



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
Child and Family Strengthening
Advisory Board
Minutes of June 8, 2020

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

- GREG COX First District
DIANNE JACOB Second District
KRISTIN GASPAR Third District
NATHAN FLETCHER Fourth District
JIM DESMOND Fifth District

Members Present:

- Supervisor Greg Cox, County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Nathan Fletcher, County Board of Supervisors
Judge Ana España, Juvenile Court
Alethea Arguilez, First 5 San Diego
Crystal Irving, Protective Services
Sarah Pauter, Phenomenal Families
Meredith Riffel, District 2 Appointee
Adam Reed, Dependency Legal Services
Carolyn Griesemer, Children's Legal Services of San Diego
Stephen Moore, Voices for Children, Inc.
Jeff Weimann, Angels Foster Family Network
Cheryl Rode, San Diego Center for Children
Kimberly Giardina, Child Welfare Services
Dean Arabatzis, County Health and Human Service Agency
Maddy Kilkenny, District 5 Appointee
Suzanne Starling, Chadwick Center for Children and Families
Sade Burrell, Former Foster Youth
Melissa Villagomez, Former Foster Youth
Simone Hidds-Monroe, San Pasqual Academy
Jessica Heldman, AB & Jessie Polinsky Children's Center
Patty Boles, Straight from the Heart, Inc.
Scott Huizar, County Probation Department
Shane Harris, District 3 Appointee

Members Not Present:

- Dr. Paul Gothold, San Diego County Office of Education
Armand King, Paving Great Futures

Staff Present:

- Stephanie Gioia, Supervisor Nathan Fletcher's Office
Khea Pollard, Supervisor Greg Cox's Office
Kyle Sand, County Counsel
Sandra McBrayer, The Children's Initiative
Sarah Rafi, County Health and Human Services Agency
Rachel Weber, County Department of Human Resources

1) Welcome and Introduction

- Supervisor Cox brought the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. Advisory Board members did roll call.

2) Public Comment

- One member of the public addressed the Advisory Board.
o A member of the public stated he would like to broaden the scope of investigations to encompass emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. He stated his frustrations with false allegations and how they impact families.

3) Approval of the Statement of Proceedings/Minutes for the Meeting of January 10, 2020

- Supervisor Fletcher called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2020 meeting, Maddy Kilkenny moved to approve, Crystal Irving seconded the motion, with all members present voting in favor.

4) Subcommittee Updates

- Supervisor Fletcher introduced the work of the subcommittees and turned the update over to Sandra McBrayer.
Sandra McBrayer shared that many more recommendations from the original Workgroup have been completed or will now be ongoing and described the progress that was reviewed and approved by each subcommittee. Sandra shared that the meeting materials for today's

meeting contain the minutes from each of the three last subcommittee meetings and outlines their work from the last meeting. Kim highlighted each of recommendations from the various subcommittees that have been completed or will now be ongoing practices or policies:

- **Workforce Development**

- The following recommendations are completed or will be ongoing:
  - Consult with outside experts to conduct workload analysis, optimal caseloads and staffing levels (8)
  - Explore state and national best practices as to the number and quality of social worker visits with families (9)
  - Assess the quality of face to face contacts and home visits using best practices and resources created by the Capacity Building Center for States (11)
  - Strengthen CWS Policies to ensure face-to-face contacts with children, youth and families reflect best practices (12)
  - Require supervisors and managers to attend annual advanced simulation trainings aimed at improving quality, reflective supervision skills (20)

- **Child and Family Services**

- The following recommendations are completed or will be ongoing:
  - Keep sibling sets at Polinsky Children's Center longer than 10 days, if necessary, in order to keep sibling sets together (8)
  - Submit a written report, if necessary, to the California Department of Social Services explaining the reasons for the overstay, as provided for in Welfare and Institutions Code (10)
  - Include the checklist analysis in the Child and Family Team report that is provided to the court, parties and counsel (15)
  - Ensure that there is a specific, written expectation in all relevant CWS policies that youth in the foster care system receive the benefit of the statutory legal preference that they remain in their school of origin (16)
  - Collaborate with PCC medical staff and the Juvenile Court to develop an updated joint protocol to obtain parent consent or Juvenile Court order to treat children entered and detained at PCC (18)
  - Investigate the ability to use community partners to complete or transfer a resource family applicant for approval (28)
  - Leverage the internet and social media to connect, inform and recruit potential resource families (32)
  - Consolidate the three different web pages currently used by the County for resource family information, sharing and recruitment (33)

- **Organizational Structure**

- The following recommendations are completed or will be ongoing:
  - Identify leaders with the skill to direct, model and inspire others as champions for excellence (1)

- Create public recognition for staff at all levels whose work personifies these values (4)
  - Identify leaders with a clear willingness to examine their organization with honesty and transparency (5)
  - Realign current reporting relationships of CWS operations in each region from the Director to the CWS Director (11)
- 
- Supervisor Fletcher allowed opportunity for questions or comments, thanked the subcommittees and reminded members of the public that all subcommittees are open to anyone interested in attending.
    - Shane Harris had concerns regarding the subcommittees addressing disproportionality and cultural competency. He shared his concern that work being done on the recommendations is not adequately addressing disproportionality and asked that this be a priority.
  - Supervisor Fletcher called for a motion to approve the completed recommendations, Alethea Arguilez moved to approve, Adam Reed seconded the motion, with members present voting in favor to approve, with Shane Harris opposing.

## 5) COVID-19 Update

- Supervisor Fletcher introduced the agenda item and turned the item over to Kim Giardina.
  - Kim Giardina described updates and actions being taken regarding COVID-19 and Child Welfare. She shared that CWS is experiencing a 40% reduction in calls to the Hotline and highlighted several prevention efforts CWS is working on, including: Youth to Youth messaging, partnership with schools, CARES Act funding project with Community Services for Families providers, and Partners in Prevention grant with the YMCA. Kim highlighted that CWS has continued to conduct in-person contacts between social workers and youth to ensure youth's need are met. CWS is still doing some in-person visitation with parents and children when it is safe to do so. Kim shared that Polinsky Children's Center has made several changes to ensure youth are safe, including physically distancing, checking temperatures twice daily and extra cleaning.
    - Crystal Irving asked if some of the CARES funding could be allocated to needs of CWS staff/frontline staff during COVID-19 for those working in the field and for those teleworking.
    - Jessica Heldman asked to continue the discussion around vulnerable populations in the subcommittees.
    - Melissa Villagomez asked once students start returning to school, will CWS be recruiting more staff to prepare for a surge in hotline calls.
      - Kim Giardina stated CWS is doing work with youth partners to get messaging out and working on the Partners Prevention Grant to allow for open channels of communication. CWS has been reviewing recruitment efforts to be prepared for a potential increase in cases when children return to school.
    - Melissa Villagomez stated her organization has increased the number of touchpoints with children due to COVID-19 and asked if CWS has done the same thing.

- Kim Giardina stated that CWS has been able to sustain a large number of contacts with children and youth, through both in-person and virtual visits.
- Melissa Villagomez asked if reunifications, visitations and adoptions are still occurring during the pandemic.
  - Kim Giardina stated all legal partners are working together to move cases forward. Adoption finalizations are now occurring virtually. Staff reviews cases to determine if visitations could continue virtually or in-person with safety protocols in place.
- Shane Harris asked Kim Giardina how CWS is addressing cultural competency and asked what the metrics are to determine if positive outcomes related to CARES Act funding are achieved.
  - Kim Giardina stated that CWS is ensuring providers are assisting in a culturally competent way and stated that CWS will track the number of families served and how many end up having a referral to CWS. Supervisor Fletcher reiterated that the aim of this program is to reach out early to children and families that are not CWS cases so CWS doesn't need to be involved.
- Jessica Heldman asked how testing is being prioritized in the foster care system and at congregate care facilities. Additionally, she asked how transition age youth are being supported this fall as some youth are not able to return to their previous living arrangements/dorms.
  - Kim Giardina stated the following efforts:
  - Rady Children's Hospital offers testing to youth and their families at their regular appointments.
  - CWS is working with County Counsel to update its consent processes for children at Polinsky Children's Center.
  - Housing Our Youth was approved at the last Board of Supervisors meeting, which prioritizes serving transitional age foster youth/former foster youth.
  - Foster youth cannot age out or exit foster care at this time so that they have ongoing support.
- Carolyn Griesemer stated she would be supportive of CARES funding going to front line workers visiting families in the community and is supportive of hazard pay for workers serving clients in their homes.

## 6) Child Welfare Services, Director's Report

- Supervisor Cox introduced the agenda item and turned the item over to Kim Giardina.
  - Kim Giardina shared that the items she wished to present to the Board were covered in the previous agenda item.

## 7) Child Welfare Services Upcoming/Recent Board Letter

- Supervisor Fletcher introduced the agenda item and turned the item over to Deputy Director Margo Fudge who provided the following updates:
  - Re-procure Single Source Contract with iHeartMedia
    - Authorized negotiations with iHeartMedia for media services to increase public awareness and promote CWS and HHSA initiatives.
    - Approved May 19, 2020
  - COSD and CDSS RFA Agreement Renewal

- Authorized agreement renewal for legal representation related to Resource Family Approval.
- Approved May 19, 2020
- PCC Physical Health Services and DSEP Extension
  - Authorized the extension of contracts for six months due to COVID-19 impact.
  - Approved May 19, 2020
- Polinsky Children's Center Annual Donations
  - Authorized accepting gifts and donations received by HHS for Polinsky Children's Center and CWS totaling \$50,913 for calendar year 2019.
  - Approved June 2, 2020
- CFSAB Children's Trust Fund
  - If approved, will authorize AB 2994 funding proposal for amount of \$1,050,000.
  - Will be heard at the June 23, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting.
- Transitional Housing Program and Housing Navigation Program Acceptance of Funds/Resolution
  - If approved, will authorize the acceptance of funds for the Transitional Housing Program that will help young adults secure and maintain housing with priority given to young adults in the foster care system.
  - Will be heard at the June 23, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting.

## 8) Disproportionality and Child Welfare Services Efforts to Date

- Supervisor Cox introduced the agenda item. Supervisor Cox described previous efforts with the Strong Families Thriving Communities Coalition to address disparities involving African American, Latino and Native American families. He reiterated that targeted interventions are needed to address disparities. Supervisor Cox described action steps that he has asked the subcommittee to review and discuss. Supervisor Cox then handed it over to Kim Giardina.
  - Kim Giardina stated disproportionality and disparities are a concern nationally and in San Diego County. African American families are overrepresented in the number of children in foster care and the number of removals. CWS is committed to addressing disproportionality by: utilizing Chiefs of Practice to review cases of African American families, dedicating a staff person to focus on race and equity work, recruiting more staff of color, increasing mandatory cultural responsiveness training, recruiting more Resource Families and utilizing RAD teams to further review cases.
  - Kim Giardina provided race and ethnicity data including: children with allegations, substantiations, open cases, new petitions files, removals, children in out-of-home care and substitute care providers.
  - Supervisor Cox proposed creating a subcommittee dedicated to addressing disproportionality. He stated he would like this Board to come back to its next meeting with a proposal to form this subcommittee. This subcommittee could help implement the following:
    - Developing a hiring plan to hire more African American social workers.
    - Instituting mandatory cultural competency training.
  - Crystal Irving asked what races are included in the data for the multicultural race. She also commented that she looks forward to mandatory cultural competency training for all staff.
    - Kim Giardina stated she would check on which races are included.

- Shane Harris stated that he is hopeful the new subcommittee to address disproportionality is well-rounded. He stated his interest in understanding the data better regarding relative placement of African American children to increase relative placement.
  - Kim Giardina stated there are a lot of factors that contribute to relative placement, some of which are linked to state regulations to become an approved home, like increased training requirements and background checks.
  - Sandra McBrayer stated that the new subcommittee on disproportionality could review the relative placement requirements to better understand challenges in this area.
- Shane Harris asked how CWS is addressing law enforcement interactions/removals with African American families.
  - Kim Giardina stated that mandated reporters report children of color at higher rates. She also stated that if law enforcement does remove a child CWS always conducts their own investigation.
- Several members of the public addressed the Advisory Board regarding this agenda item.
  - One member of the public stated her support for looking into the Resource Family Approval process to ensure there are not unnecessary barriers to place children with kinship caregivers.
  - One member of the public stated she would like a breakdown by ethnicity on children who have petitions filed. She also stated support for a citizen review board to review cases.
  - One member of the public stated her concern regarding her children being placed in foster care rather than in kinship care.
  - One member of the public stated she supports a community driven African American case review team to address issues of disproportionality.
  - One member of the public stated she supports quickly addressing disproportionality issues and that they should not take years to implement. She stated she supports keeping African American children with their families.
- Shane Harris requested CWS to include the source of all allegations as well as adding race/ethnicity to substantiated allegations. He also requested continuing the conversation on disproportionality.
  - One member of the public asked that all subcommittees address disproportionality.

## **9) Proposed Child Welfare Indicator for County Strategic Initiative- Living Safely**

- Supervisor Fletcher stated that due to time constraints this item would be moved to the next Advisory Board meeting.

## **10) Advisory Board Member Updates**

- No updates.

## **11) Adjournment**

- Supervisor Fletcher announced that the June meeting was Sarah Pauter's last meeting serving on the Board. He thanked Sarah Pauter for all her work with the Board.
- Supervisor Cox adjourned the meeting at 12:16 PM.

**Next Meeting:**

- July 10, 2020

**Distributed:**

- Meeting Agenda
- Minutes of January 10, 2020 Meeting
- Summary of April 30, 2020 Subcommittee Meetings
- Public Communication Received
- Disproportionality PowerPoint
- EPI Summary from Operational Plan
- Subcommittee Recommendations Completed
- Board Letters
- Fostering Academic Success in Education (FASE) Overview
- Housing Our Youth Overview

Meeting minutes were submitted by Sarah Rafi. Please call Sarah Rafi at (619) 417-9114 if you have corrections or suggested revisions. She may also be contacted for agenda items or general information.