

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

December 1, 2020

Meeting Discussion Highlights

(Note: Due to the Pandemic, the meeting was Virtual, through Zoom technology.)

Present: Vance Raye, Co-Chair; Michelle Baas (*covering for Mark Ghaly*), Co-Chair; Nancy Bargmann; Sarah Belton; Ken Berrick; Dana Blackwell; Stacy Boulware Eurie; Sanja Bugay; Bobby Cagle; Leonard Edwards; Will Lightbourne; Patrick Gardner; Leslie Heimov; Kathryn Icenhower; Kimberley Johnson; Karen Larsen; Sharon Lawrence; Dan Prince; Cheryl Rave; Vaneisha Reed; Trent Rohrer; Cherie Schroeder; Shawna Schwarz; Chris Stoner-Mertz; Debra Silverman; Daniel Webster; Leecia Welch; Jevon Wilkes

Absent: Heather Bowlds; Sheila Boxley; Stephanie Clendenin; Rebekah Couch; Janay Eustace; Douglas Hatchimonji; Eloise Gomez Reyes; Martin Hoshino; Aubrey Manuel; Michael Olenick; Amy Price; Susan Rubio; Sarah Tyson; Terry Rooney; Karen Staph Walters; Rochelle Trochtenberg; Judge Claudette White;

Call to Order and Introductions (Third Zoom Meeting for CWC)

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by co-chair Justice Vance Raye, who welcomed new Council Member, Ms. Lindsay Tornatore, Division Director of Student Achievement at the California Department of the Council, who fills the seat held by Gordon Jackson before he retired. Ms. Tornatore will be on maternity leave for some time, but the Council is delighted to have a new CDE member and looks forward to welcoming her personally. In the meantime, Joshua Strong will be monitoring the Council's work for her. Justice Raye then noted that courts across California and the Judicial Council just concluded the traditional November month of adoption related activities for children in foster care including many virtual adoption ceremonies. He noted that the Los Angeles County Superior Court completed 149 adoptions ceremonies for the remote finalization of uncontested adoptions for children who have been in foster care as part of the 2020 National Adoption Day. The Judicial Council then adopted a resolution encouraging the courts and their communities to join in activities to promote permanency.

Deputy Secretary Michele Baass, appearing for Secretary Ghaly then acknowledged Frank Mecca's upcoming retirement and thanked him for his tireless work on behalf of the Council. Congratulations on his many years of extraordinary work on the Council were expressed by many councilmembers and members of the public.

She then requested that Paula, Chris, and Marymichael share Zoom protocols for the meeting. Members of the Council were asked to "rename" themselves by adding "Member" to the end

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of their names and were asked to use the chat and/or hand raise function to participate with questions or comments.

I. Approval of the September 2, 2020 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Justice Raye directed Council Members to the Discussion Highlights document that had been posted and sent to them prior to the meeting. He asked for comments, and/or suggested revisions from the Council and the public. There being none, he called for a consensus vote and in the absence of any revisions or comments the highlights were approved.

II. Approval of Adding the Office of Youth and Community Restoration Committee to the Child Welfare Council (Action Item)

Deputy Secretary Baass presented an update of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) and requested a vote from councilmembers to restore the Youth and Community Restoration Committee to the Child Welfare Council; and to establish the chair(s) of the OYCR Committee and to delegate to the chair(s) of the new committee, in consultation with the CO-Chairs of the Child Welfare Council, the authority to add members (including as chairs) to ensure that the committee can carry out the statutory intent of SB 823.

In summary, SB 823, Statutes of 2020, established the OYCR within CHHS on July 1, 2021. The OYCR mission is to promote trauma responsive, culturally informed services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system that support the youths' successful transition into adulthood and help them become responsible, thriving, and engaged members of their communities.

As part of his budget plan for 2019-20, the Governor removed the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and made it a separate department under the California Health and Human Services (CHHS) Agency. Trailer bill language included a requirement that on or before October 1, 2019, the Secretary of California Health and Human Services convene a committee of the CWC. That effort was suspended due to COVID-19

Councilmembers voted individually by roll call on the request for approval and a majority approved the request.

III. Update on CalYouth Study—Wave 4 (Information Item)

Justice Raye introduced Dr. Mark Courtney from the University of Chicago to present an

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update on his groundbreaking CalYouth Study.

Pulling from Dr. Courtney's report:

"The CalYOUTH Study provides the most comprehensive view to date of young people approaching the transition to adulthood from foster care in the wake of the federal Fostering Connections Act. This Act extended the age of Title IV-E eligibility from 18 to 21 for foster care youth. CalYOUTH focuses on the state of California, an early adopter of the new policy that also has the largest foster care population in the U.S. The study addresses whether extending foster care past age 18 influenced youths' outcomes during the transition to adulthood, what factors influence the types of support youth receive during the transition to adulthood in the context of extended foster care; and how living arrangements and other services that result from extending foster care influence the relationship between extending care and youth outcomes. CalYOUTH includes collection and analysis of information from three sources: (1) transition-age youth, (2) child welfare workers, and (3) government program data."

"For Wave 4 of the CalYOUTH Study, researchers surveyed 622 23-year-olds. This study follows up on surveys of the same young people when they were approaching the age of majority in California's foster care system at age 17 and again when they were 19 and 21 years old. Similar to the previous interview waves, the study collected data on a wide range of youth outcomes in areas such as physical and mental health, education and employment, and relationships and families."

"Wave 4 findings provide a rich description of how study participants are faring at age 23, when they have all been out of foster care for at least 2 years. Years after leaving care, most of these young adults look back favorably on their experience of care. It is important to acknowledge that despite the help they received from the foster care system, on average these young people are faring poorly compared to their age peers across many measures of well-being, including their educational attainment, employment, economic self-sufficiency, physical and mental health, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Our findings suggest that gender, race, and ethnicity condition these youths' experiences, as they do for all young people in America. Finally, our findings also highlight the amazing resilience and enormous potential of young people transitioning to adulthood from foster care. Despite the histories of trauma that accompanied them into foster care and the challenges many of them faced since then, the CalYOUTH participants as a whole have much going for them."

"The consistency with which these youth express their appreciation for the help they received during their time in foster care should provide encouragement for the investments that government, the philanthropic sector, and the caring individuals who work in and with the public child welfare system have made in supporting the transition to adulthood for youth in foster care. The relatively poor average outcomes should not be simply attributed to their time in foster care, since they generally came into care from marginalized communities where many young people struggle during the transition to adulthood. In addition, these youth had often suffered long histories of trauma prior to entering care. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that

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more work can and should be done to improve supports for them during the transition to adulthood. In particular, our findings raise questions about the wisdom of abruptly curtailing services for these young people when they reach their 21st birthday. Our findings suggest that when COVID-19 is behind us, it will still be the case that many young adults in care could potentially benefit from ongoing support past their 21st birthday.”

In addition, Dr. Courtney noted that the next cohort—Wave 5—will take into effect how the Covid 19 pandemic affected the youth in the study.

The presentation was well received and generated significant discussion.

IV. Behavioral Health Committee presents its working recommendations for feedback from councilmembers. (Information Item)

Deputy Secretary Baass called on Ken Berrick and Karen Larsen who presented the Behavioral Health Committee’s Policy Recommendations from the committee’s work over the 2019-2020 year. The recommendations are intended to prevent unnecessary entries into the child welfare system; provide alternatives to CPS reporting when there is not imminent danger; and to effectively support the behavioral health needs of children and families involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In the work they are collaborating with the CalAIM Foster Care Model of Care Workgroup; the Behavioral Health Stakeholder Advisory Committee (BH-SAC); the Statewide Taskforce on Accessing Health Services for California Children in Foster Care; and the Breaking Barriers 2020 Interagency Symposium.

The consensus of the collaboration was to reach a shared vision that includes leveraging diverse viewpoints to build bold but achievable vision; multiple and ongoing opportunities for written feedback; robust year-long dialogue; and presenting recommendations to and integrated feedback from other statewide advisory groups. The policy recommendations focus on more effectively supporting the behavioral health needs of children and families who are involved in the child welfare system and improving access to behavioral health care for families at risk of formal adjudication, to prevent unnecessary contact with the child welfare system.

Councilmembers had a vigorous positive discussion about the recommendations and opted to have the vote on accepting the recommendations at the March 2021 meeting after getting additional input from councilmembers.

V. Permanency Committee presents Bench Cards produced with the Judicial Council (Information Item)

Justice Raye called on Bob Friend and Leonard Edwards who introduced Gail Johnson Vaughan who introduced the permanency bench cards that were developed in conjunction with the Judicial Council and are available on the JC website for anyone who wants to use them.

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VI. Update on DOJ-CHHS Joint Guidance (Information Item)

Deputy Secretary Baass introduced councilmember Sarah Belton, Supervising Deputy Attorney General with the Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Children's Justice, who provided an update to the council on the DOJ-CHHS Joint Guidance.

VII. Committee and Task Force Updates

Justice Raye called for committee/task force updates, which primarily focused on what would be discussed at the afternoon meetings. He thanked the Committee chairs for their reports.

VIII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

Deputy Secretary Michele Baass asked for any final comments from the members of the public and noted that conference lines and/or Zoom line numbers and links for the afternoon meetings were in the agenda.

Justice Raye thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and closed the meeting at 12:35 pm.