

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

2022

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2022 ROSTER

FIRST SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Hilda L. Solis

Maria Brenes

Wendy Garen

Steve Zimmer

FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Kathryn Barger

Shimica Gaskins

Dr. Jeanette Mann

Lou Moore

SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

Charity Chandler-Cole

Zaid Gayle

Franco Vega

THIRD SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

Gale Caswell (former)

Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey

Dr. Wendy B. Smith (former)

COMMISSION OFFICERS

Wendy Garen, Chair

Shimica Gaskins, Vice Chair

Zaid Gayle, Vice Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Tamara N. Hunter

FOURTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Janice Hahn

William Bedrossian

Tiffany Boyd

Eli Romero

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

MISSION STATEMENT AND ORDINANCE

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 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.

YEAR IN REVIEW: KEY ISSUES IMPACTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Leadership Shifts

In April 2022, Brandon T. Nichols was appointed director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Director Nichols, who previously served as the department's interim director and chief deputy director, is expected to bring to this role a wealth of knowledge and experience, desperately needed stability, and importantly, compassion for children and their families, as well as for the DCFS workforce. Director Nichols was selected following a national search, led by the Hawkins Group, which the Commission helped to inform.

The County also welcomed newly elected Third District Supervisor, Lindsey P. Horvath, who replaced Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, and Sheriff Robert Luna, who replaced embattled former sheriff, Alex Villanueva. Finally, longtime child welfare advocate Karen Bass was elected mayor of the city of Los Angeles at the end of the year.

Crisis in Juvenile Probation

The Los Angeles County Probation Department's juvenile operations continued to be gripped by a deepening crisis during this period of review. Crippling staffing shortages due to high numbers of probation officers out on extended leave or refusing to report to work created extremely dangerous conditions for detained youth and staff. Insufficient staffing numbers diminished capacity to properly supervise youth, and as a result, the department increasingly relied on the use of pepper spray and youth room confinement, which has been tremendously detrimental to youth mental health and well-being.

In response to Assembly Bill 218, a California law that temporarily lifted the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse, a flood of lawsuits alleging rape and molestation of youth who had been detained in juvenile facilities have been filed in Los Angeles Superior Court. By December 2022, more than 300 lawsuits detailing horrific allegations dating back to 1970 and as recent as 2020, had been filed.

Narrowing the Front Door to the Child Welfare System

Local and state-wide efforts to prevent maltreatment, address racial disproportionality and disparity, and safely reduce the number of families brought into contact with the child welfare system, i.e., “narrow the front door”, increased during this period of review.

In March 2022, the Los Angeles County Prevention Services Task Force launched, in response to the November 2021 ‘Establishing the Los Angeles County Office of Prevention Services’ Board motion. The motion called for development of a countywide prevention and promotion strategy to provide upstream services and supports to improve the lives of children, families, and adults across the lifespan. The Commission’s participation in the Prevention Services Task Force is detailed in the Commission Activities section of this report.

In May 2022, the Board passed the Advancing a Countywide Pre-Petition

Advocacy Model for Child Welfare motion, which directed exploration of the feasibility of developing a pre-petition advocacy model for Los Angeles County. As implied by the name, pre-petition advocacy models provide legal advocacy and other supportive services to families who are unable to afford legal representation prior to a petition being filed in juvenile dependency court. These models introduce a degree of equity to the front end of the child welfare system and play a role in addressing racial disproportionality and disparity.

Finally, the Commission’s leadership of the cross-sector, Los Angeles County Mandated Supporting Initiative (MSI) heightened in 2022. This work involves partnering with local and State-level partners to reform mandated reporting and safely divert families from the child welfare system to community-based services and supports. Additional information provided in the Commission Activities section of this report.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACTIVITIES IN 2022

During this period of review, the Commission worked closely with cross-sector partners on a wide array of efforts spanning the child welfare services continuum. The Commission's work was supported by the Commission Services Division of the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors.

Knowledge is Power Summit

A highlight of the year was the Commission-led, Knowledge is Power Summit: *Using Data to Advance Racial Equity for Families and Communities* (Summit). The Summit planning team designed a convening that used a compelling blend of data and narrative to tell the layered and nuanced story of what brings Black families into contact with the child welfare system.

Focusing on the "front end" of the system, the Summit included segments on:

- structural racism;
- the under-resourcing of communities with high levels of child welfare involvement;
- pathways into the system, including the Child Protection Hotline, mandated reporting, and emergency response investigations;

- unpacking the nebulous general neglect allegation; and
- access to culturally competent services.

The two-day event was attended by more than 350 unique stakeholders on each day and included representation from at least 47 different organizations.

The convening was successful in its aims to serve as a launchpad for transformative action at the individual, organizational, and systems levels. One notable example is the Summit's impact on service provision to DCFS-involved parents.

The Summit revealed for many the little-known fact that Los Angeles County is one of the only jurisdictions in California that does not fund parents' mandated case plan services. When this information came to the attention of the newly appointed DCFS director, he prioritized efforts to rectify this injustice.

Additionally, Summit materials, which are publicly available, have been used by various stakeholders for training purposes.

Maltreatment Prevention

The Commission remained steadfast in its efforts to prevent maltreatment and unnecessary involvement with the child welfare system during the review period.

Mandated Supporting Initiative (Initiative)

The Commission and its partners continued the work to transform LA County from a system of mandated reporting to mandated *supporting* of families in need. Achieving this goal will require moving the needle in three core areas:

- improving mandated reporter training and support;
- rectifying flawed legislation and organizational policy; and
- building pathways to facilitate reporters' capacity to link families in need to high quality, community-based services and supports.

Stakeholder Engagement

In Spring of 2022, stakeholder listening sessions and informational interviews commenced. By the end of the year, more

than 60 educators from various school districts and education-focused nonprofit organizations had been engaged to allow their experiences to inform the work of the Initiative.

Commission representatives and other Initiative partners also conducted a series of informational presentations on the effort with a wide array of stakeholders, including County department heads, philanthropy, school districts, education nonprofits, and community-based organizations.

Collaboration

Effective collaboration has been foundational to the Mandated Supporting Initiative, and whenever possible, Commission representatives have supported mutually reinforcing efforts led by other partners. One such example was Commission participation in the Office of Child Protection-led Community Supporting Workgroup. This workgroup was convened in response to a Board motion related to the tragic critical incident involving Andres F., who was tortured and severely beaten by his foster mother. The goals of the workgroup are to develop training materials and processes that strengthen community

health care providers' capacity to identify child abuse, without widening the net and unnecessarily bringing families into contact with the child welfare system.

Similarly, a Commission representative is a part of an Inglewood Unified School District-specific mandated reporting workgroup, in partnership with Gita Murthy Consulting, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, DCFS, and other stakeholders.

Statewide Advocacy

Mandated reporting reform is being propelled by significant momentum throughout the state of California. During this period of review, Commission representatives met with an array of statewide stakeholders, including representatives from the State Legislature, California Child Welfare Council, and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) regarding LA County's reform efforts and how they align with the vision for statewide reform. Commission representatives will serve on a mandated reporting reform workgroup that was convened by the California Child Welfare Council to coordinate reform efforts statewide.

The Commission worked with the Second Supervisorial District and the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs Division (CEO) to secure a County "support" position for California Assembly Bill (AB) 2085, which serves as a major victory in the mandated reporting reform effort. AB 2085, which went into effect on January 1, 2023, and was sponsored by long-time Commission partner, Children's Law Center, limits the definition of reportable general neglect to only include circumstances wherein the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness, and affirms that general neglect does not include a parent's economic disadvantage.

Similarly, the Commission also worked with the Second Supervisorial District and the CEO to secure a County "support" position for California Senate Bill (SB) 1085. This bill also went into effect on January 1, 2023, and prohibits a child from being subjected to court supervision or family separation based solely on the family's economic hardship.

Los Angeles County Prevention Services Task Force

In March 2022, the Los Angeles County Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

(ARDI) Initiative launched the Prevention Services Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force was established in response to the November 2021 'Establishing the Los Angeles County Office of Prevention Services' Board motion, which called for development of recommendations for integrated countywide infrastructure to prevent negative outcomes and promote holistic well-being, with a focus on countering racial disproportionality. A Commission representative co-led the Prevention Task Force's Disproportionality Working Table, in partnership with representatives from the County's Chief Information Office, and Forward Change Consulting. The Disproportionality Table was charged with developing recommendations for prevention and promotion metrics and addressing disproportionality in key domains. Commission representatives also served as members of the Disproportionality Table, as well as the Coordination Table, which was tasked with developing recommendations for coordinating existing and emergent prevention initiatives countywide.

Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development

Commission representatives served on the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development (Roundtable). One of the major activities undertaken this year by the Roundtable was establishing Los Angeles County's capacity to leverage new state funding for development of new child care facilities and improvements to existing facilities. Another focus area was collaboration with an array of key stakeholders on implementation of expanded Transitional Kindergarten and Preschool in school districts across the County. The Roundtable also continued to be involved in the COVID-19 response by supporting early care and education providers and families throughout the County.

First 5 LA

A Commission representative continued to serve on the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. During this period of review, this role involved engagement in development of policy priorities, advocacy to strengthen the countywide home visiting infrastructure, and planning for Families First Prevention Services Act Community

Pathway implementation. The Commission representative helped to refine First 5 LA's strategic plan to reflect changing priorities, including refinement of the North Star, the overarching goal of systems change, and long-term outcomes. Finally, the representative assisted with recruitment of the organization's new executive director.

Family First Prevention Services Act

Commission representatives were actively involved in the County's planning for implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) in 2022. This included participation in the FFPSA Advisory Committee, Policy and Training Workgroup, and Communications Workgroup. A significant focus during this period of review was development of the proposed FFPSA Community Pathway, in partnership with schools, the early childhood education system, and other key stakeholders.

A Commission representative also served on the statewide Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee of the California Child Welfare Council, which advises the California Department of Social Services on the state FFPSA plan.

Thriving Families, Safer Children

Commissioners continued to serve in leadership roles with the Thriving Families, Safer Children (TFSC) initiative. During this period of review, 40 visioning sessions were held with approximately 400 residents of targeted communities countywide. Visioning session findings informed the TFSC Community Report, which centered the voices and priorities of residents.

Finally, community-driven projects that were also informed by the visioning sessions, are in development in partnership with the organizations, Para Los Ninos, SHIELDS for Families, and Strength Based Community Change (SBCC).

Equity and Racial Justice

Racial Justice Committee

The Commission's Racial Justice Committee (RJC), which was created to drive the Commission's work to improve outcomes for Black youth and families, continued to thrive during this period of review. Both the Mandated Supporting Initiative and Knowledge is Power Summit were initiated in the RJC.

On November 17, 2022, the Commission submitted an RJC-drafted letter to the Board condemning racist remarks made by Los Angeles City councilmembers and calling for the resignation of a councilmember who refused to step down.

During the reporting period, RJC members took a keen interest in the Risk Stratification Model, a predictive algorithm being piloted by DCFS. The department intends to use the tool to designate families who will receive enhanced support. RJC members were concerned that despite best intentions, the racial bias inherent in our data systems would inevitably impact Black families by contributing to higher risk scores that would increase the families' likelihood of having a DCFS case opened.

The Risk Stratification Model was the focus of several RJC meetings and members attended the DCFS Risk Stratification Model Stakeholders Forum to learn more about Risk Stratification and to discuss the concerns.

Countywide Efforts to Address Racial Disparity and Disproportionality

DCFS ERDD Advisory Committee

RJC members served on the DCFS-led Los Angeles County Eliminating Racial Disparity and Disproportionality (ERDD) Advisory Committee, which aims to steward the County's efforts to eradicate racial disproportionality and disparity among child welfare-impacted families. During the reporting year, RJC members' contributions were focused in the areas of faith-based partnerships and prevention.

SPA 6 Community Engagement Forum

In Spring 2022, a Commission representative served as MC for the SPA 6 Community Engagement Forum. The Community Engagement Forum brought together public sector, non-profit, and community stakeholders for shared learning and relationship building in support of improving outcomes for Black and Brown children and families.

ERDD Roundtables

A Commission representative participated in ERDD Roundtables held by the DCFS Vermont Corridor Regional Office. ERDD Roundtables are a type of case staffing model wherein investigating social workers present complex referrals involving Black families to participating stakeholders for

their input in developing the best plan of action for the family. The goal of ERDD Roundtables is to safely divert families from DCFS to community-based services whenever possible.

Barriers to Addressing Racial Disproportionality Report

Commission representatives were interviewed for and provided feedback on the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Families-drafted *Report on Barriers to Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare*. The soon-to-be released report was developed in response to a 2001 Board motion calling for the reimagining of child welfare in Los Angeles County.

Addressing TAY Homelessness

During this period of review, the Commission identified preventing and addressing homelessness among systems-impacted Transition Age Youth (TAY) as a priority. The Commission held a series of meetings to understand the complex issue from the perspectives of government agencies, such as DCFS and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), transitional housing providers, advocates, and youth.

Juvenile Justice

As the Probation Department continued to struggle during this reporting period, the Commission's Juvenile Justice Committee partnered closely with the Probation Oversight Commission to remain abreast of conditions for youth in facilities. Juvenile Justice Committee members convened a meeting with the Third Supervisorial District and advocates to encourage Board support of California Assembly Bill 2417.

AB 2417, which ensures that counties throughout the state adhere to the Incarcerated Youths' Bill of Rights, was signed into law in September 2022.

Learning Exchanges

Partnerships with Philanthropy

The Commission has a long history of collaborating with philanthropy to develop and implement initiatives that aim to improve outcomes for child welfare impacted children, youth, and families.

During this period of review, Commission, philanthropic, and Board representatives partnered to disseminate the report,

Cultivating Hope through Action: How Public-Private Partnerships are Strengthening Child and Family Well-Being in LA County.

As implied by the name, Cultivating Hope chronicles the trajectory of public-private partnerships as they have deepened in recent years and become a critical component of the County's child welfare infrastructure.

Cultivating Hope was presented at the annual conferences for the Child Welfare League of America and National Funder's Collaborative for Child and Family Well-Being.

Cultivating Hope was also the focus of several meetings with representatives from the State Legislature, the Governor's Office, and policy advocates in Sacramento during the fall of 2022.

International Foster Care Alliance

In September 2022, Commission representatives met with a delegation of International Foster Care Alliance representatives and former foster youth from Japan. The youth, who were inspired

by the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights, translated it into Japanese for use in their country. The delegation was interested in learning from the Commission how they can develop a similar resource to ensure that foster youth and their advocates know their rights and are empowered to advocate for those rights in Japan. The delegation was also interested in learning about creation of the Los Angeles County Youth Commission.

Representative Participation

During this period of review, Commission representatives continued to serve on a number of countywide bodies. In addition to the above-described activities, Commissioners held seats on the Education Coordinating Council and LA County Faith Collaborative. Commissioners also participated in the Office of Child Protection Permanency Work Group and DCFS-led Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRRS) Workgroup. A group of Commissioners also met with DCFS representatives to learn more about the Department's budget.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2022 MEETING TOPICS

Commission meetings are the primary vehicle through which information regarding pertinent topics within the Commission’s purview is shared with Commissioners and other stakeholders. During the reporting year, regular Commission and Racial Justice Committee meetings focused on the following topics:

- Los Angeles County Mandated Supporting Initiative
- Family Urgent Response System (FURS) Implementation in LA County
- Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA): Community Pathways
- Serving Expectant and Parenting Youth (EPY) Under DCFS Supervision
- County Efforts to Address Homelessness
- Addressing Homelessness Among DCFS-Impacted TAY
- Transitional Housing Program Push-Out
- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
- Cultivating Hope through Action Report
- Knowledge is Power Summit
- Centering Youth Voices in Mental Health
- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
- Provider’s Perspective: Meeting the Housing Needs of Transition Age Youth (TAY)
- DCFS Budget
- Thriving Families, Safer Children
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Juvenile Justice Updates
- Community Engagement in Action: “South LA Decides” Initiative
- DCFS’ Risk Stratification Model Implementation
- Thriving Families, Safer Children
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Juvenile Justice Updates

- California State Budget
- Cultivating Hope through Action Report
- Knowledge is Power Summit
- Community Engagement in Action: “South LA Decides” Initiative
- Implications of LA City Council Events for Children, Families, and Communities
- DCFS Child Fatality Data Report
- Plans of Safe Care for Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure
- California State Budget
- Centering Youth Voices in Mental Health
- ICAN Child Death Review Team Special Report, 30-Year Retrospective
- Temporary Shelter Foster Care + Lived Expertise Mentoring Project

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPRESENTATION ON BODIES IN 2022

Education Coordinating Council	Dr. Jeanette Mann
Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity Advisory Committee	Charity Chandler-Cole Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Wendy B. Smith
Family First Prevention Services Act Planning and Implementation Work Groups Advisory Committee Policy and Training Communications Community Pathway	Dr. Tamara Hunter Dr. Jeanette Mann Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey Dr. Wendy B. Smith
First 5 LA Board of Commissioners	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Juvenile Justice Ad Hoc Committee (Commission-Led)	Shimica Gaskins, Co-Chair Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, Co-Chair Maria Brenes Dr. Wendy B. Smith
Knowledge is Power Data Summit Design Team	Tiffany Boyd Charity Chandler-Cole Zaid Gayle Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey Dr. Wendy B. Smith Steve Zimmer
Los Angeles County Faith-Based Collaborative	Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jeanette Mann Lou Moore

<p align="center">Los Angeles County Mandated Supporting Work Group</p>	<p>Tiffany Boyd Gale Caswell Charity Chandler-Cole Zaid Gayle Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jeanette Mann Dr. Wendy B. Smith</p>
<p align="center">Office of Child Protection Permanency Work Group</p>	<p>Dr. Wendy B. Smith</p>
<p align="center">Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development</p>	<p>Steve Zimmer Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey (Alt.)</p>
<p align="center">Prevention Services Task Force</p>	<p>Charity Chandler-Cole Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey</p>
<p align="center">Racial Justice Committee (Commission-Led)</p>	<p>Charity Chandler-Cole, Co-Chair Zaid Gayle, Co-Chair Tiffany Boyd Maria Brenes Gale Caswell Shimica Gaskins Dr. Jeanette Mann Dr. Wendy B. Smith Franco Vega Steve Zimmer</p>
<p align="center">Thriving Families, Safer Children Los Angeles Team</p>	<p>Tiffany Boyd Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey</p>