



**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
Tiffany Boyd
Maria Brenes
Patricia Curry
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Julio Marcial
Liz Seipel
Dr. Wendy B. Smith

Tamara N. Hunter, MSW
Executive Director

May 7, 2018

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

FROM: Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, Chair 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: FOSTERING SUCCESS: BUILDING COMMUNITY HEALTH-BASED
RESPONSE FOR SUPPORTING VULNERABLE YOUTH

On behalf of the Commission for Children and Families (Commission), I respectfully urge the Board of Supervisors (Board) to support the Fostering Success: Building Community Health-Based Response for Supporting Vulnerable Youth (Fostering Success) California state budget proposal. Fostering Success, introduced by the National Center for Youth Law, aims to address the increasing number of foster youth inappropriately referred to law enforcement by out-of-home care providers through funding a community-based infrastructure and strategic approach to diverting vulnerable youth away from the juvenile justice system and secure confinement, and providing supportive services.

Youth in the foster care system, particularly those placed in congregate care, are especially vulnerable to being referred to law enforcement and arrested for low level offenses while in placement. With 13 County-contracted group homes documented as having made more than 100 calls per year, and one facility having made more than 500 calls, Los Angeles County is among the 16 California counties with the highest numbers of foster youth referrals to law enforcement annually. In 2016, a disproportionate number of these youth were of color, girls, identified as LGBTQ, and/or had disabilities. Researchers have found that congregate care facilities too often misuse law enforcement to respond to behavior that would otherwise be handled without law enforcement intervention, and this inappropriate criminalization of foster youth was part of the impetus for California's Continuum of Care Reform.

Fostering Success is a three-year, \$7.5 million per year investment into improving outcomes for at-risk youth placed in out-of-home care. If approved, Fostering Success grants will be distributed to Los Angeles and other counties with high rates of congregate care referrals to law enforcement, or high rates of youth placed in congregate care crossing over to the juvenile justice system.

Specifically, Fostering Success grants will be used to fund:

- Trauma-informed, culturally-relevant training to law enforcement and congregate care professionals who interact with vulnerable youth populations. Fostering Success stipulates that this training should include adolescent development principles, de-escalation techniques, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed, and evidence-based interventions.
- Collaboration with public agencies to expand local youth diversion programs and deliver developmentally appropriate services in under-served communities, including expanding the capacity to serve youth in families rather than in congregate care.

Fostering Success also stipulates that these community-based services for youth in out-of-home care should include, education (academic and vocational); mentoring (authentic, lived experience); extracurricular activities and supports such as art, music, civic engagement, and sports; behavioral health (Aggression Reduction Therapy and Multi Systemic Therapy); and mental health (mindfulness and self-awareness) services.

The Fostering Success budget proposal seeks to create and further strengthen a community-based foster youth development system that is both socially and fiscally responsible, by curtailing the misuse of law enforcement, and treating children accused of low-level offenses in community settings, with trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate interventions that emphasize health and wellbeing.

With its targeting of Los Angeles County, and focus on the intersection of foster care and juvenile justice, the Fostering Success budget proposal is in alignment with this Board's priorities, including the recently passed Dual Status Youth: Prevention and Coordinated Care motion. Further, given Los Angeles County's high rates of annual foster youth referrals to law enforcement, there is an urgent need for greater analysis of underlying factors and implementation of effective policy interventions at the local level, all of which Fostering Success may be able to support.

For these reasons, the Commission strongly encourages your support of the Fostering Success: Building Community Health-Based Response for Supporting Vulnerable Youth

Each Supervisor
May 7, 2018
Page 3

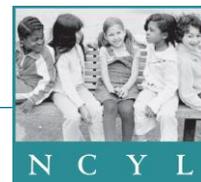
budget proposal. The Commission also encourages the Board to explore the extent of and reasons for the high rates of annual foster youth referrals to law enforcement in Los Angeles County, with the goal of reducing its occurrence.

Please contact Executive Director, Tamara Hunter at huntet@dcfs.lacounty.gov or Commissioner Julio Marcial at JMarcial@libertyhill.org for any questions.

JM:th

Enclosure

c: Chief Executive Officer
Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Chief, Probation Department
Children's Deputies
Justice Deputies
County Counsel



Fostering Success:

Building community health-based response for supporting vulnerable youth

Summary

In 2016, too many vulnerable foster youth were arrested by law enforcement officers for low-level offenses. A disproportionate number were children of color, girls, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queerⁱ, and youth with disabilities. Youth in the foster care system, particularly those placed in congregate care, are especially vulnerable to being referred to law enforcement while in placement.ⁱⁱ Data showing congregate care facilities too often misuse law enforcement to respond to behavior that would otherwise be handled without law enforcement intervention are part of the research base underpinning for California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). This proposal would fund a community-based infrastructure to divert vulnerable youth away from the justice system and secure confinement, provide training services to staff and law enforcement working with vulnerable youth populations, and deliver trauma-informed, developmentally-appropriate programs in their communities proven effective at promoting positive development, community health, and public safety.

What This Investment Will Do

An investment of \$7,575,000 will allow California to create a community-based foster youth development system that is both socially and fiscally responsible by treating children accused of low-level offenses appropriately for their age, in community settings, with an emphasis on health and wellbeing. Investments would fund nonprofits and community organizations to: (1) provide trauma-informed, culturally-relevant training to law enforcement and professionals interacting with vulnerable youth populations; and (2) collaborate with public agencies to expand local youth diversion programs and deliver developmentally-appropriate services in under-served communities statewide, including expanding the capacity to serve youth in families rather than in congregate care.

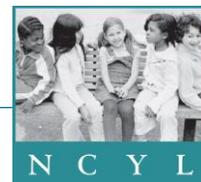
- Training to professionals interacting with youth should include adolescent development principles, de-escalation techniques, culturally relevant and trauma-informed interventions, and evidence-based interventions;
- Community-based services for children and youth in out-of-home care should include, education (academic and vocational); mentoring (authentic, lived experience); extracurricular activities and supports such as art, music, civic engagement, and sports; behavioral health (Aggression Reduction Therapy and Multi Systemic Therapy); and mental health (mindfulness and self-awareness) services.

Diverting arrests of foster youth from group homes and shelters from justice system referrals, detention, and secure confinement. (See Appendix A, Tables A and B)

An allocation of \$7,575,000 annually for three years to the counties with the facilities making the most calls to law enforcement in the state (See Appendix B) or with significant numbers of foster youth in group care crossing over to the delinquency system to (1) provide training to local law enforcement, group home, and shelter staff; (2) provide services for children in group homes and shelters delivered by public and private agencies, and non-law enforcement community-based organizations focused on promoting health and youth development. Additionally, the provision of specific community-based supports and services can reduce the use of group and shelter care for this population and can allow youth to live in the least restrictive environment. The program will be overseen by the California Department of Social Services.

Problem

Children in the foster care system, particularly those placed in group care, are especially vulnerable to crossing over to the delinquency system. Foster youth placed in group care should receive the highest level of care and supervision designed to return them immediately to a family and to their community. This level of care is not met when foster care facilities rely on law enforcement to intervene for behavior management purposes. Law enforcement intervention in congregate care is too frequently a result of facility inability to



Fostering Success:

Building community health-based response for supporting vulnerable youth

provide appropriate care and supervision or a facility culture that relies on the justice system as a punishment or consequence for normal teenage behavior.

California group homes and shelters call law enforcement on vulnerable youth in their care at astoundingly high rates. In 2016, of the 6,217 non-mandated calls statewide for youth behavior, 60% were for behavioral health emergencies, property damage, substance abuse, and theft. The calls resulted in 435 youth being cited, 527 youth being detained or arrested, and another 319 youth being booked into juvenile hall. In the 2016 annual report on dual status youth in Los Angeles, almost 40% of foster youth who crossed over into the delinquency system were residing in group care at the time of the delinquency referral.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many congregate care facilities rely on law enforcement as the primary behavior management response to minor incidents causing no injuries. For example, foster youth have been arrested for a food fight with cake icing and charged with inciting a riot. In another instance, a child who poked a caregiver with a candy cane was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon. In yet another case, a child was charged with battery and booked into juvenile hall after hitting someone with a package of hot dog buns. (See “Dubious Arrests, Damaged Lives” San Francisco Chronicle, May 18, 2017.) The facilities that disproportionately call law enforcement incorporate calling the police into their systems for discipline by using law enforcement as a scare tactic, juvenile hall as a time out, and the justice system as punishment. In one Orange County shelter, armed sheriff’s officers are stationed on-site at all hours.^{iv} In San Joaquin County (SJC), located in California’s Central Valley, Mary Graham Children’s Shelter called police over 5,000 times in 2015 and 2016, accounting for half of shelter arrests, citations, and juvenile hall bookings statewide. On average, Mary Graham sent children to juvenile hall twice a week. These children were disproportionately Black and girls.

Relying on police to deal with foster youth behavior pushes our most vulnerable children into the juvenile justice system at the time when they most need trauma-informed, culturally-relevant care. Similarly, probation supervised foster youth residing in group homes are pushed into detention and other secure placements. Childhood trauma and juvenile detention both dramatically increase a child’s risk of adult incarceration. Foster children have experienced trauma and locking them up further harms them, increasing their chances of later justice system involvement. Additionally, foster youth in the delinquency system lose valuable child welfare services. Social workers, foster homes, and services for parents that could help families reunite, like drug treatment, domestic violence education, and parenting classes, are not available to foster youth in the justice system.

Solution

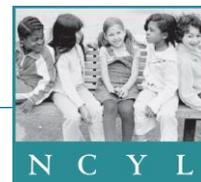
Develop community based diversion programs and provide training to group care staff in the 50 facilities that make over 100+ calls to law enforcement a year or counties with significant numbers of foster youth who crossover to the delinquency system while residing in group care, and provide training to local law enforcement in those areas. An investment of \$7.5 million dollars in California’s most vulnerable youth is both socially and fiscally responsible. Cost savings could be experienced through reductions in law enforcement responses to youth for low-level offenses, court caseloads and processing, days youth spend in detention, school and placement disruptions, and facility staff turnover due to high levels of stress and conflict related to caring for traumatized youth. Furthermore, cost savings could be experienced through improvements in youths’ health and wellbeing, school and community stability, educational attainment, and employment opportunities.

Contact

Frankie Guzman, Director, CA Youth Justice Initiative

National Center for Youth Law

E-mail: fguzman@youthlaw.org; Phone: [\(510\) 835-8098 ext. 3055](tel:(510)835-8098)



Fostering Success:

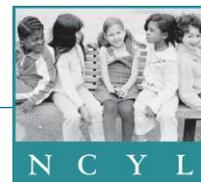
Building community health-based response for supporting vulnerable youth

Appendix A: Calculations

Investment: \$7,575,000 in State General Funds to reduce reliance on law enforcement for children in foster care.

Table A. Alternatives to Law Enforcement Calls for Foster Youth Facilities in 16 counties made more than 100 calls to law enforcement ^v	
# Foster Care Facilities with over 100 total law enforcement calls ^{vi}	50 ^{vii}
Costs to Train 300 staff ^{viii}	\$300k ^{ix}
Estimated cost to train 50 facilities and LE	\$2m ^x
After 75% federal match of funds for training	\$500k ^{xi}
Cost for evaluation	\$75k ^{xii}
Total Annual State General Funds	\$575k ^{xiii}

Table B. Services for Foster Youth	
# foster youth arrests in 2016	772 ^{xiv}
# youth in out of home placement probation	1,821 ^{xv}
Total youth	2,593
Cost to serve 120 youth/year ^{xvi}	\$300k ^{xvii}
Estimated Cost to serve 2,600 youth in care	\$6.5m
Program Evaluation Estimate	\$500k ^{xviii}
Total Annual State General Funds for (2,600 youth)	\$7m

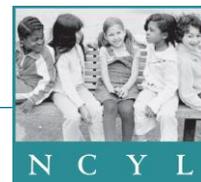


Fostering Success:

Building community health-based response for supporting vulnerable youth

Appendix B: Foster Care Facilities with 100+ Annual Calls to Law Enforcement

Facilities with 100+ calls to Law Enforcement Facilities bolded had over 500+ calls to Law Enforcement	County
PRYOR CENTER	Contra Costa
BARSTOW HOUSE MANUCH, INC. MUNCIE HOUSE	Fresno
A. MIRIAM JAMISON CHILDREN'S CENTER	Kern
BAIRD GROUP HOME DAVID AND MARGARET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES HATHAWAY-SYCAMORES CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES HILLSIDES LE ROY BOYS' HOME MARYVALE MCKINLEY CHILDREN'S CENTER, INC. OPTIMIST BOYS HOME & RANCH PENNY LANE - MAIN FACILITY ROSEMARY CHILDREN'S SERVICES - ROSEMARY COTTAGE SHOUP GROUP HOME ST. ANNE'S MATERNITY HOME VALERIO GROUP HOME VICTORY GROUP HOME	Los Angeles
HARMONY HOUSE WAKE FOREST CT.	Merced Merced
CRITTENTON SVCS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NEW ALTERNATIVE, INC. ORANGEWOOD CHILDREN AND FAMILY CENTER	Orange
OAK GROVE INSTITUTE PLAN-IT LIFE PLAN-IT LIFE TEMECULA HOUSE PLAN-IT LIFE, INC SEARCH LIGHT GROUP HOME SOJOURNERS HAVEN GROUP HOME II	Riverside
ATKINSON GROUP HOME IV CHILDREN'S RECEIVING HOME SACRAMENTO CHILDREN'S HOME #1	Sacramento
BOYS REPUBLIC	San Bernardino
A.B & JESSIE POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER CASA DE AMPARO	San Diego
MARY GRAHAM CHILDREN'S SHELTER	San Joaquin
CORBETT GROUP HOMES, INC.	San Mateo
BILL WILSON CENTER CALIFORNIA ANCHOR RESIDENTS #1 CORBETT GROUP HOME #3 EE'S - HILLSDALE EE'S - KOOSER STAR HOUSE I STAR HOUSE III UNITY CARE #3	Santa Clara
VALLEY OF THE MOON CHILDREN'S HOME	Sonoma
EXCELL-YOUNGSTOWN	Stanislaus
CASA PACIFICA CASA PACIFICA FOR THE FUTURE, INC.	Ventura



Fostering Success:

Building community health-based response for supporting vulnerable youth

Appendix C: References

ⁱ <http://projects.sfchronicle.com/2017/fostering-failure/>

ⁱⁱ Data showing congregate care facilities too often misuse law enforcement to respond to behavior that would otherwise be handled without law enforcement intervention are part of the research base underpinning for California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). CCR is based on overwhelming national evidence that for vulnerable youth, congregate care is not only less effective at achieving safety, permanency, and wellbeing outcomes than other less restrictive settings, but is also more costly in providing that care. Instead, the best outcomes result when supports, including intensive mental health and positive youth development activities, are delivered by community-based organizations to youth living in family settings.

ⁱⁱⁱ A Summary of Findings for the Los Angeles County 241.1 Multidisciplinary Team, Report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Denise Herz (September 2016), p. 10

<http://juvenilejusticeresearch.com/sites/default/files/2016-12/2016%20Enhancing%20Services%20to%20Strengthen%20241.1%20Project%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

^{iv} <http://projects.sfchronicle.com/2017/fostering-failure/>.

^v According to the data cited above, the 51 homes in Appendix E, located in 16 counties, made over 100 calls to law enforcement in 2016. Homes bolded made over 500 calls to law enforcement. Some of the homes, while they have unique licenses, are part of the same parent organization (~43 organizations).

^{vi} Number of Group Homes and Shelters with over 500 total law enforcement contacts (excessively above average for the 1061 facilities in the state) = 5

^{vii} **Assembly Bill 388 Report of Law Enforcement Contacts with Children's Facilities**, Calendar Year 2016. Group home incident data by facility tab, Retrieved from: https://sectest.dss.ca.gov/TransparencyPublic_Test/home/ab388_data

^{viii} Training for staff involves experiential based learning of the practice of council or restorative justice strategies as alternatives to calling law enforcement. Staff will learn the pedagogy, background and use of council for restorative justice purposes. Staff will learn ways to use these approaches in their work with children and youth for the purposes of community building, self-care, rehabilitation, stress management, and de-escalation. Staff will participate in training such that they will be able train their colleagues upon conclusion of the program.

^{ix} Center for Council, a project of Community Partners, CalVIP Grant Submission Budget Table, page 11. PDF received by email from Jared Seide of Center for Council on February 17, 2018.

^x The estimated cost of training 15 organizations (300 staff) is \$600,000. Multiplying that estimate by 3.3333 would estimate the cost for training the staff of 50 organizations with over 100 calls to law enforcement, which includes the 5 organizations with over 500 calls to law enforcement.

^{xi} The state can draw down a federal match of funds to provide training related to child welfare involvement. \$2m X .25 = \$500K

^{xii} The estimated cost for evaluation of the training program for Center for Council was \$22,500 for 15 organizations. Multiplying that cost by 3.3333 provides the estimate for evaluation of the training program for 50 organizations, approximately \$75,000. Outcome measures include 1) number and percent of youth referred to the program, 2) general and violent recidivism rate, 3) employment obtainment rate (where appropriate by age), 4) employment retention rate, 5) school attendance rate, 6) school completion rate (where appropriate by age), 7) housing stability, 8) reduction in anger, aggression, and problematic thinking patterns, 9) improvements in empathy, resilience, and communication

^{xiii} State General Fund portion of training costs + cost of evaluation

^{xiv} **Assembly Bill 388 Report of Law Enforcement Contacts with Children's Facilities**, Calendar Year 2016. Group home incident data by facility tab, Retrieved from: https://sectest.dss.ca.gov/TransparencyPublic_Test/home/ab388_data

^{xv} Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Eyre, M., Chambers, J., Min, S., Randhawa, P., Sandoval, A., Yee, H., Tran, M., Benton, C., White, J., & Cotto, H. (2018). *CCWIP reports*.

Retrieved 3/6/2018, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare>

^{xvi} Center for Council, a project of Community Partners, CalVIP Grant Submission Budget Table, page 6. PDF received by email from Jared Seide of Center for Council on February 17, 2018. C4C's weekly circles have been evaluated by the University of California and RAND corporation for effectiveness. Circles focus on four factors anti-social friends, anti-social attitudes, impulsive behavior, and lack of empathy.

^{xvii} To provide ~ 3,000 youth with restorative, rehabilitative council services above and beyond school and mental health-based interventions we take 3,000 (youth in need)/120 (youth served by one program in a year) = 25 (Community programs needed to serve the population). We then multiple the estimated annual cost of running a community-based program of \$300,000 * 25 = \$7,500,000 total. This is a very high estimate that assumes every youth in this population is not in a county that already has a diversion and rehabilitation program and would need a community-based intervention. Additionally, research shows many behaviors can be resolved without formal interventions, rather through existing resources from home, school, and community service providers.

^{xviii} Estimated from cost of program evaluation for 25 programs, based upon cost of evaluating a program serving 120 youth at \$22,500. (\$22,500*25=\$562,500)