

FOSTER CARE SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 8th, 2018
8911 Balboa Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123, Magnolia
Room
12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Present: Amanda Amabile, Frank Andrade, Patty Boles, Nuth Chhea, Miriam Curiel, Wendy Curiel, Jorge De La Toba, Nancy Elizarraraz-Lopez, Isela Hernandez, Brenda Jones, Nicole Kelsay, Diana Macis, Mary Jo Meer, Jessica Morales, Daniela Murphy, Sarah Nolan, Lodia Ruiz, Debbie Stolz, Jennifer Zapata, Jennifer Doud, Patricia Coleman, Margaret Gutsell, Aisha Pope, Belinda Radovich, Collette Best, Mitsuru Ramirez, Gabriela Delgado, Joanna Smith

I. Debbie Stolz called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. All in attendance made introductions.

II. Approval of Agenda/Minutes: The January 2017 minutes with correction as follows:

- Page 3; San Diego County Adoptions, third bullet: Correction – “We have identified 2 new staff, training in LOC to work with our 900 Adoption cases”
- Page 5; Independent Living Skills (ILS): Correction – name heading “Amanda Amabile”

III. Presentation:

Comprehensive Assessment and Stabilization Services (CASS) – Lisa Castagnola & Jennifer Zapata

Lisa Castagnola-

- Took over the new contract with New Alternatives starting July 1, 2017
- CASS is working with county level foster youth and with an overarching goal to stabilize the placement. We are reducing the amount of times a foster youth moves from home to home, because that can have detrimental effects in other aspects of their life, which includes school and their attachments.
- We are an intensive therapeutic intervention for a relatively short-term time with the possibility to extend service time. We have licensed and licensed eligible clinicians, marriage and family therapists (MFTs) social workers, and professional counselors who are the clinical lead. Staff are doing comprehensive assessments, behavioral health assessments, and making psychosocial determinations to individuals in the home. We are a home based service, going out serving the entire county from the border all the way to Fallbrook, and out East. The biggest difference seen since the contract started is that we are a therapeutic intervention and we have therapist doing clinical work and really trying to shift to more trauma-focused work and not tiptoe around the trauma. We process and help clients through trauma so they can better solidify attachments.

Jennifer Zapata-

- With our services, it is like a menu. We have youth partners, family support specialists, and psychiatrists, so we can serve all of the needs. Psychiatry is the only service held at our office. We have Spanish-speaking clinicians and Spanish-speaking youth partners, so we do try to give a lot of support to families. Again, our goal is to stabilize and keep kids in the home so they are not constantly changing placements. Sometimes it still happens, despite all the efforts made but it is not for lack of trying.
- All referrals come from the County social workers. Lisa and I get the referral and get to pick out the clinician who gets assigned the case. The clinician makes contact with the social worker, family, and schedules an appointment within 5 days, so we can get out there to serve those citizens really quickly.

Lisa Castagnola-

- We have alcohol and drug counselors for either teens or older at risk youth. We serve 0-18 years old, the whole age gamut. Our alcohol and drug counselors also have been working with biological parents. We are more focused on the foster home and solidifying that placement, but if reunification is imminent or what we often see is that those visitations can be triggering to children and the behaviors that we see immediately following the visitation is what is really stressful and problematic for the foster parent and the whole dynamics of the foster home. We then bring the foster parents and birth parents together to

try to make those transitions as smooth as possible.

- We can only take referrals directly from the County. We do not currently have a waitlist.
- The caregiver can self-refer to the social worker. They can advocate themselves if they think it will be a good fit, but the County social worker officially makes the referral.
- The requirements are that clients have full Medi-Cal and reside in a foster home. If a child is reunified during the course of CASS services, we will work to do a warm hand-off to another more appropriate service, but we do not stay open once reunified. If they move homes, to another foster home, within the course of treatment, we will be there, as long as they are not FFA. We also work with Adoptive homes, so we can stabilize and support families moving towards adoption.
- We are an intensive program and we do need to meet with clients at a minimum of once a week. It is a full session of therapy involving the child and caregiver. To be prepared for what our services are really going to be like, we do intensive case management, we will hold Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, and participants are made aware of the full scope of the services.

Jennifer Zapata-

- We received feedback asking that we focusing on the behaviors, and yes we do address behaviors, but that that is not our primary focus. We focus on the mental health and address the behavior as we go along.

Lisa Castagnola-

- Once we have any releases assigned, we can attend Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, we can do classroom observations, we can work with school counselors or teachers to solidify and improve the presenting problem. If the issues are at school and the placement is in jeopardy, because that foster parent is tired and stressed from all the school phone calls, then we will intervene in that regard.

IV. Discussion:

San Diego Foster Parent Association – Debbie Stolz

- We continue to giveaway the donations (toys & supplies) we received after Christmas.
- Santee Santa's held a drive at Barnes & Noble and we received a lot of brand new books.
- We had a 3-day giveaway where we put everything out and had families come in and let the kids pick toys, clothes, and books.
- At our December meeting, we honored Pam Sokol and her husband Bruce with a lending library. Currently, it is not set-up due to storage. It's always been a dream of Pam's to have a lending library with OT, toys, puzzles, and manipulatives. The lending library is for families to come in and have for kids to take items home and master a new skill and experience, then trade for something else.

North County Foster Parent Association – Patty Boles

- Continue to help many relative/kinship families coming in and needing a lot of handling and support.

HHSA, Child Welfare Services Placement Specialists – All Regions

East Region – Collette Best

- QPI meeting held at the end of last month. We talked about transitions into foster homes and also back with parents.
- Preparing for March, which usually is a busy month.
- Our binders are going well. We give everybody a binder, we have a resource list for everybody involved (social workers, attorneys), and we add different portions of it to address different things. Also, inside it contains placement agreement, travel guides, resources, placement health information, and caregivers can add to it. It is a binder that will carry on with the child if they go somewhere else, so that timeframe is all in one place so information does not get lost. We encourage adding photos. It is a way to have all the paperwork together. There is a disclosure about confidentiality and that caregivers should be cautious with the binder.

North Region – Mitsuru Ramirez

- We contacted East Region to review their binder and we were able to come up with a tailored version with resources for our region. We just issued our first one last month and it was well received.
- We have one staff who is retiring in March. We have replacement in place who will be one of our QPI Ambassadors as well as one of the placement orders that we follow-up with our relatives to make sure all the paperwork is received for timely processing of CalWORKs applications.

Central Region – Isela Hernandez & Joanna Smith

- We are recapping Level of Care (LOC) to get started first since we had a lot of questions.
- Regarding children at Polinsky, we have seen an increase of border cases. It has been tough for workers and they are able to place in foster homes. We have really great foster parents who are willing to take our kids for a couple of days. So thank you foster parents, this has been helpful.
- Our supervisor attended the QPI conference and informed us what other states are doing. We want to bring it to our next Central QPI to see how our foster parents want to move forward and if we want to incorporate what other states are doing.
- This is Joanna, she is new to placement and joined us last December. She will let us know about the Respite event for Central Region.

Joanna Smith

- We are having a Central and South region Respite Night on March 23rd. Looking to have it at the Jackie Robinson event space, but not confirmed, more to come. We are excited to hold an event where we plan on having lots of games. We want to make it collaboration with foster parents, too, and involve them in planning. We had our QPI meeting last month and had CASS and Maxim respite there. Next week at our QPI meeting we are going to have YMCA Permanent Connections give a presentation.

South Region – Belinda Radovich

- We added a new placement worker, social worker II, Kristen Jenkins. Currently she is in training while dividing her time investigating referrals.
- We are constantly working on diverting into Polinsky Children Center (PCC). Placement unit is constantly calling foster homes for placement.
- Our QPI Ambassador just came back from maternity leave and with our new addition of a placement worker, we are hoping to start working on QPI and providing more support to our foster parents.

North Central Region – Nuth Chhea

- Placement unit is down to 4 workers, but two are leaving. One is retiring next week and the other worker was promoted. We will be down to 1- Senior Protective Services Worker (PSW) and 1- social worker I. We hope to get 2- social worker I's
- We are working hard to find placement for our children. Finding medically fragile placements countywide is challenging for our region. Currently we have two medically fragile children in PCC.

San Diego County Juvenile Probation – Frank Andrade

- Continue to work hand in hand with CWS on the RFA process. We have been at this for just over a year now and we have done 68 referrals total.
- We have recruited 10 homes
- We have 5 officers doing the RFA process, with a senior and supervisor. This unit also conducts CFTs and is tasked to do LOC.
- Resiliency Is Strength and Empowerment (RISE) court is up and running. We have six volunteers, the supervisors handpicked those officers, and they are now going through placement core training. Those officers are going through the 3-week training that a placement officer would in our department. They will need to understand foster care rules and regulations related to managing youth under that heading. They believe that RISE court should come from under our placement division because we work with high-risk youth and those youths are more than likely to be removed and require services that are more extensive. This serves Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) involved in court, so they have to attend twice a month and face the judge with updates. If there is an immediate consequence required, such as custody or commitment to treatment program, the court will do that on the spot.

Feedback has been positive.

YMCA Kinship Support Program – Lodia Ruiz

- We will be fully staffed by next week. We hired a second part time case manager, who was a former County social worker. We offered the full time Kinship Navigator position to one of our current coordinators.
- In January we received 45 new referrals, 60% CWS and 40% non-CWS.
- We have 4 on our waitlist. We anticipate that by next month, we will not have a waitlist.
- A little over \$15,000 approved in emergency funding, \$7,300 formal, and \$7,800 informal for the month of January.
- Two more family events coming up:
 - We are partnering with Urban Surf in March
 - In process of planning the North County event, held sometime in March or April

San Diego County Office of Education — Gabriela Delgado

- The Tutor Connection program is where we recruit students who are future teachers, with a little over 200 at Cal State San Marcos and San Diego State, who are, as part of their course work and requirements will do between 20-30 hours of tutoring with kids in foster care. Michelle and I take care of placing them and providing that training for them. We are always looking for referrals. We typically do 1-to-1 ratio, so we have over 200 college students eager and ready to start providing those services. So if you know of any, we can cross reference our database to see if we already cleared a placement or match for that youth. The college students receive a lot of training and support from the County Office of Education, so we train them on trauma informed care, behavior management, and all skills that they can use currently and eventually when they are in a classroom.

HHSA, San Diego County Adoptions – Jorge De La Toba

- Adoption continues to work with the RFA program. We have to change our processes with approved adoptive families with RFA.
- When our families are RFA approved, it does not mean that other requirements for Adoptions are met. Adoptions staff still have to get certificates like marriage or divorce decrees. Those are our legal requirements before an adoption can be finalized for families and not necessarily a requirement for RFA. Adoption workers will continue to work with our families to make sure they follow up with that documentation and move forward with the adoption process. We want to continue with the same rate of permanency for children in the Adoptions Program.

HHSA, Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) – Diana Macis

- The QPI National Convening was held last month in January. The conference is built around many different topics and workshops. People have the option to attend whatever is of interest to them. That can range from placement, investigations, and they have a presenter from across the country facilitating the conversation about the topic and not so much training.
- We had some take way, in different states their CWS system is very different from ours. So it is taking what we can in bits and pieces trying to see if it is adaptive to us and how can we look at that.
- First Placement was one of the workshops that resonated with a lot of people. And how do we find the best preferred first placement with the constraints that we know that we have with Polinsky and everything else, how do we do that? Looking at that, we had our steering committee meeting last week and that was part of the conversation we had and we will continue to explore that.
- The next quarterly training is taking California Youth Connections, they have a training project in place. We sent out an electronic flyer that we will resend again. A copy was sent to all regions and a mailer went out last week. This is a partnership, they are trainers who are ex-foster youth based from San Diego. This is a training they have not done before. This will be on transitions from their perspective on how we as caregivers and social workers support the youth, coming up in March.

Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) — Sarah Nolan

- DSEP has been completing the annual trainings in the different regions around the County over the last few weeks. We just finished up South and projected to finish in March. We do annual training at CWS offices focusing on the aspects of DSEP and the different things that came up during the past year. This year we are focusing on CFTs and also we had a change in sense that we have to go out to the homes to conduct screenings.
- Happy to report that we hired 2- DSEP Behavioral Specialist, they speak English, and start training soon in February. We are different from CASS, where we do not provide the mental health therapy. We are talking about specialty behaviors that have come up because our children are in the foster care system. Maybe we are helping with transitions or aggressions. We offer the short term behavior coaching for parents and caregivers.

Grossmont College Foster & Adoptive Kinship Care Education Program (FAKCE) — Daniela Murphy

- We have a couple of exciting opportunities in our next pink book edition for March-April coming out next week.
 - We have collaboration with the National Conflict Resolution Center. They are providing a free workshop, where normally it is a \$400 workshop per person. The workshop is called “The Exchange,” it’s for our foster parents, Kinship, and social workers. It talks about the art of communication and how to resolve conflict, taking place in March.
 - New workshop called “Come be a Villager.” This talks about how to help youth transition into adulthood. There is a lot of disparity that youth experiences once they age out of the foster care system. This workshop is to help foster parents know what to do. These 2 workshops are being offered in North and South Region.
- We have another workshop talking about how to become a successful foster parent. We encourage families to attend that.
- We are promoting a lot of our workshops on our FaceBook page and our ListServ. We have close to 1,000 people that we email on a weekly basis and we started this ListServ in the last 8 months, just to make sure that families are aware of workshop opportunities in our communities.
- In our support groups, we are also going to be offering LOC and CFTs, so they are aware of new processes. This is going to be offered to both English and Spanish support groups.

HHSA, Resource Family Approval/ Foster Home Licensing (RFA/FHL) – Wendy Curiel

- We are working on conversion for our foster parents into RFA. We are breaking it down in different tiers. The first tier are the foster parents who have an approved home study or licensed foster homes. For foster parents who are eligible for conversion, you will be getting a call once we are ready to start the conversion process.
- Licensed foster homes are down to 800+, prior to January 1, 2018. There are about 250 homes that are not eligible to convert.

HHSA, Foster and Adoptive Resource Family Services (FARFS) – Nikki Kelsay

- We are planning the Quality Parenting Initiative banquet on May 18th. This event will be open to foster families, relative caregivers, and anybody who is a resource family. We are hoping to get representation from all of our regions.

HHSA, Independent Living Skills (ILS) – Amanda Amabile

- We continue the FAFSA challenge, trying to make sure if you have any seniors graduating, that their FAFSAs are completed. If not, to reach out to the social worker, ILS worker, or educational liaison. There are still a lot of seniors in the county that have not completed their FAFSAs. We are here to help to get it done. If you have any questions about how to fill out these forms for foster youth, you can call the ILS office and we can help.
- We are currently short staffed.
- The graduation list is open, so submit names for youth who are graduating.

Placement Support – Miriam Curiel

- Currently continuing to update Special Care Rates and the state is looking to do something consistent across all counties. Just a reminder, that Special Care Rates is not going away.

Roundtable

- **Debbie Stolz** – We would like to see more information on daycare and transportation for children to get to school.

V. NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, March 8, 2018

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

8911 Balboa Avenue San Diego CA 92123

(Magnolia Room, 1st floor)

VI. ADJOURNMENT: 1:45 p.m.