



## LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*Celebrating 34 Years of Advocacy & Achievement*

### COMMISSIONERS

Dr. Wendy B. Smith  
**Chair**

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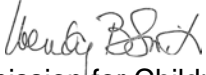
Liz Seipel

Dr. Kynna Wright

Dr. Tamara N. Hunter, DSW  
**Executive Director**

December 4, 2018

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Chair   
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' FISCAL YEAR  
2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Please find enclosed the Commission for Children and Families' (Commission) Annual Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18. During this year, much of the Commission's work involved leading public and private stakeholders in the development of the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services, which is projected to be finalized during FY 2018-19. The Commission also continued to prioritize its work in the prevention of child maltreatment; recruitment and retention of placement resources; and, enhancement of services and support to special populations of youth with high-level needs.

We look forward to ongoing work with your Honorable Board, County departments, our community partners, and other advocates as we strive to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and families in Los Angeles County.

Enclosure

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Chief Probation Officer  
Auditor-Controller  
Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Director, Department of Health Services  
Director, Department of Mental Health  
Director, Department of Public Health  
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection  
Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors  
Health Deputies, Board of Supervisors  
Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors

### *Our Mission*

The Commission for Children and Families advises the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County's at-risk children and their families.



*Los Angeles County*

# COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*Annual Report*

FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Commission for Children and Families Commissioners by Supervisorial District	2
Commission for Children and Families Mission Statement and Ordinance	3
Key Issues Impacting At-Risk and Systems- Involved Children and Families	4
Commission for Children and Families Activities	6
Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services	6
Priority Area: Prevention of Maltreatment	7
Priority Area: Placement Resources	9
Priority Area: Special Populations with High Level Needs	10
Summary of Fiscal Year 2017 – 18 Recommendations	14
Commission for Children and Families Meetings	15
Commission for Children and Families Representation on County Bodies	16
Commission for Children and Families Strategic Partnerships	17
Attachment A: Report Back on the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services	19

**COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
COMMISSIONERS BY SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT  
JULY 2017 – JUNE 2018**

**FIRST SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

**SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS**

Maria Brenes  
Wendy Garen  
Julio Marcial  
  
John Kim  
(Served until August 2017)

**FOURTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

**SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN**

Wendelyn Nichols-Julien  
Tiffany Boyd  
  
Amy Howorth  
(Served until December 2017)  
Candace Nafissi  
(served until March 2018)

**SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

**SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**

Dr. Kynna Wright  
Jacquelyn M. Horton  
  
Candace Cooper  
(Served until October 2017)  
Sydney Kamlager  
(Served until April 2018)

**FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

**SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER**

Patricia Curry  
Liz Seipel  
Dr. Jeanette Mann  
  
Genevra Berger  
(Served until September 2018)

**THIRD SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT**

**SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL**

Carol O. Biondi  
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey  
Dr. Wendy B. Smith

**COMMISSION OFFICERS**

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, Chair  
Wendy Garen, Vice Chair  
Wendelyn Nichols-Julien, Vice Chair

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dr. Tamara N. Hunter

# COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## MISSION STATEMENT AND ORDINANCE

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### MISSION STATEMENT

The Commission for Children and Families advises the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County's at-risk children and their families.

### Ordinance

The Commission was created by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) on May 8, 1984, and is charged by its ordinance to:

- Review all programs administered by County departments that provide services for at-risk children;
- Receive input from appropriate community groups and individuals concerning County administered children's services programs;
- Review and make recommendations to the Board concerning legislation dealing with children's needs;
- Make recommendations, as necessary, to various County department heads to improve children's services;
- Make recommendations, as necessary, to the Board on action to be taken to improve children's services; and,
- Provide an annual report to the Board concerning the status of children's services, along with recommendations for their improvement, to be utilized for broad community distribution and discussion.

## KEY ISSUES IMPACTING AT-RISK AND SYSTEMS-INVOLVED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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During Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18 the Commission welcomed four new Commissioners, one of whom is a former foster youth, marking the first such appointment in the Commission's history. These shifts in composition have increased diversity in thought and experience, and should facilitate the Commission's capacity to carry out its mission.

During this period of review, Los Angeles County adopted a new model of juvenile diversion that aims to reduce youth involvement with the criminal justice system by connecting youth to community-based services that will support their development in lieu of arrest or citation. To support this model, the Board established the Youth Diversion and Development Division (YDD) of the Department of Health Service's Office of Diversion and Reentry. YDD will focus on building the necessary infrastructure, particularly in marginalized communities, to advance Los Angeles County's coordinated, comprehensive, and evidence-informed model of youth diversion. In March 2018, the Board furthered its efforts to improve juvenile justice in Los Angeles County with the unanimous adoption of a motion which directs foster youth-serving County departments to develop a county-wide strategy to prevent foster youth from crossing over into the juvenile justice system, as well as to better serve and support those who are under the supervision of both the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department.

In July 2017, the Board galvanized Los Angeles County's child welfare system with the unanimous adoption of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services motion. The motion, introduced by the Third and Fourth Supervisorial Districts, recognized that although the State of California has a foster youth bill of rights, Los Angeles County should create its own-- a bill of rights that reflects its values and vision for youth in care, and provides the necessary information about legislatively mandated rights, services, and programs, not only to current and former youth, but to all who touch their lives, in an effort to facilitate their development as "healthy, educated, and self-sufficient" young adults.

The scope of the Board directive was broad, covering every aspect of a foster youth's life, and the Commission was directed to lead this important task through collaboration

with public and private partners and current and former foster youth. Phase one of the FYBoRS project, carried out during this reporting period, bore witness to deep engagement by virtually all stakeholder groups that comprise Los Angeles County's child welfare system, and tremendous enthusiasm for its promise. Details regarding the Commission's leadership of the FYBoRS project are provided in the Commission for Children and Families Activities section.

## COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACTIVITIES

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During FY 2017-18, Commission activities centered around leadership of the development of the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services, as directed by Board motion, in addition to three priority areas: prevention of maltreatment; placement resources; and, special populations of youth with high level needs.

### Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services (FYBoRS)

In August 2017, the Commission held a county-wide stakeholder engagement convening, and established the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group (Work Group), which is comprised of representatives from 44 foster youth-serving organizations and groups.

During phase one of the FYBoRS project, the Work Group employed a subcommittee structure to accomplish the monumental tasks of (1.) compiling a vast number of local, state, and federal laws, policies, and best practices pertaining to foster youth rights and (2.) translating them into “youth-friendly language”. Each of the five Work Group subcommittees: Out-of-Home Care; Health and Quality of Life; Education and Transition Age Youth (TAY); Judicial; and Communications, was comprised of subject-matter experts and co-chaired by a Commissioner and County department representative. Current and former foster youth were integral to the process, and more than 40 of them, ranging in age from 14 to mid-thirties, were engaged as part of this process. The Work Group collaborated closely with California’s Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson (Ombudsperson) in the development of the FYBoRS. The Ombudsperson is responsible for investigating and the resolving of rights-related complaints made by or on behalf of children placed in foster care, and is currently leading the expansion of the State of California’s foster youth bill of rights, which will be informed by the work taking place in Los Angeles County and vice versa.



In the March 12, 2018, Report Back on the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services<sup>1</sup> the Work Group made a series of recommendations including (1.) development and dissemination of multi-media FYBoRS materials that will accommodate the range of ages and developmental stages of youth in care and their caregivers; (2.) standardized, county-wide use of the FYBoRS in form and manner; (3.) training on and compliance with the FYBoRS for foster youth-serving County departments and non-County members of the child welfare system; and (4.) foster youth-serving County departments contribute to the funding of FYBoRS materials.

Phase two of the FYBoRS project involves finalization of FYBoRS content, obtaining funding, and, development of FYBoRS materials, and is projected for completion in FY 2018-19.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Direct relevant departments to implement the recommendations included in the March 12, 2018 Report Back on the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services, as detailed in Attachment A.

## **Priority Area: Prevention of Maltreatment**

### ***Countywide Prevention Initiative***

During the reporting period, the Commission continued its collaborative work with the Office of Child Protection (OCP), First 5 LA, and a host of public and private partners to implement the County-wide Prevention Plan (Prevention Plan) core strategies: (1.) map out and weave existing prevention networks; (2.) expand capacity of Prevention and Aftercare networks; (3.) create a universal home visiting system; (4.) improve access to early care and education; (5.) monitor community well-being; (6.) develop standardized measures of prevention; and (7.) implement prevention strategies identified by County departments.

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<sup>1</sup> March 12, 2018 Report Back on the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services, <http://ccf.lacounty.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=upeuKnPpk5k%3d&portalid=24>

The Commission's representative has played an integral role in virtually all aspects of implementation of the Prevention Plan, connecting public and private partners and leveraging relationships. Of note is the development and implementation of the Community Prevention Linkages Project, a pilot program wherein families referred to the DCFS Child Protection Hotline who are in need, but whose concerns do not warrant an in-person investigation, are linked with community-based Prevention and Aftercare networks via the multi-disciplinary team process. Early findings from the Community Prevention Linkages Project indicate that families with youth who are engaging in delinquent behaviors and are at risk of juvenile justice involvement, as well as those exiting the juvenile justice system, are in desperate need of services. These findings illuminate the urgent need for YDD and the Probation Department to become a participant in the Countywide Prevention Initiative.

During the reporting period, the Commission's representative chaired the Early Care and Education subcommittee of the Prevention Initiative. In this role, the Commission's representative has successfully engaged the Policy Roundtable for Child Care, on which the Commission holds a seat, in the Prevention Plan, as research has shown that high quality early care and education is a key strategy in the prevention of maltreatment. The Early Care and Education subcommittee has recently begun work to better understand the complex and convoluted early care and education subsidized funding landscape. This work will continue into FY 2018-19.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Direct YDD and the Probation Department to work with the Commission to facilitate active engagement in the Countywide Prevention Initiative, thereby facilitating youth and family access to the Prevention and Aftercare networks. This may include exploration of investment of Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act funding into the initiative.

## ***First 5 LA Board of Commissioners***

The Commission holds an ex-officio seat on the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners (First 5 Commission). During FY 2017-18, the Commission continued to advocate for system-involved young children and families. In its 2015-2020 strategic plan, First 5 LA adopted a strategic direction that aims to have a deeper and longer term impact on the conditions that shape children's lives. Through its representative, the Commission has contributed to the new strategies and impact framework being developed to broaden First 5 Commission's approach to solutions that go beyond specific direct services to explore root causes and emphasize prevention, identifying solutions from a systems- and policy-change perspective. First 5 LA engages in increased convening, collaboration, and partnering with county agencies, parents, and diverse organizations, and has adopted an ambitious new goal that all children in Los Angeles County will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.

## **Priority Area: Placement Resources**

### **Child Welfare Collective Impact Work Group**

The Commission, through its representative, continued to participate in the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation and First 5 LA-led Child Welfare Collective Impact Work Group, established to address Los Angeles County's shortage of resource families. During this period of review, the Commission's representative assumed the responsibility of co-chairing the Work Group's Faith Based Sub-Committee, which is focused on engaging communities of faith in support of resource family recruitment and retention.

As part of this work, the Commission's representative co-led the Pomona Fostering Home convening in partnership with the County's Center for Strategic Partnerships. The Fostering Home model brings together local faith-based leaders, DCFS, foster family agencies, and philanthropy for geographically targeted resource family recruitment. Employing a one-stop-shop structure, Fostering Home makes available to prospective resource families required components for Resource Family Approval (RFA), such as the RFA orientation, Live Scan, and health screenings, to expedite the approval process. Commission participation in the Child Welfare Collective Impact Work Group will continue into FY 2018-19.

## Resource Family Approval Focus Groups

During the reporting period, the Commission partnered with the Alliance for Children's Rights, and DCFS to conduct a series of focus groups with relative caregivers who were in various stages of the RFA process. The objective of the focus groups was to learn how caregivers were experiencing the RFA process; elements of the process that were effective, and those that were not; and, how the process could be improved. Focus group findings informed modifications to DCFS' RFA processes and protocol. RFA focus groups with caregivers of Probation supervised youth will be conducted in FY 2018-19.

## Priority Area: Special Populations with High Level Needs

### *Juvenile Justice*

#### Juvenile Justice Ad-Hoc Committee

During this period of review, the Commission established a Juvenile Justice Ad-Hoc Committee to coordinate the Commission's efforts to support various juvenile justice related initiatives taking place in Los Angeles County. The Juvenile Justice Ad-Hoc Committee prioritized work in the areas of improving services for foster youth who are involved with both the dependency and delinquency systems and diverting youth from the criminal justice system. The Commission has been engaged in the youth diversion work taking place under the leadership of YDD, having attended the March 2018 YDD Summit, and participated in the YDD Steering Committee.

In May 2018 the Commission submitted a letter to the California legislature in support of the Youth Reinvestment Fund budget proposal. The Youth Reinvestment Fund aims to improve outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system or at risk of system-involvement by funding trauma-informed, community-based interventions. The Youth Reinvestment Fund, which will distribute \$75 million in one-time funds to California counties for trauma-informed youth diversion programs over a three-year period, and \$15 million in one-time funding to county public defender offices for the hiring of social workers to provide aid and support in juvenile matters, was approved and signed into the final state budget in July 2018. The Juvenile Justice Ad-Hoc Committee Co-Chair

holds a seat on the California committee tasked with making allocation determinations state-wide.

During the same period, the Commission also submitted a letter to the Board urging support of the Fostering Success: Building Community Health-Based Response for Supporting Vulnerable Youth (Fostering Success) California budget proposal. Fostering Success aims to address the increasing number of foster youth who are inappropriately referred to law enforcement by out-of-home care providers by funding a community-based infrastructure and strategic approach to diverting youth away from the juvenile justice system. Fostering Success was also approved and included in the final state budget in July 2018.

During the next period of review, the Commission's Juvenile Justice Ad-Hoc Committee will work to partner with the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), which is responsible for oversight of grant funds allocated to county Probation Departments state-wide to reduce the threat of juvenile crime and delinquency. This partnership may involve assistance in the identification and support of evidence informed and promising community-based services for at-risk and system-involved youth and families.

### Dual-Status Youth

On March 20, 2018 the Board of Supervisors instructed the Director of the Office of Child Protection, in collaboration with the Juvenile courts, Directors of DCFS, DMH, Office of Diversion and Reentry, Probation, County Counsel, Public Defender, District Attorney, Superintendent of Schools, and other organizations to report back to the Board in 180 days on a countywide plan for dual-status youth. The plan should encompass an understanding of the population, funding streams, coordination across sectors, best practices and current efforts, and should address prevention, treatment, data-tracking and evaluation, consideration of LGBTQ youth, and steps to provide juvenile criminal record expungement.

The Commission, which seeks to improve policies and practices affecting dual-status youth, has participated in the Dual-Status Youth Work Group since its first meeting in June 2018, representing the interests of system-involved youth and their families. The Commission representative attends meetings of the Delinquency Prevention

Subcommittee, which is focused on four levels of prevention: preventing entry into the child welfare system, preventing delinquency by youth in the child welfare system, preventing youth in child welfare from entering the juvenile justice system, and preventing greater penetration into the juvenile justice system by youth with child welfare cases. The Commission's participation in the Dual-Status Youth Work Group is expected to continue into FY 2018-19.

### Central Juvenile Hall

During the reporting period, the Commission remained interested in improving conditions for youth, foster youth in particular, who are housed at Central Juvenile Hall. Members of the Juvenile Justice Ad Hoc Committee visited the facility, and met with representatives from the First Supervisorial District and the Probation Department to learn more about the County's long-term plan. The Commission will continue to work with stakeholders regarding Central Juvenile Hall during FY 2018-19.

### ***Mental Health***

During this period of review, the Commission continued participation in the OCP-led Psychotropic Medication Work Group. The Work Group's recent efforts have resulted in increased oversight of psychotropic medication by public health nurses, as well as implementation of enhanced documentation protocol and processes at the DCFS regional office level.

The Commission continues to serve on the Mental Health Services Act System Leadership Team, regularly attending monthly meetings, and advocating for the interests of systems-involved children.

### ***Transition Age Youth***

During FY 2017-18, the Commission continued to engage in efforts to improve outcomes for transition age youth (TAY). In August 2017, the Fourth and Fifth Supervisorial Districts introduced a motion to support the successful transition of foster youth to adulthood through development of multi-year countywide strategy that will facilitate self-sufficiency. Commission representatives provided feedback to help inform the County's plan, and attended the May 2018 TAY Stakeholder Engagement Conference. The

Commission dedicated one of its meetings to learning more about the County's strategy for increasing TAY self-sufficiency, and began participating in the TAY Hub Steering Committee. This work is projected to continue into FY 2018-19.

### ***Racial Disproportionality and Disparity***

African American children and families are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and juvenile justice systems; often experience disparate treatment; and are more likely to enter into foster care, fail to reunify, age out of the foster care system, and to enter the juvenile justice system. During FY 2017-18, the Commission increased its engagement in this area. Commission representatives participated in the Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD) Advisory Group, and invited ERDD Advisory Group leaders to present on current initiatives at a Commission meeting. The ERDD Advisory Group brings together County, community, and private stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to address racial disproportionality and disparity at the systems-level. During this period of review, the Commission has experienced a renewed interest in and commitment to advancing equity, and work in this area will continue into FY 2018-19.

## SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2017–18 RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Commission respectfully recommends that the Board:

1. Direct relevant departments to implement the recommendations included in the March 12, 2018 Report Back on the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services, as detailed in Attachment A.
2. Direct YDD and the Probation Department to work with the Commission to facilitate active engagement in the Countywide Prevention Initiative, thereby facilitating youth and family access to the Prevention and Aftercare networks. This may include exploration of investment of Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act funding into the initiative.



## COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MEETINGS

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Commission meetings are the primary vehicle through which information regarding issues, programs and services impacting children and families is exchanged.

Commission meetings serve as an important venue in which Commissioners, partners and stakeholders are informed about child welfare related issues in Los Angeles County.

During FY 2017-18, the Commission held 17 regular meetings during which reports and presentations from County departments, advocates and stakeholders on child welfare related issues, services and programs were provided. Fiscal Year 2017-18 meeting topics included:

- Countywide Prevention Initiative
- LA County Trauma and Resiliency-Informed Systems Change
- Emergency Child Care Bridge Program
- Cross-Over Youth
- Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group
- Office of Child Protection Psychotropic Medication Work Group
- Fostering Home Resource Family Recruitment Convenings
- Continuum of Care Reform
- Equity Alliance for LA's Kids: SENI 2018 and Equity is Justice 2.0 Resolution
- A Second Chance, Inc
- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Campus Kilpatrick
- Los Angeles County Youth Diversion Plan
- Centinela Youth Services
- Supporting LGBTQ Youth in Care
- DCFS Eradicating Racial Disparity and Disproportionality Initiative
- First Place for Youth iLearning System
- Supporting the Successful Transition of Foster Youth to Adulthood Board Motion Update
- Families First Prevention Services Act
- Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development Updates
- Youth Referrals to Law Enforcement from Congregate Care

**COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPRESENTATION  
ON COUNTY BODIES FISCAL YEAR 2017-18**

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Countywide Prevention Initiative Work Group	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Education Coordinating Council	Maria Brenes
Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity	Wendelyn Nichols-Julien
First 5 LA Board of Commissioners	Dr. Wendy B. Smith
Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council	Carol O. Biondi
Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council Community Advisory Committee	Carol O. Biondi
Mental Health Services Act System Leadership Team	Liz Seipel
Office of Child Protection Psychotropic Medication Work Group	Wendelyn Nichols-Julien
Office of Child Protection Dual-Status Youth Work Group	Dr. Wendy B. Smith
Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey Wendy Garen

## **COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

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The Commission maintains a critical and distinct role in Los Angeles County. As advisors to the Board, and advocates for the most vulnerable children and families, the Commission often serves as a bridge between the County and its pivotal partners, including the courts, philanthropy, the non-profit sector, and the community. The Commission's experience, expertise and steadfast commitment to at-risk children and families has contributed to the forging of strong partnerships with some of the most important entities shaping public policy in Los Angeles County.

### **Education Coordinating Council**

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The Commission holds a seat on the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council (ECC). The ECC brings together key leaders, decision makers and stakeholders from diverse sectors to develop and implement strategies and initiatives designed to close the tremendous achievement gap among children and youth involved with the public child welfare and delinquency systems.

### **Center for Strategic Partnerships**

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The Commission has partnered with the Center for Strategic Partnership on several initiatives involving public-private partnerships. The Center for Strategic Partnerships, housed within the Chief Executive Office, connects government, nonprofits, business, and philanthropy to identify pressing needs for systems change, and to broker and bring joint initiatives to fruition.

### **First 5 LA Board of Commissioners**

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The Commission holds a seat on the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. The First 5 LA Commission, led by the chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, is comprised of Board appointed leaders in education, mental health, public health, and child welfare. First 5 LA is dedicated to systems change, and serves as one of the County's most pivotal partners.

## **Los Angeles County Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development**

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The Commission holds a seat on the Los Angeles County Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development (Roundtable). The Roundtable, comprised of Board appointed leaders, representatives of key early care and education (ECE) organizations and six County departments, builds and strengthens ECE systems, services and support by providing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on policy, systems, and infrastructure improvement.

## **Mental Health Services Act System Leadership Team**

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The Commission holds a seat on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) System Leadership Team (SLT). As a component of the 2004 MHSA, the SLT was established to serve as a quick-response advisory and monitoring body on issues concerning the MHSA plan and the County's broader public mental health system.

## **Office of Child Protection**

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The Commission routinely partners with the Office of Child Protection (OCP) on initiatives to further develop and enhance the service delivery system across County departments that impact at-risk children and families. OCP works to strengthen Los Angeles County's child protection system and promote better communication, coordination, and accountability to ensure child safety.

ATTACHMENT A: REPORT BACK ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS AND SERVICES



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION  
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

*Celebrating 34 Years of Advocacy & Achievement*

**COMMISSIONERS**

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey  
**Chair**

Wendy Garen  
**Vice Chair**



Wendelyn Nichols-Julien  
**Vice Chair**

Genevra Berger  
Carol O. Biondi  
Maria Brenes  
Patricia Curry  
Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Julio Marcial  
Candace Nafissi  
Liz Seipel  
Dr. Wendy B. Smith

Tamara N. Hunter, MSW  
**Executive Director**

March 12, 2018

TO: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Commissioner   
Tamara N. Hunter, Executive Director   
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: **REPORT BACK ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS AND SERVICES. (BOARD AGENDA ITEM 11, JULY 18, 2017).**

On July 18, 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion that recognized the need to ensure that youth in the foster care system are provided every reasonable resource to facilitate their development as “healthy, educated, and self-sufficient” young adults. The motion also recognized that, as the largest child welfare system in the country, Los Angeles County should create its own Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services that provides the necessary information about services, programs, and legislative mandates to youth and resource families.

To accomplish this important task, the Commission for Children and Families (CCF) was directed to convene a work group to include, at a minimum, the Chief Executive Office, Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Child Protection, County Counsel, Department of Mental Health, Probation Department, Department of Health Services, other County departments, community stakeholder groups, and at least six current or former foster youth, and report back to the Board in 120 days with:

1. A proposed Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services (FYBoRS) for Los Angeles County, to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors, and that has incorporated:
  - a. Feedback from foster youth;
  - b. Review of the State of California Foster Youth Bill of Rights and any proposed changes resulting from, and significant gaps in Assembly Bill 1067;

- c. Review and presentation of the California Welfare and Institutions Code and all other relevant Federal, State, and local statutes and policies in plain language; and
  - d. Consideration of a wide range of domains and topics, including education, mental and physical health, housing, income, employment, dependency court proceedings, visitation, reunification, adoption, and rights related to immigration status;
2. A proposed communication plan targeting foster youth, resource parents, social workers, and probation officers that utilizes web and print mediums;
  3. A plan for annual review and updating of the FYBoRS, as necessary, to reflect current legislation and policy.

The Work Group requested and was granted an extension to March 20, 2018, so that feedback from all stakeholders could be incorporated. The Board directives will be delivered through a two-phase process, beginning with the compilation and development of content, followed by dissemination.

This report is comprised of five parts: 1) FYBoRS Guiding Principles and Vision; 2) FYBoRS Work Group; 3) Current Law Governing Foster Youth Rights; 4) Work Group Recommendations; and 5) Next Steps.

### **FYBoRS Guiding Principles and Vision**

The ongoing efforts to develop the FYBoRS are shaped by the following *guiding principles*:

- The FYBoRS must not be simply a compilation of existing laws and policies, but a living expression of the County's vision, hopes, and responsibilities for the youth in our care.
- These rights must be explained in plain language that is age and developmentally appropriate.
- The FYBoRS must be known, understood, and adhered to by the Los Angeles County child welfare system as a whole, including all public and private partners, and stakeholders who interact with youth in our care.
- The assumptions around system responsibilities regarding rights of foster youth must shift from required periodic informing youth of their rights, to an embrace by all who serve or support foster youth of their role in engaging, educating, and empowering youth regarding their rights.

In view of the guiding principles, the following vision statement serves as preamble to the FYBoRS:

*Every child, teen, and young adult in foster care in Los Angeles County, as well as those who have left the system, deserves to have a safe, loving, stable, and nurturing home and family; to be valued and respected; to have a say in making decisions that affect their lives;*

*to have access to help and support when they need it, through a trauma-informed system that will help them and their families heal and be stronger; and to have educational and other supports that will help them reach their own chosen goals as successful and healthy adults.*

### **Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group (Work Group)**

On July 31, 2017, the Commission for Children and Families (CCF) adopted a motion establishing the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group (Work Group). With the goal of assembling the most inclusive and representative Work Group possible, the CCF invited all parties named in the Board motion, as well as numerous other organizations and individuals known to have interest, experience, or expertise in working with foster youth to an August 24, 2017, stakeholder engagement convening. The stakeholder engagement convening served as the first FYBoRS Work Group meeting, and an initial step in the process of creating the FYBoRS. Work Group participants and contributing organizations are listed in Attachment A. During the convening, the eighty-four attendees participated in small group discussions, co-facilitated by current and former foster youth and CCF Commissioners, regarding the vision and principles that should underlie the work and subject matter-specific processes associated with foster youth rights.

The Work Group employed a subcommittee structure to compile FYBoRS content. Four of the five subcommittees focused on a subject matter-specific “domain” of a foster youth’s life, as illustrated in Attachment B, and one subcommittee focused on developing a proposed communications and dissemination plan. Each subcommittee, comprised of subject matter experts, was co-chaired by a CCF Commissioner and County department representative, and had the following objectives:

- Compile and translate domain-specific law and policy into plain language that will be easily understood by foster youth.
- Identify areas for improvement of County processes regarding foster youth rights and services, and develop relevant recommendations.
- Further development of the FYBoRS vision statement.

Subcommittee participation across County departments and external organizations was enthusiastic and robust. The work to create the FYBoRS has already proven to be an engaging and educational process for all participants, and has facilitated the shared view that the final product will be an important and useful tool for youth, caregivers, staff who serve foster youth, parents, and mentors.

#### *Youth Voice*

Current and former foster youth have been key members of the Work Group, and demonstrated a high level of interest and desire to participate. More than 40 current and former foster youth, ranging in age from 14 to mid-thirties, were engaged as part of this process. At times their work and school commitments, with few exceptions, precluded their



being able to regularly attend subcommittee meetings. Therefore, our solution to ensuring their participation was to send youth all material being reviewed by each subcommittee, to encourage teleconference participation and written input, and then to meet with them where they were. Focus groups were held with youth at National Foster Youth Institute, California Youth Connection, the Alliance for Children's Rights, and a DCFS Teen Club to hear and incorporate their feedback on FYBoRS content, as well as their experiences with regard to their rights. Current and former foster youth frequently expressed surprise and frustration when they learned of rights to which they were entitled, but that had been violated at some point in time. Similarly, they were dismayed to learn how many policies governing important aspects of their lives leave them out of the decision-making process. An example of this is the identification of an education rights holder, when necessary. They expressed a strong desire to have a formal role in policy development at both local and State levels, noting that the FYBoRS development process serves as an exemplar of how they should be engaged.

#### *FYBoRS Content Compilation*

Domain-specific content compiled by subcommittees has been organized into the FYBoRS Master Matrix, Attachment C, with input received from County Counsel as part of the process. Given the broad scope of the areas of focus required by Board directive, the FYBoRS Master Matrix is a voluminous document, comprehensively consisting of more than two hundred pieces of Federal, State, and local legislation and policy. It is important to note that the FYBoRS Master Matrix should be viewed as the raw material from which age and developmentally appropriate materials will be developed during phase two. The most essential rights, of which all foster youth should be aware, have been identified through subcommittee work, focus groups, and legislative mandate, and will be featured in abbreviated versions of the FYBoRS.

#### **Current Law Governing Foster Youth Rights**

California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 16001.9 lists twenty-seven rights that youth have in foster care. WIC Section 16501.1 governs dissemination of these rights and requires that:

- At least once every six months, at the time of a regularly scheduled visit with the youth, and at each placement change, the youth's social worker or probation officer shall inform the youth, the caregiver, and the child and family team, if applicable, of the youth's rights as a foster child, as specified in WIC Section 16001.9.
- The social worker or probation officer shall provide the rights-related information to the youth in an age and developmentally appropriate manner, and document in the case plan that the youth has been informed of and provided with a copy of these rights.

Further, Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Section 1530.91 requires any licensed facility providing care for six or more foster children to post in an area accessible to foster youth a listing of foster youth personal rights as specified in WIC Section 16001.9.

On September 30, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill (AB) 1067, which called for the revising of WIC Section 16001.9. Specifically, AB 1067 required that:

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) convene a work group regarding the specified rights of all youth in foster care in order to educate them, foster care providers, and others;
- Make recommendations to the California State Legislature (Legislature) for revising the rights based on a review of state law by January 1, 2018;
- Develop standardized information regarding the revised rights in an age-appropriate manner and reflective of any relevant licensing requirements with respect to the foster caregiver's responsibilities to adequately supervise youth in care by July 1, 2018;
- Develop recommendations regarding methods for disseminating the rights-related information by July 1, 2018; and,
- Develop recommendations for measuring and improving the degree to which foster youth are adequately informed of their rights by July 1, 2018.

AB 1067 applies specifically to the collection of the twenty-seven foster youth rights enunciated in WIC Section 16001.9, and not to the broader universe of rights afforded to youth in care. On February 16, 2018, AB 3046, which proposes amendments to WIC Section 16001.9, was introduced.

The CDSS and the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson are leading the work mandated by AB 1067. In light of the overlapping requirements of AB 1067 and the Board's directives, as well as the mandates of WIC Section 16501.1 and H&SC Section 1530.91, the Work Group has collaborated closely with the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson to ensure alignment of the FYBoRS with the revised WIC Section 16001.9 and minimize the risk of developing conflicting documents. Moreover, the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson, a participant in the Los Angeles County FYBoRS Work Group, shares the vision and principles that have guided Los Angeles County in this work.

### **Work Group Recommendations**

In the course of the processes described above, and through the significant experience and expertise of its participants and contributors, including a cross section of County contracted service providers, the Work Group gathered vital information and invaluable insights that informed the recommendations included in this report. Key takeaways and recommendations are provided below.

#### *Accountability*

Work Group participants consistently expressed in no uncertain terms the importance of ensuring accountability for adherence to the rights contained within the FYBoRS. Although the current draft FYBoRS identifies persons and organizations to be contacted for recourse when rights are violated, some members of the Work Group expressed the belief that the

respective responsibilities of social workers, probation officers, caregivers, and foster youth should be delineated in the FYBoRS. Work Group members, youth in particular, voiced concerns that empowering foster youth with information about their rights without also educating them as to their responsibilities and providing proper context would be a disservice, and could have unintended consequences, such as discord between the youth and caregiver. For example, foster youth have the right to participate in extracurricular activities; however, the caregiver may limit participation in some activities based on California's reasonable and prudent parent standards. Conversely, other Work Group members expressed concerns that calling out foster youth responsibilities in a listing of statutory rights, could suggest that foster youth shared responsibility when their rights were violated.

#### *State of Knowledge of Foster Youth Rights*

The Work Group determined that foster youth in general are not knowledgeable about their rights, despite the fact that various legislative mandates and other State directives, described in the previous section, govern how and when they are to be informed. Current foster youth, especially younger youth, reported that they knew little about their rights beyond those involving basic needs, such as the right to reside in a safe placement and have enough food to eat. Former foster youth were able to identify a greater number of rights; however, most reported that they learned about these rights only after exiting the child welfare system. These responses reflect the need to develop better strategies to engage, educate, and empower foster youth regarding their rights in ways that are authentic and impactful.

The Work Group also determined that employees of foster youth-serving County departments, as well as non-County foster youth-serving partners, would benefit from additional information and training on foster youth rights, including training specifically on ways of effectively communicating with youth about their rights. Some departments have not yet established a standardized policy or process for training staff on foster youth rights, and may lack procedural guidance for their employees as to best practices for educating foster youth about their rights. The lack of standardization extends to informational materials, as multiple versions of foster youth rights documents are used throughout the County, among foster youth-serving departments, and in some instances, within departments. Inconsistencies and gaps in these areas among County departments also impact County-contracted service providers and their work with current and former foster youth.

#### **Recommendation One: Proposed Communications Plan**

The Work Group recommends development of the following multi-media products, as shown in Table 1, for optimal dissemination of the FYBoRS. Essential (priority) recommendations are noted with asterisks.

*Table 1. Multi-media Recommendations*

Print Materials	Web-based Materials	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Handbook (including PDF version)**</li> <li>▪ Activity/comic book</li> <li>▪ Multi-fold wallet card**</li> <li>▪ Mini handbook</li> <li>▪ Poster**</li> <li>▪ Brochure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobile-friendly webpage**</li> <li>▪ Interactive videos</li> <li>▪ Peer-to-peer videos</li> <li>▪ Animation</li> <li>▪ Social Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promotional Material</li> <li>▪ Phone App</li> <li>▪ E-learning module</li> </ul>

Durable print materials constitute the best medium overall for disseminating rights information to foster youth, as most do not have consistent access to the internet. Print materials should be developed to accommodate the range of ages and developmental stages of youth in care, and translated into common languages. This will require collaboration with experts in the development of youth-accessible educational information content. Graphic art and design expertise will also be required. The Graphic Arts section of the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors has committed to work on the development of FYBoRS print materials; however, the Graphic Arts section does not provide web-based design or printing services.

A mobile-friendly FYBoRS webpage should also be viewed as an essential component of the proposed communications plan. The webpage will be hosted by the Department of Children and Family Services and the webpage URL will be provided to other foster youth-serving organizations to include on their websites as a resource.

The multi-media materials that will be developed can also be utilized by caregivers, social workers, probation officers, and other stakeholders.

**Recommendation Two: Proposed Plan for Dissemination**

The Work Group recommends the following policy and training actions for effective dissemination of the FYBoRS:

- Foster youth-serving County departments develop and/or update policy consistent with current law, as well as the FYBoRS vision and guiding principles.
- The FYBoRS be used County-wide in standardized forms and manner;
- All County employees of foster youth-serving organizations who interact with foster youth in any capacity receive training on the FYBoRS;
- All County contracts for services to foster youth include language in contract terms and conditions requiring all parties to the contract who interact with foster youth in any capacity, to receive training on and comply with the FYBoRS; and,
- Training, compliance, and use of the FYBoRS by non-County members of Los Angeles County’s child welfare system.
- All training should be developed to meet the training objectives shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Training Objectives

Training Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Increase awareness and knowledge of foster youth rights <b>and</b> responsibilities related to upholding foster youth rights;</li><li>▪ Provide procedural and best practice guidance for use of the FYBoRS to engage, educate, and empower foster youth regarding their rights; and,</li><li>▪ Build capacity to embody the FYBoRS vision and guiding principles in practice behaviors and all interactions with and on behalf of youth in care.</li></ul>

### **Recommendation Three: Funding for Development of FYBoRS Materials**

Funding will be required to develop and produce the recommended youth-accessible multi-media FYBoRS materials, shown in Table 1. The Work Group recommends that the Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, and other foster youth-serving County departments, including the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnership within the Office of Child Protection, identify the necessary funding. County departments have been advised of this recommendation. When costs and funding sources have been identified, Board action may be required.

### **Recommendation Four: Proposed Plan for Updating the FYBoRS**

The Work Group recommends that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department, as the primary agencies responsible for the supervision of youth in care, jointly re-convene and lead public and private stakeholders, which must include current and former foster youth, caregivers, biological families, and other foster youth service providers and supporters, in the process of annual review and updating of the FYBoRS, as necessary.

#### **Next Steps: Development and Dissemination (Phase Two)**

Phase Two involves the following actions required to deliver the FYBoRS:

- **Finalization of the FYBoRS content**

The Work Group requests authority to finalize the FYBoRS content in parallel with the revising of WIC Section 16001.9 to ensure consistency between County and State. The CDSS and Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson are projected to finalize revisions to WIC 16001.9 in July 2018, as required by AB 1067, and proposed in AB 3046.

- **Budget development**

The Work Group will consult with and obtain estimates from organizations specializing in content development of youth-accessible print and web-based informational materials, as well as printing services, to inform the FYBoRS budget.

▪ **Develop FYBoRS materials**

The Work Group requests authority to develop FYBoRS materials upon finalization of content. Development of materials will be led by the Work Group's Communications Subcommittee, with all prototypes being vetted through a robust focus group process, before approval by the full Work Group.

Enclosure

- c: Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Chief Probation Officer  
Auditor-Controller  
Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Acting Director, Department of Health Services  
Director, Department of Mental Health  
Director, Department of Public Health  
Director, Office of Child Protection  
Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors  
Health Deputies, Board of Supervisors  
Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors

**ATTACHMENT A**

**Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services  
Contributing Organizations**

Advocates 4 Family Caregivers	Grandparents As Parents	Los Angeles County Probation Department
Alliance for Children's Rights	John Burton Advocates for Youth	Los Angeles Unified School District
Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker Family Foundation	Kids in the Spotlight	Los Angeles County Women and Girls Initiative
Association of Community Human Service Agencies	LA Compact at the LA Chamber of Commerce	National Center for Youth Law
C.I.T.Y.	LA LGBT Center	National Foster Youth Institute
Cal Strat	Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller	Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services
California Department of Social Services, Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman	Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office	Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services
California Youth Connection	Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families	Public Counsel
Children's Law Center	Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services	Raising Our Children's Kids
Children's Empowerment Network	Los Angeles County Department of Health Services	Southwestern Law School
Extraordinary Families	Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health	The Chronicle of Social Change
FASD Network of Southern California	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health	United Friends of the Children
First 5 LA	Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection	Youth Justice Coalition
First Place for Youth	Los Angeles County Office of the County Counsel	Current and Former Foster Youth
Foster Education Xchange	Los Angeles County Office of Education	

**Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group Subcommittee Structure**

SUBCOMMITTEE	DOMAINS OF FOCUS	CO-CHAIRS
<p>OUT-OF-HOME CARE SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Out-of-Home Care</li> <li>▪ Continuum of Care Reform</li> <li>▪ Core Practice Model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wendelyn (Wende) Nichols-Julien, CCF</li> <li>▪ Robbie Odom, DCFS</li> </ul>
<p>HEALTH &amp; QUALITY OF LIFE SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal Rights</li> <li>▪ Quality of Life</li> <li>▪ Health</li> <li>▪ Mental Health</li> <li>▪ Reproductive &amp; Sexual Health</li> <li>▪ LGBTQ</li> <li>▪ Native American</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wendy Smith, CCF</li> <li>▪ Bryan Mershon, DMH</li> </ul>
<p>EDUCATION &amp; TAY SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education</li> <li>▪ Non-Minor Dependents</li> <li>▪ Transitional Housing</li> <li>▪ Independent Living Program/Self Sufficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gene Berger, CCF</li> <li>▪ Rachelle Touzard, LACOE</li> </ul>
<p>JUDICIAL SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dependency Court</li> <li>▪ Delinquency Court</li> <li>▪ Probation</li> <li>▪ Cross-Over Youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jacquelyn McCroskey, CCF</li> <li>▪ Judge Michael Nash, OCP</li> </ul>
<p>COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communications and Information Dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Candace Nafissi, CCF</li> <li>▪ Neil Zanville, DCFS</li> <li>▪ Genie Chough, DCFS</li> </ul>



## **ATTACHMENT C**

[Click here to access the FYBoRS Master Matrix](#)

## Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services

### Glossary (Definitions)

Term	Definition
<b>AB12 (Also called Extended Foster Care )</b>	AB 12 (California Fostering Connections to Success Act) is a 2010 California law that extends foster care benefits for eligible youth up to age 21. Youth who get these benefits are called nonminor dependents (NMDs).
<b>AB 490 Educational Liaison (Sometimes called AB 490 Counselor)</b>	A person appointed by the school district to help foster youth with: (1) ensuring proper educational placement, school enrollment, and “checkout” (withdrawal) from school and (2) transfer of grades, credits, and records when there is a school change.
<b>California State Graduate Requirements</b>	<p>The California Education Code sets requirements for graduation from California high schools. The minimum requirements for graduation are passing the California High School Exit Exam (unless the student has a qualifying IEP) and taking the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Three years of English.</li> <li>(B) Two years of math, including Algebra I.</li> <li>(C) Two years of science, including biological and physical sciences.</li> <li>(D) Three years of history/social studies, including one-year of United States history and geography; one year of world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government and civics; and a one semester of economics.</li> <li>(E) One year of visual or performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education.</li> <li>(F) Two years of PE, unless the student has been exempted.</li> </ul>
<b>California Dream Act Application (CADAA)</b>	Allows undocumented and nonresident students who meet certain eligibility requirements to apply for state financial aid, and allows qualified students to pay state resident fees (instead of higher out-of-state fees) at California’s public colleges and universities.
<b>Case Plan</b>	A written document prepared by DCFS that describes the care and services to be provided to a youth who has been placed in foster care. It must include: a description of the placement, a plan for providing the youth with safe and proper care, a plan for services that will be provided, along with a timeline, and other issues relating to health, safety, and well-being.
<b>Chemical Substances</b>	Chemical substances are sometimes called drugs. They include those prescribed by a doctor, and legal or illegal non-prescription drugs, including those you can purchase over the counter.

<b>Child and Family Team (CFT)</b>	A group of people, which may include extended family members, community, tribe, and others identified by youth, who come together to talk and make decisions about case planning and placement that will best support success of the family, and positive outcomes for the youth's safety, permanence, and well-being.
<b>Child Welfare System</b>	The group of government agencies that (1) take and investigate reports of possible child abuse and neglect; (2) provide services to ensure safety and care of youth and to support their families; (3) arrange for youth to live with relatives, non-relative extended family members, or foster families when they are not safe at home, and; (4) arrange for reunification, adoption, or other permanent connections for children leaving foster care. The Los Angeles County child welfare system also includes non-government agencies that provide services to youth and their families.
<b>Community Care Licensing</b>	The divisions of the State Department of Social Services that licenses and oversees foster family agencies, daycares, group homes, short-term therapeutic residential facilities, and residential care for children and adults throughout California.
<b>Community Treatment Facilities (CTF)</b>	Mental health treatment facilities where youth stay or visit if they need to get treatment. Some CTFs are locked.
<b>Contraception</b>	A number of ways to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including condoms and birth control pills.
<b>Conviction</b>	A person is found (proven to be) guilty of breaking the law.
<b>Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)</b>	Volunteers appointed by the court to look out for what is best for a youth who is placed in foster care. A CASA can: (1) advocate or speak up for the youth; (2) investigate or look into problems that the youth is having; (4) report or speak to the Judge for the youth; and, (5) recommend or ask the judge to make orders that will help the youth.
<b>Court Personnel</b>	The people who work inside the courtroom, including the judge, bailiff, court reporter, and clerk.
<b>Criminal Act</b>	A crime or an act that is against the law.
<b>Danger to Self or Others</b>	When someone seems to be at risk of harming themselves and/or others, the person can be considered a danger to themselves or other people. Examples are having done something or threatened something that would hurt themselves (suicide attempts) or someone else in a serious way.
<b>Delinquent</b>	A person under age 18 who has done something that is against the law, and needs formal supervision by the Juvenile Delinquency Court.

<b>Delinquency Court</b>	Delinquency court is a specialized court for minors who are being accused of doing something that is against the law, and is focused on rehabilitation. The Probation Department or the District Attorney's office can file a petition asking the court to get involved. The petition describes what the minor is accused of doing.
<b>Dependency Court</b>	Dependency court is where a judge makes decisions about the safety of a youth, and decides if they are in danger of neglect or abuse, abandonment, or injury. Decisions can also be made about where the youth will live, and the services the youth and their family might need.
<b>Dependent</b>	A legal word that means an abused or neglected child who is supervised by dependency court.
<b>Dignity</b>	Dignity is a person's right to be valued, respected, and receive fair treatment.
<b>Discrimination</b>	Discrimination is unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people, often because of age, race, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, or disability.
<b>Education Rights Holder (ERH)</b>	The person legally responsible for making educational decisions for the youth, and protecting the youth's educational rights and best interests. When it cannot be the biological parent, the court appoints someone to make educational decisions.
<b>Expulsion</b>	When a school removes a student from the entire school district for a specific period of time, usually one semester or year, as punishment for the student's behavior.
<b>Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)</b>	The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used by two and four-year colleges, universities, and career schools to award Federal, state, and college-funded student aid.
<b>Foster Youth Verification Letter</b>	Written verification of a youth's time spent in foster care. This used to be called the Ward of the Court letter.
<b>Gender</b>	Gender is what it typically means to be male or female. It is how society expects you to act because you are male or female.
<b>Gender Expression</b>	The way a person expresses their gender identity, such as through how they dress or behave.
<b>Gender Identity</b>	How a person feels inside and thinks of their identity. Gender identity might be different from what is on their birth certificate or child welfare records.
<b>Gender Pronoun</b>	A word used to refer to people, such as <i>she</i> , <i>hers</i> , and <i>her</i> or <i>he</i> , <i>his</i> , and <i>him</i> , or other terms.
<b>Green Card</b>	A registration card that shows an immigrant's status as a permanent U.S. resident, allowing the person to live and work in the United States.
<b>Group Home</b>	Group homes provide 24-hour care to a small number of foster youth in a structured environment. Group homes will be

	transitioning into Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP).
<b>Harassment</b>	Harassment is words, behavior, or action that causes the person it is directed at to feel scared, annoyed, or emotionally upset and should be reported to a trusted adult.
<b>Independent Living Program (ILP)</b>	<p>The ILP provides training, services, and programs that help current and former foster youth to be self-sufficient before and after leaving the foster care system. Youth are eligible for ILP services up to the day before their 21st birthday if they meet one of the following conditions:</p> <p>(1) They were or are in foster care at any time from their 16th to their 19th birthday, or</p> <p>(2) They were or are between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age and participating in the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP).</p> <p>Some of the ILP services are: daily living skills, money management, decision making, building self-esteem, financial assistance with college or vocational schools, educational resources, housing (transitional housing), and employment.</p>
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Jurisdiction is the court’s authority to decide what happens in a case, and to make decisions and orders.
<b>Juvenile Detention</b>	Juvenile detention centers and juvenile halls (“juvie”),” are secure residential facilities for young people who are accused of violating the law, who have been found to have violated the law, or are awaiting a court hearing or long-term placement.
<b>Lawyer/Attorney</b>	A person who is licensed to practice law. The court will appoint a lawyer to represent (speak for) youth in dependency and delinquency courts.
<b>Legal Service Organizations</b>	Legal service organizations provide free legal assistance to people who can’t afford an attorney.
<b>Mental Health</b>	Mental health is emotional or psychological well-being. It includes feeling able to enjoy life, engage in work or school, and in healthy relationships with others. It includes feeling able to recover from difficult experiences and being able to cope with the normal stresses of life.
<b>Medication</b>	Medications, sometimes called drugs, are substances used to treat a physical medical condition or mental health problem. Medications may be prescribed by a doctor, or bought “over-the-counter”, without a prescription from a doctor.
<b>Naturalization</b>	Naturalization is the way in which U.S. citizenship is granted to immigrants after they complete certain legal requirements.
<b>Nonminor Dependent</b>	Under AB 12, foster children who meet certain conditions and choose to remain in foster care past age 18, and up to age 21

	are referred to as nonminor dependents. (Also see AB-12 definition)
<b>Non-Relative Extended Family Member</b>	An adult who has a supportive relationship with a youth and is important to the youth, but not a blood relative.
<b>Ombudsperson</b>	An ombudsperson is an official who receives, investigates, and reports on individuals' complaints against the government and its officials and employees.
<b>Patients' Rights Advocate</b>	All state hospitals must have a Patients' Rights Advocate who receives and investigates complaints from or concerning people receiving mental health services and residing in licensed health or community care facilities. Complaints can be about abuse, and/or unreasonable denial or withholding of their rights as a punishment. A Patients' Rights Advocate also helps ensure that people receiving mental health services in licensed health and community care facilities know what their rights are.
<b>Permanent Placement</b>	A living arrangement that is meant to be the permanent home or permanent living arrangement for a child until he or she leaves the child welfare system.
<b>Probation Department</b>	A youth is supervised by the Probation Department and Delinquency Court when he or she has violated the law.
<b>Probation Officer</b>	Probation officers are responsible for supervision of some youth (juveniles) on probation. They are required to make regular home visits to ensure that that youth are healthy and safe, and that delinquency court orders are being followed. They also meet with youth and their families to help with rehabilitation.
<b>Pregnant and Parenting Teen Conference</b>	A voluntary meeting for parenting and expectant teens in foster care, where they can share their concerns, identify things they need, and figure out the best plan for them and their baby. Youth can invite people who are important to them. The youth's social worker and a specialist on resources for expectant and parenting teens will attend the conference and be able to help the youth with services.
<b>Psychotropic Medication (also called drugs)</b>	Psychotropic medications are prescription drugs used in the treatment of various psychiatric conditions or mental health problems.
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Reproductive health is about the conditions, diseases, and ways in which the male and female reproductive systems work at all ages.
<b>School of Origin</b>	School of origin means one of the following: (1) the school that you were last enrolled in when permanently housed, (2) the school that you were last enrolled in, or (3) a school that you feel connected to <b>and</b> you attended in the last 15 months, <b>and</b> the educational liaison and your educational rights holder all agree it is in your best interest to consider that your school of origin.

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and want to have sexual or romantic relationships with. Sexual orientations include, but are not limited to, gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, and asexual.
<b>Short-Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP)</b>	A residential facility that provides specialized and intensive services and supports to a group of youth placed in foster care.
<b>Social Worker</b>	Social workers are DCFS employees and also called Children's Social Workers or CSWs. They are responsible for supervision of youth under DCFS supervision. They make regular home visits to ensure that that youth are healthy and safe, and that dependency court orders are being followed. They also meet with youth and their families to help youth reunify with their parents.
<b>Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)</b>	SIJS allows youth under age 21 who cannot be reunited with their parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, to apply for a green card and remain in the U.S. legally.
<b>Suspension</b>	When a school temporarily sends a student home as punishment for the student's behavior.
<b>Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)</b>	A plan to help a youth prepare for exiting the child welfare system and being a successful adult. Youth should write their first TILP with their social worker when they are 15 or 16 years old. The TILP must be updated every six months.
<b>Transition Jurisdiction</b>	<p>Former wards who meet certain requirements can participate in extended foster care without having to remain under delinquency jurisdiction. For those under 18, transition jurisdiction is available if the youth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. is subject to an order for foster care placement;</li> <li>2. is between 17.5-18 years of age;</li> <li>3. no longer requires the supervision of the delinquency court because they have met their rehabilitative goals;</li> <li>4. is at risk of abuse and neglect and cannot be returned to the parental home safely; and,</li> <li>5. intends to meet the nonminor dependent participation requirements.</li> </ol> <p>Youth who are under an order for foster care placement on their 18th birthdays are eligible for extended foster care and would enter transition jurisdiction when they meet the terms of their probation (as long as they are under 21 years old).</p>
<b>Tribal Customary</b>	An option for Indian children who are dependents that allows

<b>Adoption</b>	them to be adopted through customs and laws of the child's tribe without terminating parental rights of their parents.
<b>Written Consent</b>	A written agreement, approval, or permission for something to happen.