

PAVING THE ROAD TO SAFETY FOR OUR CHILDREN: *A Prevention Plan for Los Angeles County*



Los Angeles County Office
of Child Protection (OCP)

JUNE 2017

Table of Contents

Purpose of This Plan	3
What We Mean By Prevention	4
What We Know	5
Key Los Angeles County Prevention Investments	7
What We Heard	10
What We Want	11
What We Will Do	12
Where Do We Go From Here?	20
Conclusion	20
List of Contributors	21
Definitions of Acronyms and Initialisms	21
Appendix A: Some of Los Angeles County's Prevention History	22
Appendix B: Research on Effective Prevention Strategies	24
Appendix C: Los Angeles County "Hot Spot" ZIP Codes	26
Appendix D: The Prevention and Aftercare Networks/ Best Start Listening Tour	28



Purpose of This Plan

What parents want for their children is what Los Angeles County wants—for every child to be healthy, to be growing and thriving in a strong family, and to be supported by a safe and nurturing community.

For children who come into contact with the child welfare system, however, this vision can seem unattainable. Many have already experienced some level of harm and trauma, and their families need intensive services to keep from entering (or going deeper into) the system.

In April 2014, in response to a tragic child death, the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection released a detailed report for improving the county's child protection system. It recommended the creation of the Office of Child Protection (OCP) to increase coordination and accountability, and to oversee the development and implementation of a comprehensive countywide prevention plan for reducing child maltreatment.

The OCP addressed this complex charge, in part, by studying the tremendous growth in community-based child- and parent-focused networks that Los Angeles

County has seen over the past decade. These networks include organizations and individuals working together to build solid relationships and to share knowledge, best practices, new ideas, and perspectives. The ongoing success of these networks, coupled with their ever-stronger relationships with family-serving County departments, now presents an historic and unique opportunity for enhancing the protection and well-being of all children in our region.

This plan is our strategy for making the most of this moment. Many County departments and a wide array of partners contributed to the development of this plan, which is a blueprint for partnering with our region's diverse communities to coordinate and expand existing prevention-focused networks to further strengthen families, prevent child maltreatment, and reduce unnecessary burdens on the child welfare system.

Every one of us must "own" prevention. Keeping it at the forefront of all of our minds and every part of our work is the single most important way we can keep our children safe. We share responsibility for achieving this vision; it requires each of us to think differently about how we engage and support families, as well as how we engage and support each other.



What We Mean By Prevention

We believe that connecting families early on to positive family supports will reduce the number of children and families touched by the child welfare system, as well as decrease the length and intensity of interactions for those who must be involved.

By lessening families' contact with child welfare, we also hope to limit their involvement with other systems. A single child abuse hotline call—even when the allegation is not substantiated, a case is not opened, and the child is not removed from the home—can predict a family's later connection to other County systems. (A forthcoming study, for example, found that 83 percent of probation youth had previous referrals to child welfare, 43 percent of them before the age of five.¹) This is especially true when families are not linked to supportive voluntary services at the time of the initial investigation. For families with very young children, research shows that home visitation and early care and education programs have significant effects on the prevention of child maltreatment and a family's reliance on other intensive services.

This plan's definition of "prevention" includes:

- Support for concrete needs like food and housing
- Opportunities for social, recreational, and community connections that reduce isolation and build personal support systems
- Access to economic and employment prospects
- Assistance in navigating the broad and often confusing array of available education, health, mental health, and other services

Research and experience show that a community-based family-strengthening approach offering these key elements can improve parenting skills, enhance child development, increase economic stability, and build a strong foundation for positive future outcomes. That approach should be coupled with improved access to formal government services, when needed, to provide families with a full spectrum of support. Formal services can't meet every need—there simply aren't enough of them—and informal community supports may not be intensive enough to address some families' complex demands. A balance is best.

We want to encourage a culture where communities are equipped to provide families the types of support and connections that reduce their need for more intensive services, and where it is both accepted and expected for families to reach out for help when necessary.²

While this plan begins by focusing on the family supports and services shown to have a positive effect on preventing child maltreatment, it is admittedly a starting place. Our goal is to expand community-based prevention efforts more broadly over time.



¹ Herz, D., Chan, K. (2017). *Los Angeles County Juvenile Probation Outcomes Study, Part II: Assessing the Experiences of Probation-Involved Youth Exiting from Out-of-Home Placements Across Two Cohorts*. California State University, Los Angeles.

² *Child Maltreatment Prevention: Past, Present and Future*. Child Welfare Information Gateway. Available online at www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue_briefs/cm_prevention.cfm

What We Know

Research suggests that child welfare systems experience pressure because families are not getting the support they need early enough, and because some are referred back to the system over and over again.

- One-third of the children in Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services system are age four and under. A recent national study estimates that 37.4 percent of all children will have a protective services investigation by age 18.³
- Of all the babies born in Los Angeles County during 2006 and 2007, 14.6 percent were reported to child protective services before age five, although the majority of these referrals were not serious enough to warrant opening a case. This suggests that people may not know what to do, whom to trust, or where to find help when they suspect a problem is developing.
- As a recent article noted, "The longer that instability lasts, the harder it is for a family to rise back up. At that point, placing children in foster care may be the only option available to us. But what these families really need is [earlier] intervention . . . when they are beginning to struggle but are still relatively stable, and when the intervention wouldn't involve breaking up families."⁴



³ Kim, H., Wildeman, C., Johnson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). "Lifetime prevalence of investigating child maltreatment among U.S. children." *American Journal of Public Health*, 107 (2), pp. 274–280.

⁴ McGrath Tierney, M. "From Family Data to Neighborhood Outcomes." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, November 29, 2016.

Some key early intervention strategies have demonstrated success in improving child outcomes and reducing child maltreatment.

The **Strengthening Families Approach** works to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and effectively nurture young children, especially in times of stress. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five critical protective factors for families⁵—shown below—through community-based supports. It is the “most well-established and broadly used” approach for reducing the risk of child maltreatment.⁶ See page 24 for further information.

The Five Protective Factors



Parental Resilience: the ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family’s life



Social Connections: connections to networks of support essential to parents



Concrete Support in Times of Need: connecting to services to meet basic needs, as well as to address crises that may emerge



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations for children’s behavior



Social and Emotional Competence of Children: a child’s ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate, and communicate effectively

- **Home visitation programs** connect to families at the very earliest stages possible, offering critical support to expecting and new parents. With a combination of parenting information, coaching, and connections to key services, home visitation has been proven to increase parenting skills, enhance child health and development, raise high school graduation rates, lessen juvenile justice involvement, and reduce child maltreatment.⁷
- **High-quality early care and education programs** (child care or preschool) that include support for families can also help to prevent maltreatment. For example, participants in the Chicago Parent Child program, which includes a half-day preschool program for three- and four-year olds along with comprehensive family services, had significantly lower rates of substantiated abuse and neglect.⁸
- Some **community-level child abuse prevention strategies** also have promising results—highlighting the voices of parents, mobilizing volunteers, engaging a broad range of community residents, and improving connections among economic development, health care, and social service sectors.⁹

Ensuring that prevention-oriented services are available, culturally competent, and accessible in local communities can provide support for families before problems escalate. In turn, knowing that community-based agencies are ready and willing to help also bolsters the child welfare system—strengthening the families it serves, increasing opportunities for family economic development, assisting social workers in their search for appropriate service referrals, and helping parents navigate local health, education, and family service systems.

⁵ “The Protective Factors Framework.” Center for the Study of Social Policy. www.cssp.org.

⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway (2014). *Protective factors approaches in child welfare*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁷ “Home Visiting.” Children Now Issue Brief. On high-school graduation rates, see, for example, *Research Spotlight on Success: Healthy Families America Promotes Child Health and Development*, Healthy Families America, 2008, www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org.

⁸ Reynolds, A.J., Mathieson, L.C., & Topitzes, J.W. (2009). “Do Early Childhood Interventions Prevent Child Maltreatment? A Review of Research.” *Child Maltreatment*.

⁹ Daro, D. & Dodge, K. (2009). “Creating community responsibility for child protection: possibilities and challenges.” *Future of Children*, 19(2), 67–94.



Key Los Angeles County Prevention Investments

Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP)

In 2006, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors directed the establishment of a comprehensive prevention system. This included developing a pilot for implementing the Strengthening Families Approach (page 24) through community-based networks.

As a result, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) established PIDP in 2007. This project built upon existing community networks in each of the County's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs), applying community-organizing approaches to strengthen families' protective factors and increase their economic stability. (Appendix A on page 22 presents more details on the PIDP program.)

Independent evaluations of PIDP conducted in 2009 and 2010 found a "strong and significant pattern of improvements for families in terms of social support (reported by parents in all eight SPAs), decreased re-referrals to [DCFS] (in one of the three areas tested), and more timely permanency for [system-involved children] (in all of the three areas tested)."¹⁰ Evaluators also recommended that the County encourage cross-departmental efforts to share funding and support for prevention.

During the OCP's development of this plan, it became clear that a number of County departments support programs that align very well with PIDP prevention-

related goals. They include community-based programs funded through County contracts and projects operated by County staff who partner informally with community-based service providers. Mapping the status of these programs would be a very helpful next step in building cross-departmental support for prevention.

Although PIDP was successfully implemented across the County, the establishment of an entity for coordinating additional prevention resources and efforts beyond the network funded by DCFS did not materialize.

Prevention and Aftercare Networks (P&As)

Because of PIDP's effectiveness in engaging and strengthening families, DCFS institutionalized its community-based networks in 2015 and established ten countywide Prevention and Aftercare networks (P&As).¹¹ These include a broad range of public, private, and faith-based member organizations—groups that bring resources to the shared goal of preventing child abuse and neglect, along with designated lead agencies responsible for convening, organizing, and leading local grassroots efforts.

The P&A organizations are part of a critical web of providers across the county that effectively reach out to and engage parents, assisting them as they navigate often-complex systems of services. In so doing, providers develop relationships with these parents, building upon their natural assets through the Strengthening Families Approach. Those relationships in turn create trusting environments that encourage parents to disclose family needs and access appropriate services earlier, as family stressors occur.



¹⁰McCroskey, J., Pecora, P.J., Franke, T., Christie, C.A., & Lorthridge, J. (2012). "Strengthening Families and Communities to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect: Lessons from the Los Angeles Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project." *Child Welfare*, 91(2): 39–59.

¹¹Eight of the P&As are based in SPAs and two serve countywide populations: Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian families.

Best Start Community Partnerships

While not part of the P&A networks, another important parent-focused community-based network also exists across the county, known as the Best Start Community Partnerships. First 5 LA¹² has been investing resources in 14 communities, bringing together parents, caregivers, providers, and other stakeholders to improve child outcomes and to engage and mobilize residents around issues that positively affect child and family well-being.

A significant number of the providers involved in the Best Start efforts also participate in the P&A networks, and this plan presents a unique opportunity to build on these networks' effective parent engagement. Both have adopted the Strengthening Families Approach mentioned on page 6, which has shown tremendous success in improving outcomes for children and reducing child maltreatment.

IN PRACTICE: Jennifer's Story

Jennifer had a history of postpartum depression. After she had her third child, signs of depression showed up once again and verbal abuse became a factor in her parenting. But the children ran the house and they did what they pleased, causing Jennifer to become even more frustrated.

A parent educator conducted a visit and became concerned about her behavior and the risk of child neglect due to Jennifer's depression. The newborn cried for minutes and was not attended to by his mother, while the oldest daughter, who was 4 years old, grabbed a knife from the counter to open a treat. The parent educator had to remove the knife from the child because Jennifer showed no signs of responding to the situation. As a mandated reporter, the parent educator had to call DCFS, which opened a case and came to Jennifer's home. She was upset and wanted to quit the home visiting program, but the parent educator did not give up and soon Jennifer began to turn her parenting around.

Realizing that she needed help and that help was there for her, Jennifer allowed the parent educator to help safety-proof her home, teach her about boundaries and discipline, as well as support her during the open DCFS case. Now she is seeking a brighter future for her children, including going back to school and contacting other referrals provided by the parent educator, which Jennifer had previously refused to contact. Her depression has also decreased, making her parenting techniques even more successful. At this time, there are no longer any signs of neglect in the home and her parent educator continues to support her when needed. – Richstone Family Center, Best Start Community Home Visiting provider

American Job Centers of California (AJCCs)

The Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) department administers Los Angeles County's portion of the largest workforce development system in the state—American Job Centers of California (AJCCs). The AJCCs are a network of centers structured in alignment with economic development and regional planning efforts to coordinate and partner with workforce development stakeholders. The purpose of the system is to prepare an educated and skilled local workforce that supports the three policy objectives outlined in the California State Workforce Board's state plan for 2016–2020:

- Fostering demand-driven skills attainment
- Enabling upward mobility
- Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to economize limited resources

The AJCC network prioritizes services to target populations and individuals with significant barriers to employment, including those who are homeless, English language learners, veterans, public assistance recipients, current and former foster or probation youth, and re-entering the community from incarceration, as well as those with basic-skills deficiencies or disabilities. Services are provided through strategically located centers and partnerships that bring together resources from the business community, employers, educational institutions, the State of California's Employment Development Department and Department of Rehabilitation, other County departments, and six other Workforce Development Boards. Given the important role that economic stability plays in the well-being of children and families, it is critical that we find every opportunity to ensure that the AJCC network is strongly connected to the other community-based networks already established.

Health Neighborhoods

The County departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Public Health (DPH) have partnered with numerous community organizations to establish "Health Neighborhoods" to improve access to coordinated health and mental health care across Los Angeles County. Participants in this network have committed to work with local agencies to identify available services, make cross-agency referrals for families more seamless, share information as legally permissible, and coordinate services so that families needing care can easily and efficiently receive the support they need.



¹²First 5 LA is a leading public grant-making and child welfare advocacy organization.

Medical Hubs

Over the past several decades, the Department of Health Services (DHS) has established seven Medical Hubs across the County to provide high-quality coordinated health care for children who touch the child welfare system. Services have historically included medical assessments of suspected child abuse or neglect, comprehensive medical exams for children entering out-of-home care, ongoing well-child care and sick visits, and linkages to pediatric specialty care for children with complex medical needs. In coordination with DCFS and DMH, the County has recently brought additional support to the Hubs to ensure that any identified social, mental health, and/or developmental needs are also addressed. As the reach and impact of the Hubs is expanded through further interdepartmental collaboration, the County's health-related agencies and the Office of Child Protection are exploring opportunities to connect these Medical Hubs more significantly with other community-based prevention-oriented networks.

Los Angeles County Community Child Abuse Prevention Councils

In 1989, the California Legislature passed the Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Act, requiring each county to create child abuse prevention councils to promote intervention and prevention activities. In Los Angeles, 12 community-based councils were formed. These, too, have adopted the Strengthening Families Approach and have been working within their communities to reduce child abuse and neglect and to educate the public about abuse and family violence issues.

Landscape Analyses

In 2015, the Advancement Project (a civil rights organization in Los Angeles) conducted a study that looked at referrals to the DCFS child protection hotline by ZIP Code, analyzed the availability of prevention supports in different ZIP Code areas, and identified "hot spots" of high-need communities that would benefit from additional network and community connections. Findings indicated that ZIP Codes 90044, 90003, and 93535 had the highest numbers of DCFS referrals coupled with the lowest number of available prevention supports (see Appendix C: Los Angeles County "Hot Spot" ZIP Codes on page 26). Casey Family Programs has also launched a landscape analysis to identify existing services and supports around six high-need DCFS regional offices.

The recently released child care needs assessment study, *The State of Early Care and Education in Los Angeles County*, also provides an up-to-date analysis of the

landscape of early care and education (ECE) services in the county. Its recommendations raise important issues about the cost of child care and the quality of existing services, and also offer ideas on providing essential supports for the ECE workforce.

Together, these analyses will inform our efforts as we map existing networks and prevention resources and determine how best to enhance and connect them so families in our most vulnerable neighborhoods have timely access to the assistance they need.



What We Heard



Because the premise of this plan builds upon the considerable work of the P&A and Best Start providers in establishing their extensive community networks, we conducted a “listening tour” of six key providers in both networks to learn more about what is working well and what should be improved upon. Twelve consistent themes emerged:

- When we are building stronger families, it's important to understand that children exist within families, and families exist within communities.
- The “five protective factors” from the Strengthening Families Approach (see page 6) are extremely important to successful prevention efforts.
- Economic stability for families is critical, yet it is the most challenging element to achieve.
- Parents need help in connecting to and navigating systems or networks of support.
- Establishing trusted relationships with parents is essential to connecting them to the right services and supports.
- Building authentic partnerships—so that parents are equal participants in building community-based networks of support—is fundamental.
- Trusting relationships take time, and they are an essential precondition to families' accepting and participating in voluntary supportive services.
- While cost is not the main barrier to increasing prevention efforts, flexible funding and some specific additional resources are still needed (for example, mental health, economic stability, informal community events, child care, transportation).
- Connections for communities and community-based organizations to schools and County departments are necessary but inconsistent.
- Connecting existing networks greatly enhances the array of resources available to families, and should be more intentional.
- Categorical funding is often challenging, particularly when it leads to competing reporting requirements that create barriers to providing services.
- Though extensive data exists, a standardized, consistent way to measure and report prevention factors is critical and very much needed.



What We Want

Informed by research, experiences across the County, and best practices, we now have an important opportunity to leverage existing partnerships to prevent child maltreatment. This is not about creating a whole new system of supports, but rather about strategically connecting and leveraging what is known to have a positive effect on prevention that already exists in our communities.

Create a “Network of Networks”

As mentioned, Los Angeles County is home to a number of successful networks, including Prevention and Aftercare (P&As), Best Start Community Partnerships, the community child abuse prevention councils, Medical Hubs, Health Neighborhoods, and other established and emerging groups with a similar family-strengthening focus. Along with important relationships identified by community partners, these networks can be both expanded and more deliberately connected with each other to focus on prevention. By bringing these providers together with faith-based organizations, home visiting programs, early education services, school districts, and other community entities, County leadership can support shared planning with communities and provide more seamless ways for families to access services before their issues can escalate. Community-based organizations and partners can play a critical role in building trust so that families are comfortable reaching out to those supports.

This connected infrastructure of networks can and must be culturally competent and responsive and must support equitable access for families of color, immigrants, expecting or parenting youth, and others facing challenges that undermine child and family well-being. These networks, rooted within the communities where families reside, are responsive to on-the-ground community issues and needs. They can share promising practices, new and innovative ideas for serving families in the child welfare system—particularly those aimed at reducing the overrepresentation of African-American and American Indian families and of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth—and pilot-test new partnerships between community groups and government, as well as innovative strategies for preventing child maltreatment. Community-based networks can identify holes in the local safety net, and providers can be held accountable for meeting family and community needs.

Support Earlier Access to a Range of Services and Supports

In addition to encouraging early access to services, these community networks also have a proven record of establishing trusting relationships and safe environments in which parents can establish social connections, build economic stability, identify family needs, access necessary services, and receive support in navigating complicated service systems. Networks have a unique role to play by serving families holistically across multiple disparate systems of supports.

Building upon those strengths, the County can partner with communities to create a system of SPA-level navigation hubs, particularly focused on high-need/low-resource “hot spots,” so families can find the help they need and so County staff know where to refer them. To do this, we need to improve cross-agency information-sharing and bring best practices in family engagement to County and community partners alike. This includes ensuring that both County departments and their community-based partners are prepared to understand the effects of trauma on families and how to appropriately respond to signs of trauma—an approach known as Trauma-Informed Care.

The County can also more intentionally and effectively use existing resources by connecting the roll-out of any new funding for family-focused services to these existing networks, rather than adding separate systems unconnected to them. In addition, given the significance to prevention of home visitation and early care and education services, those programs should be strongly integrated into these networks.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of Our Prevention Efforts

As we intentionally connect and strengthen these community-based networks, we must find ways to measure our efforts. That ability is essential to knowing whether we are having the desired effect of preventing child maltreatment, and can also help us tell the story of how investments in prevention work most effectively. We need to incorporate the five protective factors that strengthen families (see page 6) into residents’ experiences at the community level, as well as assess changes in family involvement with the child welfare system.



What We Will Do

Our Seven Strategies

1. Map out and then weave together existing prevention networks.

- We will undertake an inventory of the P&A networks (including lead agencies and providers), the First 5 LA Best Start communities, the emerging DMH/DPH Health Neighborhoods, Los Angeles County's Medical Hubs, and Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services' (WDACS') America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) networks, as well as the aligned work being done by the 12 community child abuse prevention councils, the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, 211, and other identified city- or school-district-sponsored family-focused community-based networks. We will also assess ways to connect other civic or philanthropic efforts that support prevention for the same families and communities. This will give us an opportunity to see if there are gaps in service providers across the County, as well as to identify possible connecting points where we can be more deliberate in "networking the networks."
- We will map the array of prevention-oriented programs and services currently funded or organized by County government with three objectives in mind:
 - » Aligning the work of County departments with this plan
 - » Identifying key stakeholders to participate in governance and funding discussions
 - » Identifying services that should be better aligned with the P&A networks
- We will help community-focused networks link with each other and establish new connections among themselves. The goal is for these networks to weave together, making it easier for families to access services and supports that strengthen their protective factors, delivered by trusted providers, within their own communities.

2. Expand the capacity of the Prevention & Aftercare networks.

Because of the P&A networks' demonstrated efficacy in developing robust linkages and implementing key prevention strategies across the County, we will partner with them to implement this plan and rely on them to serve as the leads for expanding prevention efforts that support families and strengthen neighborhoods and communities.

- We will work to support the capacity of the P&A networks to serve families early on—particularly those at risk of entering the child welfare system. While many of these agencies already provide home visiting and early care and education services (or connect to agencies that do), we want to increase their capacity to connect interested families to these and other important services.
- We will explore avenues to expand the capacity of the P&A networks to connect families to a broader array of opportunities for workforce preparation, employment, and financial stabilization (community colleges, WorkSource Centers, etc.).
- We will build on the work of First 5 LA in developing trauma-informed care approaches and infusing them into our work with families, understanding the effect that environment has on a family's well-being and capacity to thrive.



3. Create a universal home visitation system.

In response to a motion from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in December 2016, the Department of Public Health—in partnership with the OCP, First 5 LA, the Los Angeles County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium, the Children's Data Network (CDN), the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and the departments of Mental Health, Public Social Services, Children and Family Services, Health Services, Public Library, and Probation—will develop a plan for creating a Countywide voluntary universal system of home visitation services so that all families who are interested can be connected to supports early on that strengthen their protective factors. Using various eligibility requirements and funding streams, this system will strategically expand capacity and improve integration across these critical programs, and help home visitation providers assist families in connecting to other services they need. More intentionally linking these programs to community-based networks will provide a proven prevention resource.

IN PRACTICE: Mary's Story

Mary has been in a home visiting program for two years. She's a full-time mom with two boys, ages 4 and 1. The older child has been diagnosed with autism and the other has language delays and possibly autism. Mary is grateful for the home visiting program because it allows her to learn more about her sons' development and to pursue personal and family goals that otherwise wouldn't have been established.

Most of all, parent educators have given her significant encouragement and hope. Mary now believes her children, and she, are capable of making their dreams a reality. She realizes that although her children may have a disability, they can still be successful in life and tries to teach them this every day through education and encouragement. She has learned that although she cannot be a perfect parent, she strives to better herself and is eager to learn different parenting practices so that she may be able to enhance the life of her family. Mary can truly see the positive outcomes, and feels she can now advocate for her children to receive the services they not only need, but deserve.

—Richstone Family Center

4. Improve access to early care and education (ECE) programs.

We will call on stakeholders to enhance partnerships among the County's Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council, LACOE, school districts, First 5 LA, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, and others to work on improving access to ECE for those families interested in participating. Many ECE programs have complicated enrollment processes with short and narrow enrollment windows that may not align with the child care

needs of vulnerable biological families, resource families, or relatives who work or go to school. Immediate goals include mapping ECE resources, providing information on this complex system to County departments and their community partners, helping families served by County departments access and navigate the ECE system, linking entities specializing in ECE to P&A networks and family-serving County departments, and enhancing the ability of the Department of Children and Family Services to make referrals electronically and track whether or not services are received. Over the longer term, we hope to develop strategies for utilizing existing ECE resources more efficiently regardless of funding source, and for seizing opportunities to expand the quality and availability of ECE services in communities with the largest gaps between supply and demand. As with the approach to home visitation described in strategy 3 above, shared planning is needed to align and maximize resources, given varying funding streams and eligibility criteria.

5. Monitor the overall well-being of communities.

Building upon the landscape analyses conducted by the Advancement Project and Casey Family Programs (see Appendix C: Los Angeles County "Hot Spot" ZIP Codes, page 26), plus the child care needs assessment study discussed earlier, we will continue to look at the well-being of communities across Los Angeles with an eye toward elements that prevent child maltreatment—social connections, economic stability, access to behavioral health services, etc. Our review will include a "Portrait of Los Angeles" (made possible by a Productivity Investment Fund grant recently awarded to the OCP) that will systematically measure health and longevity, educational attainment, and economic stability in Los Angeles County neighborhoods. This will help us better understand how to more specifically target family-strengthening prevention efforts in different communities, as well as provide a consistent way of measuring economic stability, which the P&As identified as a need.

6. Develop standardized measures of prevention to evaluate our efforts.

We will establish a standard set of indicators to measure our investments in prevention and to assess individual, community, and population-level impacts. Because prevention providers routinely knit together multiple funding sources to support their work, we will also recommend ways to standardize and streamline the different reporting requirements of County departments and other funders. This includes building on other data-collection efforts like the "Portrait of Los Angeles" and work being done by the Children's Data Network.



As mentioned earlier, recent analyses from the CDN are beginning to describe the experiences of children and families with multiple systems over time, clarifying interactions and overlaps between services that may not be visible from the perspective of a single system at any one point in time. The CDN should also be able to help in evaluating this countywide prevention plan by tracking changes in child abuse reporting and involvement with the child welfare system, assessing the impact of preventive services on deeper system involvement, and analyzing the effect of pilot projects or planned changes in community-based service delivery designed to reduce continuing or recurrent involvement with deeper-end, more intensive public service systems. These data will inform both the further implementation and expansion of our prevention efforts and the most effective use of our resources moving forward.

7. Implement prevention strategies identified by County departments.

We will continue to work with County departmental leadership to identify and implement ways in which the County can show greater ownership over its role in prevention efforts by building upon family-focused community-based networks and connecting them to important County systems and services. Representatives of County departments on the OCP prevention workgroup have identified many such opportunities, a number of which are already moving forward (see below).



Los Angeles County Department Commitments to and Efforts in Prevention

Based on the work of the OCP prevention workgroup and recent meetings with County leaders, the rest of this section lists activities underway to advance our work on prevention.

Department of Public Health (DPH)

- The department will report back to the Board of Supervisors on ways to make voluntary home visiting services universally available across Los Angeles County.
- DPH will connect its SPA-based Area Health Officers to the P&A providers for each SPA to strengthen their relationships with these networks.
- It is connecting to the emerging consortia of the Department of Mental Health's Health Neighborhood networks.
- It will work with DMH to enhance access to postpartum depression services and supports.
- DPH will outstation public health nurses in two Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) offices serving low-income mothers enrolled in California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) to help connect them to home visitation and other social services as needed.
- The department is coordinating its text-messaging campaign, *La Familia*, with First 5 LA's family-strengthening campaign and others to incorporate prevention efforts.
- DPH will partner with a Best Start community that has identified the issue of child welfare or prevention as its priority focus to find ways to support local efforts.

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

- DMH is working to coordinate the three-year cycle of its Mental Health Services Act planning for the use of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funding with the larger prevention efforts being coordinated by the OCP.
- The department will maximize opportunities to connect its funding of mental health providers (through PEI or the Mental Health Services Act's Innovations funding) with existing P&A networks. If barriers exist to those providers being included in DMH funding, the department will work with others to provide assistance to those community-based organizations to enhance their ability to compete for DMH funding.



- It is mapping its constellation of providers and specialty services (such as birth to five, dual-diagnosis, early intervention, intensive services) across Los Angeles County to improve access for high-need populations and provide accurate information to its partnering agencies and community referral sources (DCFS, DHS Medical Hubs, DPH).
- DMH will support the development and implementation of the CalWORKs Family Stabilization pilot project being led by DPSS and help connect families who want them to mental health services.
- The department is expanding its System Leadership Team, which makes recommendations to the DMH director on the use of PEI dollars, to include entities focused on child welfare and prevention, including the OCP and First 5 LA.
- As the pilot demonstrates some success, DPSS will partner with First 5 LA, DCFS, and the OCP to consider approaching the California Department of Social Services, if necessary, for CalWORKs and child welfare waivers or other flexibility needed to enhance services to this population. The ultimate goal will be an effective, truly integrated support program for DPSS and DCFS (or pre-DCFS) families that can then be expanded to other communities.
- Given the high overlap of caseloads across these departments, the OCP will work with DPSS and DCFS to explore (with others) a research project to identify early indicators present in DPSS-involved families that could lead to possible DCFS involvement.
- As DPSS continues to implement the state-mandated online CalWORKs assessment tool, it will work with DCFS and the OCP to identify systemic barriers to employment that are also early indicators of potential DCFS involvement.

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

- DCFS identified the benefit of mapping its own categories of providers to ensure intradepartmental connections among those funded through different solicitations. Once this is complete, those providers will be mapped against other networks, including the First 5 LA Best Start community partnerships and the Health Neighborhood providers.
- The department will strengthen the relationships between DCFS regional offices and the lead P&A providers in each SPA. Once points of connection are identified, DCFS can incorporate the standardized reporting on prevention measures into its contracts.
- DCFS will conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of prevention efforts provided through the P&As.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

- Working with First 5 LA, the OCP, DCFS, and SHIELDS for Families, Inc., the department has begun to map how mothers served by DPSS' CalWORKs Family Stabilization program resources might be connected to SHIELDS for Families (the lead P&A network provider in SPA 6) to access needed supports not covered by DPSS' existing array of welfare-to-work services. The purpose of this pilot is to find ways to enhance DPSS connections to community-based P&A agencies to better serve low-income parents with barriers to employment. This effort will also connect to the local Best Start community partnership to further enhance parent connections to community-based supports.

Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS)

- WDACS will ensure that the prevention and aftercare networks (P&As) become an integral part of the countywide workforce system—the America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs)—to prioritize referrals for at-risk families, DCFS families, and youth.
- It will pursue collaborative partnerships with DCFS, Probation, DPH, and LACOE to use data to identify employment and education service gaps for youth, at-risk families, and DCFS families, and determine how to mobilize services to mitigate those gaps.
- Once this stage is complete, WDACS will partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to co-locate three Pupil Services Attendance counselors at select AJCCs to identify and connect opportunity youth from 17 LAUSD high schools to access workforce services. ("Opportunity youth" are defined as youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor employed.) WDACS will work with LACOE and others to expand this re-engagement strategy to the other 80 school districts in Los Angeles County, prioritizing those with high concentrations of foster youth. It will also explore developing a Memorandum of Understanding with LACOE for data-sharing that will further support this effort.





- In September 2017, to further the Purposeful Aging Initiative, WDACS will launch (in partnership with the Public Library, Probation, and DCFS) a mentor-based tutoring pilot through which Title V–Senior Community Services Employment program participants will mentor youth who will then jointly provide tutoring to other youth.
- In partnership with various County departments and other external stakeholders, WDACS will establish a multidisciplinary approach to improve outcomes that promote economic stability and permanency for youth, at-risk families, and DCFS families.
 - It will work with DCFS, Probation, LACOE, and DPSS to align multiple case and service plans in the areas of employment and education. Currently, youth and certain families are required to have a case plan, a transitional independent living plan, a needs and services plan, a welfare-to-work plan, and an AJCC equivalent, but these plans are not jointly created or maintained (with the exception of shared DCFS and DPSS families).
 - In conjunction with DCFS, Probation, DPSS, and the Children’s Law Center, it will initiate referrals to prioritize workforce services for AB 12 youth at age 19 (DCFS non-minor dependents, for instance), ensure that the court requires their participation in workforce services, and prioritize referrals for other family members in need of employment, in support of the DCFS case plan.
- It will work with Probation and LACOE to formalize a process to enroll all youth at probation camps into AJCC services prior to their release. This will improve youths’ overall outcomes through education, training, career planning, work experience, and job readiness, and also reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
- WDACS will incorporate a prevention strategy as a required approach in the Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) strategic plan. The P3 is a major multi-partner effort to increase countywide coordination and collaboration across a broad group of dense systems—education, workforce, social services, child welfare systems, local municipalities, and community-based organizations—to streamline access to services and improve outcomes that promote economic stability.

Child Support Services Department (CSSD)

- CSSD recognizes that economic stability and connections to resources are critical to strengthening families. The department will partner with the P&As to periodically co-locate volunteer staff at sites within each of the 10 networks, and also explore opportunities to co-locate volunteer staff at additional community-based organizations.
- The department will periodically co-locate volunteer staff at the DPSS CalWORKs Family Stabilization pilot’s district office and explore partnerships to expand co-location to additional County offices to ensure that families are aware of services available to assist them with child support.



- CSSD will train its staff on connecting clients to preventive and supportive services within their communities.
- It will distribute information at all of its regional offices about supports available through the P&As.
- It will explore options to partner with the County Library to periodically co-locate volunteer staff at library facilities to expand its reach to families who may need CSSD services.

Public Library

- The Library will expand its Family Place programming so that, by the end of 2018, 86 libraries will host the program. Family Place builds strong bonds between children and their parents while promoting early literacy and connecting families to resources and services. All Family Place parent/child workshops feature a community resource specialist (nutritionist, pediatrician, behaviorist, etc.) who meets informally with parents to offer additional services and resources, as requested.
- Beginning in the fall of 2017, the Library will implement a new outreach program, The Reading Machine, in partnership with other County departments—DPSS, DCFS, DMH, the CSSD, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, DPH, LACOE, Probation, and the OCP—to provide mobile early literacy and caregiver-support services. The program will deploy two vans to targeted sites within nine at-risk neighborhoods, and serve parents, home day care providers, and youth. Caregivers will learn how to engage in meaningful play activities that help them identify developmental issues with their young children, and will receive information on additional available County services.
- In 2017, with financial support from DMH, 10 Library staff will be trained in the evidence-based parent-support program Triple P—the Positive Parenting Program. One Triple P librarian will host multi-session parenting workshops at 52 libraries so that foster parents can satisfy their parenting class requirements. The remaining nine librarians will be trained to conduct one-to-one interactions with parents on developing simple strategies to address common childhood issues such as toilet training, tantrums, sleep problems, getting along with other children, and more.
- All library staff who interact with youth will be trained to use Touchpoints, a parent support model that builds parents' confidence in being their child's first teachers and also helps maintain parent-child relationships during periods of family stress.
- Library staff at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall are implementing programs to help teen parents at the facility understand the importance of early literacy. Board and picture books are being purchased so that youth can take the books home to use with their children. These staff are also in the process of exploring an adapted version of the Family Place program at the Hall to facilitate parent-child bonding.
- This year, in partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Library will expand its *Lunch at the Library* summer program—which introduces parents to resources and materials that support caregiving and promote literacy—from 7 libraries to 13 libraries. It will also open its doors to children age 2 through 18 who are in need of a free meal (access to school lunch programs being limited in the summer). Three to five new lunch sites will be added each year thereafter to expand access to free meals for these children.
- The Library hosts bullying prevention and personal safety programs to help youth learn how to protect themselves and be more aware of their environment. The programs started at 10 libraries in 2014 and will expand to all 87 libraries by the fall of 2018, so that youth throughout the county can learn valuable safety and confidence-building skills.

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

- DPR will work with area schools and community partners to expand parent educational opportunities that create networking opportunities for families and expose parents/caregivers to local resources that support healthy parenting via workshops, informational fairs, and educational classes.
- The department will collaborate with DMH to expand pilot park-therapy programs where families can access free mental health education and wellness programs at park facilities, with the goal of developing this model in other high-need areas.
- Parks and Recreation will partner with the P&As, providing a quarterly brochure of DPR programs—camps, teen clubs, lunch/snack programs, Tiny Tots, sports programs, and special events—while utilizing social-media tools and engaging area school districts to distribute information intended to bring the community together and promote child and family resiliency.





- DPR will build a robust youth council program that invests in youth leadership, creates a space for youth voices in governance by engaging youth in decision-making, and exposes teens to civic engagement and volunteer opportunities. Youth councils will host an annual Youth Summit to gather teen community leaders from throughout Los Angeles County to engage one another and strengthen their leadership skills.
- The department will expand programs such as Parks After Dark to build social cohesion, connect families to resources, lessen crime, and thereby build resilient communities. Programs that create opportunities for families to interact in healthy ways in home and community life will be offered by DPR's community partners.
- The department will partner with First 5 LA and the P&As to provide early-childhood and other parenting information at all park facility public counters.
- DPR will introduce and train staff in trauma-informed approaches to build resiliency in children through its Tiny Tots and after-school programs.

Department of Health Services (DHS)

- DHS Medical Hubs will work with the P&As to ensure that children and families in contact with DCFS are referred to services within those networks, as necessary, to address any needs identified during the on-site assessment process.
- The department's MAMA's Neighborhood program will partner with both DCFS and Probation to identify

pregnant adolescents and facilitate direct referrals to prenatal care and other psychosocial services related to healthy outcomes.

- Through DHS' Whole Person Care pilot program, the department will partner with Probation and DMH to identify high-risk youth with medical, mental health, or substance-use disorders in juvenile camps or halls who would benefit from community-based re-entry support. The goal will be to improve these youth's access to and use of clinical and support services to reduce recidivism.
- The department's Women's Health Programs and Innovation unit will provide support and training to Medical Hub staff and to Probation, juvenile court health services, DCFS, and Sheriff's Department staff on issues related to adolescent sexual health, contraception, pregnancy-options counseling, prenatal care, terminations, and sexually transmitted infection prevention.
- DHS Medical Hubs will focus on providing teen-friendly services, including training nursing staff on non-directional contraception counseling and training clinicians on providing access to all FDA-approved contraception options during teen visits.

Probation Department

- Probation will partner with DPR and the Department of Health Services to expand opportunities that meet the needs of youth and families through a myriad of services (health, mental health, substance abuse, tutoring, legal clinics, etc.) offered in community-based neighborhood service hubs.
- It will partner with WDACS to fully implement a vocational/employment program for probation youth, with specific emphasis on youth transitioning back to the community.
- Over the next 180 days, Probation will create a family-finding unit able to locate family members early in the judicial process, both to increase support for youth and also to enhance the probability of youth being placed with a relative should the need for out-of-home care arise.
- Over the next 180 days, Probation will review current protocols/policies and develop more suitable community-based placement options for youth awaiting re-placement and/or a court hearing that might normally lead to detention in juvenile hall.



- Over the next 120 days, Probation will partner with LAUSD to expand educational opportunities for probation youth by offering credit-recovery services to credit-deficient youth in nontraditional community-based hubs. This effort will allow for youth to be dually enrolled, attending school during normal hours and accessing credit-recovery services after school to increase graduation rates and create post-graduation plans that include continued education/vocational opportunities.
- The department will expand partnerships with community-based organizations to provide traditional support services through the Juvenile Hall Family Resource Centers.
- It will work with faith-based organizations to expand opportunities for families to engage in pro-social networks and support groups, and will explore mentorship opportunities for youth transitioning from camp and from the Division of Juvenile Justice back into their communities.



Los Angeles County Office of Education

- A statewide initiative is currently being rolled out across Los Angeles County that engages school districts in a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). The four pillars of this system address administrative leadership, an integrated educational framework, family and community engagement, and inclusive policy structure and practice. To support these four MTSS pillars, LACOE will work collaboratively and collectively across the county to strategically leverage already existing practices that are known to have a positive effect on prevention in our communities.
- LACOE will continue to partner with federal entities to increase the number of Early Head Start and other infant/toddler services available to children and families

in Los Angeles County.

- LACOE will further provide early learning support by actively engaging various partners and networks throughout the county and by hosting the California Preschool Instructional Network and Early Childhood Education Professional Learning Community.
- LACOE's Division of Special Education (DSE) will be more aggressive in its approach to increase public awareness of important services that exist for children with special needs or suspected needs, through public service announcements, ads in print media, 211, and so on. In addition, DSE will strengthen its partnerships with school districts and Regional Centers to provide technical support for meeting the needs of children birth to age five in general-education settings who are suspected of having special needs. (Early intervention programs can prevent referrals to special education programs before age three.)
- LACOE will guide school districts in transitioning probation students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to comprehensive school campuses by helping districts understand these students' unique challenges and the need to address them by the student's 30-day change-of-placement IEP meeting.

Through the Eyes of Community Residents

An essential attribute of using a network model to implement prevention is that activities take place in neighborhoods, often sponsored by grassroots organizations that are accepted as fellow community members, close to and trusted by local residents. Individuals may not even realize they are participating in a "prevention program," but might tell instead of their personal connection to a specific worker or team who partners with them to help meet challenges and recognize their own abilities. They are more likely to see the organization itself not as a place they come to for appointments, but as a safe space where they make social connections, have fun with other neighborhood folks, share a meal, share opinions, share information, and engage in activities with their families.

As the prevention elements called for by this plan come to scale, residents will experience trusted community members encouraging them to link with their neighbors to find and access beneficial resources and supports. The organizations making up the prevention networks will be seen as places for friends and families to gather—places that advocate for fairness and equity, where everyone is welcome.



Where Do We Go From Here?

Create a Governance Structure to Align Prevention Efforts

To maintain the momentum of the many efforts described in this document and to ensure appropriate focus and accountability, the OCP will institutionalize a formal governance structure for overseeing the implementation of this plan along with other prevention efforts. This structure will connect and coordinate existing networks and entities with important roles to play, and will include leaders from County departments and community partners, including service providers, community-based organizations, the faith-based community, education, law enforcement, resident and youth representatives, and those from the philanthropic sector who focus on prevention. We will also look to non-traditional external partners and find ways to ensure that parent voices continue to inform our work.

The purpose of this governance structure will be to better align and prioritize efforts, not to replicate or supersede existing frameworks.

Identify Ongoing Funding Streams

An ongoing funding stream for prevention implementation will be identified by more effectively using existing funding, leveraging resources, and exploring the possibilities for braiding and/or pinpointing new public and private funding opportunities.

Convene a Data Advisory Committee

We will assemble an advisory group of researchers and data experts to develop a standardized set of measures to capture our investments in prevention. This group should also recommend ways that the County can implement standardized reporting on prevention and make prevention data more publicly available. County departments can use these standards as they fund prevention efforts, so we have a comprehensive view of County investments.

Identify and Implement New, Innovative Approaches

We will continue to pursue opportunities with public, private, community, and philanthropic partners for expanding creative and effective models across the county. Most immediately, the emerging partnership of DPSS and First 5 LA's home visitation provider, SHIELDS for Families, Inc., is finding ways to serve a particularly vulnerable population whom we know disproportionately ends up in the child welfare system—families enrolled in CalWORKs. This work could inform practice at the state level as well. Other populations also tend to be overrepresented in the child welfare system, and we will identify additional innovations to address their unique issues and reduce their disproportional involvement.

Timeframe for Implementation

We aim to implement this plan over the next two to three years. While we feel an urgency to move forward, much of our progress will be dictated by the County's contracting process.

Conclusion

Sizable public and private investments have already been made throughout our region to establish networks of family-focused community- and faith-based organizations to meet the needs of the populations Los Angeles County and its partners are committed to serve. We now need to stabilize the pieces already in place, build and expand them, and deliberately weave them together to ensure a strong, coordinated, sustainable network.

This prevention plan is an important step toward achieving our shared vision—that every child is healthy, growing and thriving in a strong family, and supported by a safe and nurturing community. This vision goes hand in hand with our commitment to prevent children and families from coming into contact with the child welfare system, to minimize the duration of any contact that is necessary, and, over time, to limit their involvement with other intensive service systems.

All partners must "own" prevention and recognize their role in helping to achieve it. This includes working together in new ways to create a seamless framework of support for the children and families we jointly serve, identifying the governance structure and funding needed to sustain these efforts long term, and ensuring this plan's success.

We need to be proactive and forward-thinking to successfully produce the outcomes we all want. Each of us must take responsibility for being more resourceful in our approaches to supporting our children and families within their communities, so that their lives are enhanced in ways that are visible, powerful, and lasting.



List of Contributors

Advancement Project
 Antelope Valley Partners for Health
 Best Start El Monte
 California State University, Los Angeles
 California Youth Connection
 Casey Family Programs
 Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships
 Children's Data Network
 Children's Bureau
 Children's Institute International, Inc.
 Community Child Welfare Coalition
 First 5 LA
 Friends of the Family
 Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN)
 Korean Youth and Community Center (KYCC)
 Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (CEO)
 Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD)
 Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families
 Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
 Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS)
 Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH)
 Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
 Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH)
 Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)
 Los Angeles County Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS)
 Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council
 Los Angeles County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education
 Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)
 Los Angeles County Probation Department
 Los Angeles County Public Library
 Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
 Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles Prototypes
 SHIELDS for Families, Inc.
 South Bay Center for Counseling (SBCC)
 Special Services for Groups
 SPIRITT Family Services
 United American Indian Involvement
 Westside Children's Center

Definitions of Acronyms and Initialisms

AJCC	America's Job Centers of California
CalWORKs	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids
CDN	Children's Data Network
CSSD	Child Support Services Department
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services
DMH	Department of Mental Health
DHS	Department of Health Services
DPH	Department of Public Health
DPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services
DSE	Division of Special Education
ECE	Early Care and Education
LACOE	Los Angeles County Office of Education
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning
OCP	Office of Child Protection
P3	Performance Partnership Pilot
P&As	Prevention and Aftercare Networks
PEI	Prevention and Early Intervention
PIDP	Prevention Intervention Demonstration Project
SPA	Service Planning Area
WDACS	Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services



Appendix A: Some of Los Angeles County's Prevention History

Los Angeles County has a long record of efforts to enhance child protection and prevent child abuse and neglect. Entities such as the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families and the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), along with the First 5 LA Commission, County departments, academic institutions, partners from the philanthropic community, and others have worked for years to prevent child maltreatment. In 2002, the County Board of Supervisors directed the Children's Planning Council, the Commission for Children and Families, the Department of Children and Family Services, ICAN, and other leaders in child and family services to develop a Countywide prevention plan. A 2005 report titled "Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Comprehensive Plan for a Continuum of Family-Centered Community-Based Prevention and Intervention Services for Children, Youth and Families in Los Angeles County" was issued.¹³ Many entities and organizations were consulted. Scores of recommendations were put forth.

That report—like others—found that the lack of a coordinated, effective strategy for prevention was compromising child safety. It noted the existence of many County and community programs, but also recognized the absence of any structure or mechanism through which these programs were coordinated and held accountable to ensure the effective implementation of prevention strategies in communities or across the county.

In an effort to coordinate the systems and resources affecting the prevention of child maltreatment, the County Board of Supervisors in 2014 established the Office of Child Protection (OCP). The OCP became operational in February 2015, and released its countywide Strategic Plan in October 2016. The OCP Strategic Plan has a focus on prevention, with the stated goal of providing "children and families with the upfront supports and services they need to prevent them from entering the child welfare system and/or limit their involvement with the system once they are known to it."

These and other investments by County and non-County entities over the past five to ten years are now in place across the region. These resources are an integral component to creating an infrastructure of prevention, as well as a wealth of knowledge that can inform the County's commitment to prevention and our prevention plan.

Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP)

In 2006, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion directing the establishment of a comprehensive prevention system. This motion called for promoting family-strengthening efforts in safe and stable communities, and further recommended that:

- The Department of Children and Family Services establish a pilot project designed to show how community-based networks could reduce social isolation, improve economic resources for families, and increase access to existing services, supports, and activities
- The Chief Administrative Office (now the Chief Executive Office), in partnership with others, facilitate community meetings and planning workgroups, develop outcomes and indicators, analyze successful models, and develop recommendations for the County

Responding to the first directive, DCFS established PIDP in 2007. This project built on three integrated or "braided" strategies implemented by networks of PIDP providers in the eight geographic Service Planning Areas (SPAs): (a) building social connections by using community organizing approaches; (b) increasing economic opportunities and development; and (c) increasing access to and utilization of beneficial services, activities, and resources. PIDP continued as a demonstration project for several years and was independently evaluated in 2009 and 2010. Evaluators concluded:

"... PIDP findings show a strong and significant pattern of improvements for families in terms of social support (reported by parents in all eight SPAs), decreased re-referrals (in one of the three areas tested), and more timely permanency (in all of the three areas tested). The fact that results were found across levels of prevention underlines the fact that PIDP accomplished just what it was designed to do in only two years. It pilot-tested locally relevant approaches to strengthening families, and demonstrated the potential for significant improvements in child safety and well-being as a result of well-designed prevention services that braid three core elements to create accessible and welcoming webs of community support, activities, and services for families."



¹³ Prevention Workgroup (2005). "Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Comprehensive Plan for a Continuum of Family-Centered Community-Based Prevention and Intervention Services for Children, Youth and Families in Los Angeles County."

Evaluators also recommended that the County work to encourage cross-departmental efforts to share funding and support for prevention. During the process of creating the current prevention plan, it became clear that a number of departments already support programs that align very well with the goals of this plan. These include both community-based programs funded through County contracts and those operated by County staff who partner informally with community-based service providers.

Although the original DCFS pilot project called for in the Board of Supervisors' 2006 motion was created and successfully implemented (as mentioned on page 7), an entity for coordinating additional prevention resources and efforts beyond the network funded by DCFS was never established.

Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN)

The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) was established in 1977 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. ICAN serves as the official County agent to coordinate the development of services for the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It is the largest county-based child abuse and neglect network in the nation, and is co-chaired by the Los Angeles County Sheriff and the Los Angeles County District Attorney. ICAN staff are housed within the Executive Office of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). ICAN was designated as a local child death review team for the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention in 1996.

ICAN consists of 32 county, city, state, and federal agencies represented at the department-head and professional/line levels, along with 12 community-based interdisciplinary child abuse councils. In addition, ICAN's nonprofit partner, ICAN Associates, is composed of volunteer business and community members who raise funds and public awareness for programs and issues identified by ICAN. ICAN's activities are carried out through committees of public sector and private sector professionals with expertise in child abuse/neglect. These groups address critical issues affecting the well-being of the most vulnerable children in the County, and include committees on policy, operations, victim services for commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC), cyber-crime prevention, child death review, child and adolescent suicide review, pregnant and parenting teens, child abduction and reunification, the Family and Children's Index, AB 1733/AB 2994 planning and funding recommendations, a safe sleep for infants campaign, the safely surrendered baby law, data/information-sharing, child abuse/domestic violence protocol development, child abuse protocol development, infants at risk due to prenatal substance abuse, and the California Hospital Network.

ICAN provides advice and guidance on public policy development and program implementation to improve the community's collective capacity to meet the needs of abused and at-risk children. ICAN has a unique ability to bring both department-head-level and line-level professional staff together to work collaboratively, holding forums where staff from different agencies share information and learn about the roles each agency plays in the prevention of child abuse/neglect. As a result of these forums, staff from multiple agencies develop a much deeper understanding of the broad system that is required to most effectively combat child abuse and family violence.

ICAN regularly releases three major reports—*The State of Child Abuse in Los Angeles County*, *the Report of the Child Death Review Team*, and the report on *Safely Surrendered and Abandoned Infants*—and also produces five major training events: the NEXUS Conference, the Children's Traumatic Grief and Loss Conference, cyber-crime prevention symposia, child sexual exploitation trainings, and child and adolescent suicide prevention trainings.

ICAN's work has resulted in many positive outcomes, including:

- The successful sponsorship and passage of legislation that has brought millions of dollars into Los Angeles County for child abuse prevention programs, created the Family and Children's Index, allowed for a greater sharing of health information between medical professionals and case workers for children in the child protection and juvenile justice systems, permitted the secure electronic sharing of information by two-person multidisciplinary teams, and enacted drowning prevention ordinances and child product safety measures
- The development of protocols for the countywide response to reports of child abuse and neglect, guidelines for an effective response to domestic abuse and inter-disciplinary protocols for severe non-fatal child injuries; and guidelines for the mentoring of foster youth
- The development of a countywide public awareness campaign for infant safe sleeping

In addition, the ICAN Hospital Network was created to support child abuse screening, reporting, evaluation, and management in all hospitals serving Los Angeles County residents. This privately funded project will build a data-tracking program and connect hospitals to the child protection system and to each other with regard to births and children under age three served by a hospital, emergency department, or inpatient services.



Appendix B: Research on Effective Prevention Strategies

The urgent need to connect parents early on to available resources is highlighted in a recent study from the University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's Children's Data Network that examines the cumulative risk of becoming involved with the child welfare system for our youngest children. The study found that 14.6 percent of all babies born in Los Angeles County in 2006 and 2007 were reported to child protective services before age five. Of those reported, allegations of maltreatment were substantiated for only about one-third (5.2 percent of those reported) and only 2.4 percent were removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care.¹⁴ Such high rates of reporting, accompanied by much lower rates of substantiation and removal, suggest that many people may not know where to go when family problems begin to develop, and that communities may not have access to the broad range of supports and services needed.

Calls for help may go unanswered because of pressures on the system, and family problems may not be addressed in a timely way. Too often, a cycle of repeated referrals occurs before DCFS eventually becomes actively involved with these families. By that time, their problems may have already escalated.

As another study finds, the longer these instances of seeking services go unaddressed, the more significant the costs are to the child, the family, and society.¹⁵

"The longer that instability lasts, the harder it is for a family to rise back up. At that point, placing children in foster care may be the only option available to us. But what these families really need is [earlier] intervention . . . when they are beginning to struggle but are still relatively stable, and when the intervention wouldn't involve breaking up families."¹⁶

By intervening with families earlier, we are able to enhance positive child outcomes. Building stronger families prevents child maltreatment.

The Strengthening Families Approach

Based in part on experience in Illinois and elsewhere, along with research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), various jurisdictions around the country have begun implementing the Strengthening Families Approach. Within a community-based context, this approach centers on ways to connect parents to ensure that the five positive attributes that research has linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect—"protective factors"—are present for families.¹⁷ One of these protective factors is connecting parents to services in times of need. These factors have been adopted by many jurisdictions with the goal of preventing child abuse and neglect.

The Five Protective Factors



Parental Resilience: the ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family's life



Social Connections: connections to networks of support essential to parents



Concrete Support in Times of Need: connecting to services to meet basic needs, as well as to address crises that may emerge



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations for children's behavior



Social and Emotional Competence of Children: a child's ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate, and communicate effectively

¹⁴ "Cumulative Risk of Child Protective Service Involvement Before Age 5: A Population Based Examination." See *Interactive Cumulative Risk Report*, www.datanetwork.org.

¹⁵ In addition to the individual toll, one recent study by the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business found that for every incident of child abuse, there was a public cost of \$400,533 over the lifetime of the victim. "How Much Does Child Abuse Cost?" chronicleofsocialchange.org, 1/13/17.

¹⁶ McGrath Tierney, M. (2016). "From Family Data to Neighborhood Outcomes." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, November 29, 2016.

¹⁷ "The Protective Factors Framework," Center for the Study of Social Policy, www.cssp.org.



Research on Best Practices

Ample research exists on services that are particularly effective in improving child outcomes and decreasing child maltreatment. Both home visitation and early care and education services have been shown to significantly decrease instances of child maltreatment, as well as to enhance parents' protective factors.¹⁸

Home Visitation

Home visitation connects to parents at the very earliest stages possible, providing critical support to expecting and new parents. Through parenting information and coaching, as well as connections to key supports and services, home visitation has been proven to increase parenting skills, enhance child health and development, raise high school graduation rates, lessen juvenile justice involvement, and reduce child maltreatment.¹⁹

In Los Angeles, we are fortunate to have a network of at least six federally and locally funded home visiting programs across the county. For the past few years, First 5 LA, the Partnership on Early Childhood Investment, the Department of Public Health, and others have funded and supported the Los Angeles County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium in an effort to coordinate this network and develop a shared reporting and accountability system.

Early Care and Education

Evidence also shows that high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs that include support for families can help prevent maltreatment. For example, results from the Chicago Parent Child program, which includes a half-day preschool program for three- and four-year olds along with comprehensive family services, have demonstrated markedly lower rates of substantiated (verified) abuse and neglect.²⁰ Over the last 15 years, the Los Angeles County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, along with the Child Care Planning Committee and the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development, have been working on strategically aligning County services with the early childhood education and child development programs that are supported by federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources. Their goal is not to create a new system, but to strategically connect effective programs into a countywide network dedicated to strengthening families, enhancing child development, and preventing child maltreatment.

This work includes an ongoing partnership with First 5 LA, the Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Universal Preschool, the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Head Start Division, and others to coordinate a countywide approach to improving ECE quality.



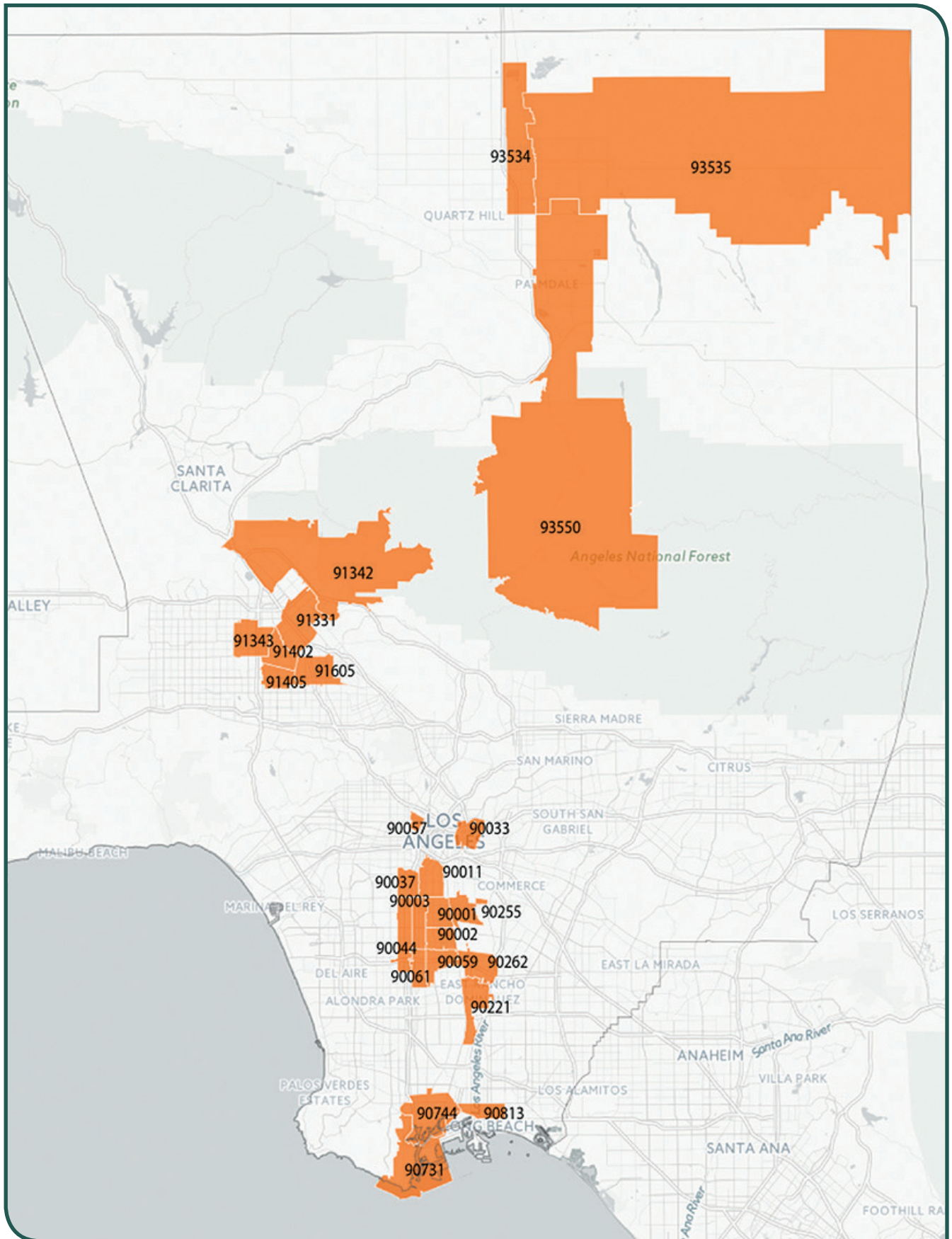
¹⁸ For the effects of home visitation, see "Long-term Effects of Home Visitation on Maternal Life Course and Child Abuse and Neglect: Fifteen Year Follow-up of a Randomized Control Trial," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997, as cited by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' motion on home visitation, December 20, 2016.

¹⁹ "Home Visiting," Children Now Issue Brief. On high-school graduation rates, see, for example, *Research Spotlight on Success: Healthy Families America Promotes Child Health and Development*. Healthy Families America (2008). www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org.

²⁰ Reynolds, A.J., Mathieson, L.C., & Topitzes, J.W. (2009), "Do Early Childhood Interventions Prevent Child Maltreatment? A Review of Research." *Child Maltreatment*.



Appendix C: Los Angeles County "Hot Spot" ZIP Codes



Top 25 Los Angeles County Prevention Need and Maltreatment ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood	Prevention Need Rank	Maltreatment Rank	Average Rank
90003	South L.A.	2	1	1.5
90044	Athens	5	2	3.5
90002	Watts	6	4	5
91402	Panorama City	4	7	5.5
93550	Palmdale/Lake Los Angeles	1	12	6.5
90059	Watts/Willowbrook	7	10	8.5
90011	South L.A.	18	5	11.5
90037	South L.A.	21	3	12
91405	Van Nuys	8	22	15
90057	Westlake	9	23	16
90001	Florence/South L.A.	20	15	17.5
91331	Arleta/Pacoima	25	11	18
90061	South L.A.	19	18	18.5
90033	Boyle Heights	40	6	23
90221	East Rancho Dominguez	26	21	23.5
91342	Lake View Terrace/Sylmar	29	20	24.5
90731	San Pedro/Terminal Island	37	13	25
91605	North Hollywood	27	24	25.5
93535	Hi Vista	43	9	26
91343	North Hills	45	8	26.5
90255	Huntington Park/Walnut Park	16	41	28.5
90744	Wilmington	46	16	31
93534	Lancaster	49	17	33
90813	Long Beach	3	63	33
90262	Lynwood	33	34	33.5



Appendix D: The Prevention and Aftercare Networks/Best Start Listening Tour

In addition to studying the research on effective approaches and services and documenting our experience with various prevention efforts, we also went straight to the source. To learn more about what works and what can be improved upon, the OCP, the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, and First 5 LA undertook a “listening tour” of Prevention and Aftercare network (P&A) and Best Start providers. These community meetings identified 12 themes that were consistently articulated across these networks:

- **It’s important to focus on the child/family/community levels.** The goal is to build stronger families; children exist within families, and families within communities.
- **The critical strategies connected to “protective factors” are consistently recognized.** Much similarity exists in how the DCFS prevention networks and the Best Start communities approach child well-being, strengthening families and communities through: (1) increasing social connections (decreasing isolation) of parents and families; (2) improving the economic opportunities and conditions of families; and (3) enhancing a family’s ability to access appropriate and responsive supports or services in times of need. Several entities referred to these critical three elements as the “braided strategies.” Some P&A providers add two additional factors: the social/emotional competence of adults, and a family’s increased economic opportunity, stability, and security. There is an overall recognition of the important impact protective factors have on prevention.
- **There is also recognition of the vital yet challenging role of economic stability.** Many conveyed that of all the factors embedded in the three strategies, “economic opportunity and stability” was the most difficult to address and to achieve. Interestingly, the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services (DPSS)—which manages many streams of income support for families—was not often cited as a department with which the networks had a strong connection. Navigating mainstream systems such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Earned Income Tax Credit, CalFresh, and others was also cited as a challenge.
- **P&As and Best Start communities have a critical role in helping parents connect to and navigate systems or networks of support.** All discussed the difficulties parents have in finding their way among networks and separate systems of services; organizations often play an essential role with navigation assistance. One theme expressed was the importance of looking at what is already in communities and finding ways to connect resources so support is more effective and integrated—it’s about connecting to what already exists.
- **Beyond navigation, it’s also about establishing trusted relationships between parents and providers.** In addition to the themes of navigation and access, the importance of trust came up consistently. A relationship with a trusted individual or organization is crucial in a couple of ways. First, parents need a trusting relationship with someone they can have an honest conversation with (“letting their guard down”) about barriers or issues being faced by their families, especially when those issues include immigration status, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, the clearing of criminal records, etc. The second element is a trusted network of services—appropriate, beneficial, and responsive (including culturally) to the needs of the adult or family. This theme is much less about parents’ need for “information and referral” than it is about building trusting relationships, helping parents connect to appropriate services, and keeping tabs to make sure services are provided. Many mentioned needing to actually go with parents—occasionally providing the transportation—to connect to services (sometimes referred to as a “warm hand-off”) and to following up with parents to ensure they are accessing the services and supports needed.
- **Building authentic partnerships with parents is key.** Trusting relationships require authentic partnerships with parents, where they are seen both as equal to and as potential resources for others at the table—community-based organizations and providers, department representatives, etc. Oftentimes the parent voice is not as well incorporated as it should be.
- **Developing trusting relationships takes time.** Given the importance of trust and families’ feeling they are in a trusting environment, this work takes time. Examples of uncovering “deeper” issues in families only after working with them for a period of time surfaced in many conversations. Some entities referenced four to six months for those relationships to be developed.





- Though they are not the main barrier to enhancing prevention, some specific additional resources are needed.** Overall, issues of helping parents access services and supports centered around the need to develop trusting relationships and trusted navigators, but specific service gaps were also identified in several conversations. Those most often cited were in children's mental health and postpartum depression treatment, as well as resources to enhance economic stability. In addition, many expressed a need for flexible funding to engage parents via informal community events while also supporting logistics like child care, event venue fees, and transportation.
- County department connections to communities are vitally important . . . and remain inconsistent.** Relationships with the regional/local offices of various County departments affect local networks and communities. Many providers serve several jurisdictions and could compare areas in which those relationships helped or hindered a network's ability to engage parents and families. For prevention, relationships with regional DCFS offices are key, and those depend greatly on the individual regional administrators. Many participants also cited connections to schools as important, but often missing, because access depends on one-on-one relationships with the principal.
- Connecting networks greatly enhances the array of resources available to families, and should be more intentional.** Family-serving networks are innovative and nimble, and have found effective ways to connect to other supports. Significant differences exist in how networks are structured and operationalized, but what they have in common is providing an environment that engages parents and connects them to resources and services that are funded by a broad variety of entities. Various network meetings, community workgroups, Best Start community partnerships, and other forums bring together parents and needed resources. Some are formal (getting into a program, for example), and many are informal (a plumber who is able to help out a neighbor at a lower price than if the neighbor had to call a business). Many networks are able to set up workgroups when gaps in necessary services and supports are identified, and find ways to connect to others providing them. As important as this is, several entities mentioned that this could be much more intentional (some suggested it be mandated and measured for accountability).
- Categorical funding and reporting requirements are often challenging.** From a provider perspective, the categorical nature of funding complicates the goal of connecting families to critical services, requiring navigators to piece together multiple requirements and funding streams that can be flexibly used to meet family needs. Providers also pointed to the different reporting requirements for each funding stream as a barrier contributing to a disjointed system. They further noted that funding is generally for direct services, making it difficult to fund community support/trust-building strategies.
- Though a lot of data exist, there is no standardized, consistent way to measure and report on prevention.** This is critical and needed. Related to the focused strategies and related outcomes ("the protective factors"), participants sent a consistent message that we need to do more to measure prevention in a standardized, consistent way. This would enable us to better measure progress and consistently tell the story of the importance of investing in prevention. Although each P&A provider collects data uniquely, there is no common framework, without which it's hard to demonstrate a direct impact on prevention.

