



Education Coordinating Council

October 24, 2018

9:30 a.m.

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

Present:

Mónica Garcia, Chair
Lilia Alvarez Romo, representing Judge Michael Levanas
Helen Berberian, representing Bobby Cagle
Maria Brenes
Marilyn Brison, representing Sylvie de Toledo
Jessica Chandler
Jesus Corral, representing Terri McDonald
Pia Escudero, representing Austin Beutner
Leslie Heimov
Bruce Saltzer
Fabricio Segovia
Kanchana Tate, representing Jonathan Sherin
Rachelle Touzard, representing Debra Duardo

Speakers and
Staff:

Kawena Cole, FosterEd
Ashley Cooper, Change the Talk Project
Maya Paley, National Council of Jewish Women in Los Angeles
Jessica Petrass, John Burton Advocates for Youth
Paul Vinetz, Probation Department

Judge Michael Nash
Carrie Miller
Stefanie Gluckman
Min Meeker
Barbara Spyrou
Elizabeth Salazar

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 also gave a special welcome to Pia Escudero, the new superintendent's representative from the Los Angeles Unified School District. ECC members, meeting speakers, and audience members introduced themselves.

Accomplishments

The **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**—enacted on December 10, 2015—contained key protections for students in foster care and imposed new requirements on education agencies relating to school stability and prompt school enrollment. Under ESSA, school agencies must collaborate with their child welfare partners to ensure school stability and success for these youth.

Last year, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) together agreed to a pilot program to ensure that foster youth were ensured transportation to their schools of origin—if that was in their best interests—when they were originally detained by DCFS or subsequently changed placements. With an additional \$250,000 from LACOE and \$800,000 from DCFS, ECC Executive Director Stefanie Gluckman announced, that pilot program has now been extended through June 2019.

To date, the transportation pilot has given over 500 youth more than 12,000 rides to their schools of origin. The contract with HopSkipDrive, the private provider offering individualized transportation, has been transferred from LACOE to the Los Angeles County Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS). A long-term ESSA transportation plan is under negotiation that will serve as a template for all school districts within Los Angeles County.

Supporting College Education

On October 2, 2018, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion (included in meeting materials) directing the ECC to facilitate enhanced support on the part of DCFS, the Probation Department, LACOE, and other stakeholders to improve the post-secondary educational attainment of foster youth through:

- Participating in the *California Foster Youth FAFSA® Challenge* (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Implementing the provisions of SB 12, which require social workers and probation officers to identify an individual to support system-involved youth age 16 and older with their college and financial aid applications
- Engaging with internal and external foster youth advocates
- Providing additional recommendations for opportunities to improve financial aid application rates among foster youth, taking into account current available data

Gluckman invited representatives from departments and partners named in the motion to describe how they were involved with these issues last year, and their plans for involvement this year.

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) | SB 12

Jessica Petrass, project manager for **John Burton Advocates for Youth**—a statewide advocacy group for foster and homeless youth—explained that her organization serves as the local lead for the Foster Youth College Advancement Project, an initiative within the L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative focused on increasing foster youth post-secondary accomplishment to help youth transition to sustainable careers and achieve self-sufficiency. An estimated 96 percent of foster youth aspire to higher education, but only 8 percent actually achieve an associate or bachelor degree by age 26. Although the majority of foster youth automatically qualify for financial aid, attainment rates are low. Only 57 percent of the foster youth attending community college (where many begin), for instance, obtained a Pell grant last year, despite close to 90 percent meeting the financial eligibility.

The *California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge* is a statewide campaign to increase the number of foster youth prepared for success as they matriculate from high school into college

by ensuring that foster youth are accessing financial aid. Efforts are led by county-based foster youth services coordinating programs in collaboration with local partners, including school districts, community-based organizations, child welfare agencies, independent living programs, and local colleges. Since the 2017–2018 school year, John Burton Advocates for Youth has provided technical assistance, promotional materials, and other resources to participating counties to support them in this effort.

The overall goal of the *FAFSA Challenge* this year is to have 60 percent of foster youth who are high school seniors complete the application submission process, a rate equivalent to that of the general population. Participating counties have been given access to WebGrants, an online portal on the California Student Aid Commission's website that tracks FAFSA and California Dream Act Application submissions (data that was not previously available).

SB 12, which went into effect on January 1, 2018, calls for, among other things:

- ✓ The development of an automated system to verify a student's status as a foster youth to aid in the processing of applications for federal financial aid
- ✓ Expanded funding for community-college services supporting post-secondary education for foster youth
- ✓ Biennial reports to the Governor of campus-by-campus enrollment, retention, transfer, and completion rates for foster youth
- ✓ For youth age 16 and older (and non-minor dependents), identifying the person responsible for assisting the youth with applications for post-secondary education and related financial aid

John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) recently published a downloadable student-friendly *Financial Aid Guide for California Foster Youth* available at <http://www.jbaforyouth.org/ca-fy-financial-aid-guide/>.

Rachelle Touzard from the **Los Angeles County Office of Education** is working with JBAY to support the participation of the county's 80 school districts in the *California Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge*, partnering in particular with DCFS and its independent living program and offering gift-card incentives to the first 400 students whose FAFSA submissions are confirmed.

Access to the WebGrants portal mentioned by Petrass has given LACOE the opportunity to track foster youth who are high school seniors in Los Angeles County this year and generate follow-up if some element of a FAFSA submission is kicked back. As mentioned, the state average for senior students completing FAFSAs is 60 percent, but last year only 33 percent of foster youth seniors did so. LACOE is providing training to school districts and counselors to help foster students reluctant even to consider college because of confidence issues, and is hoping that less available aid will be 'left on the table' this year and in future.

Helen Berberian from the **Department of Children and Family Services** expressed appreciation to JBAY, LACOE's Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program, LAUSD's Foster Youth Achievement Program, and the ECC for their support this year of the DCFS Youth Development Services (YDS) division's FAFSA outreach to the approximately 2,200 DCFS-

involved high school seniors and young adults (non-minor dependents) who are already enrolled in college.

Last year, DCFS efforts around the FAFSA Challenge included special staff trainings and webinars, workshops for foster youth, identifying and personally communicating with 800 LAUSD students, and posting information and workshop schedules on the department's intranet. In addition, it participated in the Fostering Connections Summit and The Cooperating Agencies Foster Youth Educational Support/NextUp convening.

This year, Berberian said, DCFS wants to increase collaboration with its FAFSA partners, spread the word more widely about financial aid available to foster youth, increase outreach to other youth-serving County departments and, in particular, to non-minor dependents (AB 12 youth), hold FAFSA workshops at venues with wi-fi access, work individually with more youth, better support them in obtaining the needed application documents, find more ways to offer incentives for FAFSA completion, and contact foster-parent associations, foster family agencies, short-term residential treatment programs, and other contracted service providers to help youth with applications. The department also plans to challenge staff at each DCFS office to compete for the greatest pro-rated number of completed FAFSA submissions.

With regard to the implementation of SB 12 (outlined by Petrass above), DCFS's Individualized Transition Skills Program staff will have their names included in youth case plans as the persons identified to assist individual youth with FAFSA completions.

Although SB 12 mandates that children's social workers document which adult is assisting a youth with college and financial-aid applications, Leslie Heimov stated that this information is not generally appearing in court reports. The number of items that should be part of every court report is huge, and Judge Michael Nash believes that the court's memo to DCFS regarding report contents—10 pages when originally drafted in 1996 and 40 pages when revised in 2000—should be upgraded once more.

Gluckman is working with LACOE, DCFS, and the courts to link this kind of information electronically, and Heimov requested that Children's Law Center be included in those discussions to help prioritize the hierarchy of what judges, lawyers, and youth need access to. A youth's education rights holder, for instance, is identified on every minute order more often than not, and Lilia Alvarez Romo will check to see how difficult it would be also to automatically list the person helping the youth with college and FAFSA/California Dream Act applications

- College Readiness

Jesus Corral, the **Probation Department's** Senior Director of Education Services, highlighted that department's Residential Center College Program, which serves youth in the probation camps and juvenile halls and has grown to become one of the largest such programs in the nation. During the current fall 2018 semester, 170 youth have enrolled in at least one college course. Those who are concurrently enrolled receive both high school and college credit, high school graduates earn transferable college credit, and all college courses are University of California/California State University transferable. Probation Education Services provides students with the materials, textbooks, and supplies needed for class, and students receive help in registering for courses and completing all required financial aid

documentation, along with access to technology. The program's primary partner is Los Angeles Mission College, which offers classes to youth in all camps and juvenile halls; East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles Trade Tech College, and the University of California, Los Angeles, offer courses in select areas.

Mission College is also Probation's academic partner in LAUSD's Juvenile Day Reporting Center college program, which began in the spring of 2018. Again, Probation Education Services assists students with class registrations and fee-waiver paperwork, and supplies the required course textbooks. On the Mission College campus itself, a \$250,000 grant from the California Wellness Foundation has created an on-site re-entry hub to support probation youth, giving them a center on campus where they can obtain services and supports from a full-time social worker, college counselors, and community-based agencies.

Paul Vinetz, a bureau chief from Probation, explained its Youth Development Services/Independent Living Program (YDS/ILP), whose seven deputies offer services to transition-age youth exiting the juvenile-justice and dependency systems, acting as resources for employment, housing, and life skills designed to empower youth to improve their quality of life. "The youth in our system come with great trauma," Vinetz said, "and overcoming those challenges is difficult. But Probation is committed to rising to the occasion and to elevating others." From October 2017 to the present, 79 YDS/ILP youth have accessed funding for books, supplies, educational materials, and testing available to them once they have completed their FAFSA submissions. YDS/ILP also convenes an annual college summit each February, early enough in the financial-aid cycle to ensure that community colleges can assist youth with their FAFSAs before the March deadline. Probation encourages group homes to allow all eligible high school graduates and potential graduates to attend both the college summit and the Success Is Our Future events, thereby recognizing graduating probation youth and encouraging others to persevere with their education.

In partnership with two Antelope Valley school districts and several County-level partners—the Juvenile Court, the Probation Department, DCFS, LACOE, and the ECC—the **National Center for Youth Law | FosterEd** is piloting a multi-agency systems-improvement framework to improve outcomes for foster youth. The goals of this project are to:

- Test and implement high-quality, evidence-based interventions targeted to the specialized needs of foster youth, improving academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes
- Provide targeted support to at least 700 system-involved youth to address emergent needs to improve enrollment, attendance, graduation, and school stability
- Design and execute systems-level practices to improve cross-agency collaboration, using data to more proactively identify and respond to the early warning signs of educational disengagement for all 5,000 foster youth in the region

As Antelope Valley Program Manager Kawena Cole explained, FosterEd is a youth-centered nonprofit committed to helping youth in foster care graduate from high school and develop a plan for their future. It works with participating school districts to set meaningful goals, identify and build a support team, and ensure that the school's voice guides its work. Eight FosterEd education liaisons are embedded within 'best-in class' demonstration sites in the Antelope Valley Union High School District and the Lancaster School District (K–8).

For young people to graduate with a wide array of possibilities for their futures, FosterEd believes, they need three key things to succeed:

- Student-centered engagement using positive youth development principles to build strong connections with every young person
- Effective and committed Education Champions who can support the student's long-term success
- Well-coordinated education teams of engaged adults, including the Education Champion, caregiver, agency staff, and youth themselves

As part of this approach, every FosterEd education liaison:

- Meets with each student in person every other week and checks in at other times by phone, text, or e-mail
- Ensures that the student's educational rights are respected and enforced
- Helps the student find activities at school or in the community that are of interest
- Supports the student in education planning
- Supports the development of immediate and long-term goals that the student wants to accomplish
- Helps the student build a team by identifying people in his or her life that can support the student in reaching those goals
- Shares information with the student's support team so everyone can work together to help the student do his or her best in school and make progress toward those goals
- Helps with navigating and understanding the child welfare system and what other services the student may qualify for
- Bridges the communication gap between the child-welfare and education systems
- Coaches 'natural supports' (parents, family, caregivers, mentors, friends, and other loving adults) to be long-term education champions

In addition, education liaisons assist with FAFSA completion for every twelfth-grader, help school sites facilitate college tours, and use online teaming software to be sure information is consistently provided by and to a student's education team. "Once they graduate," Cole said, "we continue to follow them, whether they attend college or seek employment right away."

Education teams have not yet participated in DCFS-led Child and Family Team meetings, but are certainly open to doing so. One problem often encountered is getting in touch with a student's education rights holder (ERH) for consent signatures and other matters, as records can be out of date. Leslie Heimov noted that children's attorneys, peer advocates, and TAY specialists can assist with that, and that the court can be petitioned for a change in ERH if something isn't working out. The Children's Law Center is happy to help if needed.

Sexual Violence Prevention and Awareness for Youth Groups

Stefanie Gluckman introduced Maya Paley, Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement at the National Council of Jewish Women's Los Angeles chapter (NCJW|LA) and Ashley Cooper, Community and School Program Coordinator of NCJW|LA's *Change the Talk* project, a program for teens to combat sexual violence and promote a consent culture through peer-to-peer education and advocacy. *Change the Talk* wants to incorporate a diversity of youth voices, and hopes that current and former foster youth will become involved.

Through interactive workshops facilitated by teen peer educators who travel throughout the country, Cooper explained, *Change the Talk* educates students on the societal causes of sexual violence, laws of consent, legal rights of survivors, and bystander intervention. As a result, students are empowered to speak out against rape culture, advocate for consent culture, and make informed decisions about recourse if sexual violence takes place. Peer educators also participate in community initiatives to advocate for comprehensive sexual health education and sexual violence prevention legislation.

Workshops cover numerous topics:

- Gender roles and stereotypes
- Rape myths
- Transforming rape culture into consent culture
- Title IX and legal rights
- How to support someone who has experienced sexual violence
- Bystander intervention

An evaluation of the program—which was launched in 2016—found that after participating in these workshops, individuals are less likely to adhere to ‘rape myths,’ more likely to practice consent behaviors, and more like to intervene as bystanders using the program’s “Three Ds,” Cooper said—“Distract, delegate, or be direct.”

“We’re only doing ninth through twelfth grades now,” Paley said, “but we want to move into middle and elementary schools, and we particularly want to bring in the foster-youth perspective.” She would like to see *Change the Talk* brought to group homes/short-term residential treatment programs, either sending trained peer educators to do workshops there, or training youth at those facilities.

School districts might also be interested, and Rachelle Touzard suggested that *Change the Talk* present to one of LACOE’s thrice-yearly district convenings. Chair Garcia plans to include the program’s PowerPoint presentation (distributed in meeting materials) in the next LAUSD school board newsletter. “We need to change this conversation,” Garcia said. “Student-centered support is a powerful win-win.”

Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, January 23, 2019
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Room 743, 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 11:29 a.m.