media/rbs-full-report.pdf> [accessed 10/25/17]

“You know that the day any kid arrives at a short-term residential therapeutic program,” Matthews said, “is *not* the best day of their lives. Just the fact that they’re there, means things haven’t been going well. Now they’re changing where they stay, they may be changing schools, sometimes they have an out-of-date IEP or no IEP at all, even though it’s very likely they need one. Without some interim support, a lot of kids get suspended in their first week.”

Mark Rodgers from the Bonita Unified School District explained that his 10,000-pupil district serves about 500 foster youth per year, from a large range of placement types. “That kind of interim support is what I call ‘pre-crisis’ support,” he said. “Our two foster youth liaisons meet kids on their first day there and introduce them to the culture of the campus, get them used to things—support them before any suspension or expulsion issues arise. The process is time- and staff-intensive,” he admitted, “and it’s very hard to quantify ‘stopping something from ever happening.’ But it works. If we can arrange cooperation between group homes and school districts to embed that kind of support in schools, partly funded by districts and other mechanisms, then we can increase school stability. Students who are getting in less trouble are having more academic success, and are less likely to change placements.”

In many cases, the coordination of care between placement- or community-based educationally related mental health services and outside ERMHS faces challenges:

- A misunderstanding of health privacy laws
- School-district policies that don’t allow outside providers (wraparound teams, for example) on school campuses
- Medi-Cal billing issues
- A lack of explicit standards and expectations for the required coordination of services

The Department of Children and Family Services is currently writing a scope of work for short-term residential therapeutic programs that will focus on transitioning youth back into the community. “The question then becomes,” Matthews said, “how do we make progress in STRTPs when kids are not there very long? These are issues we’ve always had, only now they’re more concentrated. Coordinating DMH contractors, therapists in the community, mental health services in schools—that’s always a dilemma. But we need to set an expectation that services won’t be fragmented.”

Another challenge is avoiding the ‘fail-up’ approach with these youth, which stems from starting with the least-intensive level of support at every placement, despite the youth’s history or assessed needs. The goal of continuum-of-care reform is to ensure that foster youth have access to services and supports based on their assessed needs, and they should not have to change placements to a higher level of care (or ‘fail up’) to obtain the intensity of support they need. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state special-education laws, in fact, require ERMHS and other educational supports to be provided based on need, and do *not* require students to ‘fail up’ by trying less intensive services first.

“The point of continuum-of-care reform is to have fewer students in congregate care,” Leslie Heimov pointed out, “which means some of these kids will be placed with relatives or non-related family members—and should *still* receive educationally related mental health services. Connecting ERMHS to certain placements pretty much forces the ‘fail-up’ approach.”

Funding issues also exist. School districts and Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) receive about \$430 million per year to provide ERMHS, but procedures for coordinating these services with those provided through county child welfare and mental health agencies, foster family agencies, and STRTPs need to be developed. In addition, SELPAs currently get ‘bed allowance’ funding based on the number and care level of group-home beds within the particular SELPA—whether or not those beds are occupied—since youth in group homes are more likely to have special needs. “The current formula is based on the Rate Classification Level (RCL) system,” Mathews noted, “which is going away when group homes convert to STRTPs. Ideally, a new formula will be tailored to funding for people instead of beds, but that’s still an open question in Sacramento.”

An additional funding stream is based on the number of children placed in foster homes within school districts; these monies flow to the SELPAs and are pooled for services to low-income, English-learner, and foster youth without earmarked percentage requirements. They are separate from Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) dollars, which are based on the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) count done annually on October 3. For districts like Bonita Unified and Pasadena Unified, which have high numbers of very mobile foster children cycling through their schools year-round, the CBEDS numbers can amount to a severe undercount of the number of individual students actually served. General-fund monies are often used to make up the shortfall. The Los Angeles Unified School District spends \$1.5 billion for special-education services, Chair Garcia said, half of which comes from the general fund.

Other education implications of continuum-of-care reform will affect:

- STRTPs and school-of-origin decisions
- Which assessment tool should be used to address educational needs and coordinate with the special-education assessment process
- The Children and Family Team (CFT) approach, whose meetings should include education rights holders and address education needs
- Including educational supports in the ‘core services’ that foster family agencies and STRTPs must provide
- The training and support that resource families get for meeting a young person’s educational needs

Kaliah Salas from the Department of Mental Health emphasized the importance of CFT meetings and involving education rights holders and others in that process, and making sure that everyone is appropriately informed about placement changes. She also stated that interagency agreements could address gaps in services, training needs, and communication needs, and also make clear what can be shared by school-based providers. Kathryn Stroupe (also from DMH) agreed, adding that it’s vital that parents understand inviting mental health and other disciplines to be part of CFTs.

Heimov agreed that parents need to be educated on the value of having DMH and other disciplines participate in CFT meetings, “but that assumes that parents themselves are in the room,” she commented. “When CFT meetings are set up, we need to make sure that parents are truly welcome—and that means bio parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, relative caregivers, and so on. Wherever the child is physically living, all his or her parent figures should be there if possible.”

With regard to assessment tools, Bruce Saltzer believes that Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) assessments are more likely to address education issues that are Child and Adolescent

Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessments, but also warned that neither appropriate assessments nor Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) happen overnight. “There needs to be a balance,” he said. “If a kid’s entering a foster family home or a STRTP, should he be placed in a new school on the same day? For some, that would be counter to trauma-informed care.” Saltzer also encouraged more tracking and transparency with the various funding streams handled by school districts and SELPAs, maintaining that they should be based on need.

Helen Berberian thanked the presenting speakers for their comprehensive report and expressed appreciation also to agencies that participated in RBS. “Education was that approach’s Achilles heel,” she said, seconding the suggestion of written agreements between school districts and children’s mental health providers to allow access to campuses. She also mentioned an increase in youth being transported to psychiatric emergency rooms for 72-hour holds, accompanied by far-less-than adequate information about their status and treatment. “Some kind of training needs to happen for school police and other personnel about what to do when youth decompensate on campus and they are system-involved,” she said. “We need to work closely with school districts to tighten up how we’re meeting foster youth’s mental health needs, perhaps with agreements between the county and the districts to coordinate with youth’s existing mental health providers to prevent psych holds and coordinate getting needs met before kids hit rock bottom.”

Pasadena Unified has agreements with six or seven mental health agencies who are on-campus working with the foster-youth population, and those staff are trained to be part of the school threat assessment teams. “Coordination is a huge issue,” added Mark Rodgers. “[Bonita Unified’s] biggest roadblock is not getting information early enough, when there’s still time to make decisions. We take immediate enrollment very seriously, and we want to do coordination from the outset. School-embedded supports should be part of the model. School districts shouldn’t be able to say, ‘no, thanks.’ It’s not just foster youth—others need support, too. It’s the responsibility of districts and others to work together.”

The ongoing data match that the Los Angeles Unified School District has undertaken with the Department of Children and Family Services, Erika Torres said, has helped that district identify its foster youth and better coordinate services and resources for them. She thanked the department for its leadership and advocacy.

Chair Garcia closed the discussion, asking ECC members to consider three actions moving forward. “First, we need to ensure training for professionals on the expectation of collaboration,” she said. “Second, we need to make sure that there’s communication and education for the parents and advocates for the child regarding mental health issues. And third, since the way funding allocations for ERMHS are made will change with continuum-of-care reform, we need to organize our voices to speak up for a more equitable allocation for Los Angeles County. In general, the rules are not made for us—most school districts in California serve about 5,000 kids, but many districts in this county are much, much larger. LAUSD alone has 25 percent of the state’s poor children. The need is great.”

#### Arts Education: Access, Impact, and Engagement

Stefanie Gluckman introduced Kaile Shilling, executive director of the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, thanking her for returning to the ECC to make the presentation originally planned for the May 2017 meeting.

The Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (AIYN) is a nonprofit body that brings high-impact, high-quality arts programming to youth detention facilities throughout Los Angeles County in partnership with the Probation Department and the county's Arts Commission. AIYN's nine community-based member organizations—three more are expected to join during the coming year—offer courses in the visual arts, creative writing, spoken word, theatre, and music; a dance curriculum will be added soon.

AIYN members originally became involved as the Arts Commission worked with Probation on the development of the new "L.A. Model" initiative during the past few years. After successful field-testing at six sites, AIYN is now active at 11 different facilities. "We work with the site directors and rotate our member organizations through," Shilling said, "offering twice-weekly sessions for periods of 12 weeks, with culminating events at the end."

Future plans for the network include becoming more involved in mental health support and in re-entry strategies. "We have an arts facilitator at Campus Kilpatrick who went through all the training that staff members there took prior to the campus's opening, and that was a tremendous relationship-builder," Shilling went on. "Our artists are starting to use the same language that the county uses. In a drama improvisation class, for instance, the 'yes ... and' that's the backbone of improv—that's the same 'dialectical acceptance' that the kids hear about elsewhere. We're involved in multidisciplinary team meetings now, and what we see in arts class can be very different from what other staff see with various kids."

In terms of re-entry, Shilling said, "The creative economy is a huge part of L.A.—one out of six jobs—and we want to build pathways to that for the kids. Not just as artists or performers, but in tech jobs, living-wage union jobs, and paid internships through WDACS [the county's Workforce Development and Community Services Department] to build their work experience."

AIYN ultimately wants to move into the school-day programming by using the arts to support learning engagement and taking advantage of the project-based educational model now used in juvenile facilities. "It's incredible that public-safety dollars are funding the arts," Shilling commented, "addressing mental health issues and supporting schoolwork. We'd love opportunities to coordinate with other agencies, especially to redirect kids from deeper system involvement. It's very clear that cultural engagement in schools and communities is a huge opportunity to break down the school-to-prison pipeline. The arts aren't just an add-on. They are foundational to working with young people."

All this good work has happened through probation funding. Now we have an opportunity to grow this work through more coordinated funding that could involve DMH, and DCFS.

"We have seen the value of support from Probation for the arts. Is there potential for support from DMH, and DCFS?" Gluckman asked. Helen Berberian of DCFS responded by acknowledging that there are many types of successful interventions outside of traditional mental health services and that she looks forward to partnering. Bryan Mershon of DMH indicated that there was a past history in the mental health department of supporting arts interventions.

"The research no longer asks, 'Do the arts help?'" Gluckman put in. "That's proven. The question is how to make them systemic. How do we get them to system-involved youth? How do we get them into schools?"

Shilling agreed, stating that she does not want to build a business model that depends on youth being incarcerated. “How can we look at a school and county investment to minimize youths’ contact with the juvenile justice system?” she asked. “Most kids in our classes say this is the first arts engagement they’ve ever had in their lives. We’ve worked with the Arts Commission to map an overlay of the locations of system-involved youth with where arts-engagement opportunities exist, and it’s just about what you might think—not good. We’d love to expand into communities. We’re about to sign a contract to move into juvenile day reporting centers, and we’re exploring ideas with Parks and Rec and in community housing.”

“Youth are with us for a brief period of time,” said the Probation Department’s Jesus Corral, “on average, about six months. Exposure to arts programming is a piece of our puzzle and so are post-secondary classes, which can get kids who haven’t been that academically engaged interested in new subjects. We’ve just scratched the surface.”

### Member Updates

- **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** Stefanie Gluckman reviewed the federal law relating to school stability for foster students and their legal right to remain in their schools of origin after removal or a placement change. ESSA requires that school districts and child welfare agencies—the Department of Children and Family Services, in Los Angeles County—develop a plan that includes transportation logistics for those children, how costs are shared, designated points of agency contact for implementing ESSA policy, and assurances that youth will stay in their schools of origin unless their education rights holders determine otherwise.

On February 7, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion directing the Office of Child Protection, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and DCFS—in conjunction with stakeholders—to develop an ESSA transportation compliance plan. Copies of the October 5 report-back to the Board detailing the plan and its timeline were included in meeting materials. A multiagency ESSA Transportation Workgroup created an interim pilot structure to provide needed transport immediately while at the same time gathering data to inform a long-term plan. The workgroup will continue to meet until the plan is fully executed.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by DCFS, LACOE, and the Los Angeles Unified School District—which serves 40 percent of foster children in the county—to provide and fund transportation to schools of origin through June 30, 2018. Procedures were developed for noticing school districts of student removals and placement changes, making best-interest determinations, and deciding on appropriate modes of transportation. Services are available to all school districts within the county.

LACOE’s Rachelle Touzard thanked the MOU partners and her counterpart in San Diego who provided technical assistance. A contract for safe and secure private transportation went out to public bid and has been finalized, additional full-time staff to collect data and coordinate the program have been hired, and LACOE counselors co-located in six DCFS offices are working with that agency’s education consultants to set up data systems in all 19 DCFS offices. At the thrice-yearly meetings that the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools holds for all 80 school districts in the county, details of the pilot project have been fully communicated.



Helen Berberian likewise thanked the ECC for convening the ESSA Transportation Workgroup, LACOE for its generosity of contributing funds and in-kind services to the pilot, and LAUSD for its volunteering to be the trail-blazing first school district in the pilot. 817 new children's social workers have been trained on the rights of foster youth to remain in their schools of origin if that is in their best interest, on options for transporting them there from new placements, and on the pilot program now in place. For the evaluation of the pilot, DCFS is tracking the numbers of youth served, the transportation methods used and lessons learned, the average distance of travel, the length of time youth use transportation, and the costs involved.

Erika Torres from LAUSD echoed other speakers' appreciation, saying that partnerships are critical to ensuring the success of all foster youth, including the 7,400 served by her district. Through the data match with DCFS, LAUSD identifies all foster youth enrolled in its schools and assigns them to one of its 100 foster-youth counselors. For those needing transportation following placement changes, it first works with its division of transportation to reroute regular school buses, then explores further options if that isn't feasible. "The ultimate goal is to improve foster youth's school stability and thereby their overall education outcomes," she concluded.

- **Probation** Jesus Corral reported that, with the current focus on diverting youth away from the juvenile justice system, the number of youth in custody is declining. Current counts are about 400 youth in camps and 600 in the juvenile halls, and some consolidation of locations is being considered. He also applauded the department's partnership with the Los Angeles City College district, which is offering online and in-person higher-education classes in all Probation residential centers.

Probation is also working with county and community-based partners to convert Camp Gonzales to an open residential vocational training center operated by various nonprofit organizations and the local community college district (the latter of which will also provide employment placement). The first pilot, opening in early 2018, is for males, with a center for females planned in the future.

#### Public Comment

- The Foster Care Project at All Saints Church in Pasadena sponsors an art show every year where sales proceeds go to the youth, Jeanette Mann said. They have never involved probation youth, but will speak with Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network about doing so.
- Winnie Jackson, a long-time Probation employee now retired, recalled the success of the learning centers put in each camp under the direction of then-chief Paul Higa in 2005. "Art resources were put at the kids' disposal, and it seemed to open a part of their brains that had never been used before. I was always amazed."
- The recent passage of SB 12 increases financial aid access for foster youth, additionally mandating assistance for them with applying for that aid and with college applications, said Jessica Petrass, a project manager from John Burton Advocates for Youth.

Next Meeting

The Education Coordinating Council's next meeting is scheduled for:

**Wednesday, January 24, 2018**

**9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Room 739, Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Adjournment

There being no further public comment, Chair Garcia adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.