



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

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January 31, 2018

To: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair  
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From: Judge Michael Nash (Ret.)   
Executive Director, Office of Child Protection

## Education Coordinating Council 2017 Annual Report

### Background

The Education Coordinating Council (ECC) is a public-private partnership that was created in 2004 by the Board of Supervisors to raise the educational achievement of system-involved youth in Los Angeles County. ECC members include department directors from Children and Family Services, Probation, and Mental Health, superintendents from Los Angeles County school districts, and the presiding judge from the Juvenile Court, as well as advocates, representatives from community-based organizations, and a former foster and former probation youth. The ECC currently functions under the umbrella of the Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection (OCP).

The California Department of Education recently published data on the performance of foster youth on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) website. Just 19% of students in foster care score as proficient or above in English Language Arts, compared to 44% of students statewide. Similarly, 12% of foster youth score as proficient or higher on the Math portion of the CAASPP, compared with 33% of students statewide.<sup>1</sup> School stability is also an area of concern, as one-third of foster youth attend two or more schools during a single school year, compared to 7% of students statewide.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, foster youth have the highest dropout rates and the

<sup>1</sup> Alliance for Children's Rights, Court Companion to the Foster Youth Education Toolkit (2017) & California Department of Education at: <http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov>.

<sup>2</sup> Barrat, V. X., & Berliner, B. (2013). The Invisible Achievement Gap, Part 1: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California's Public Schools. San Francisco: WestEd.

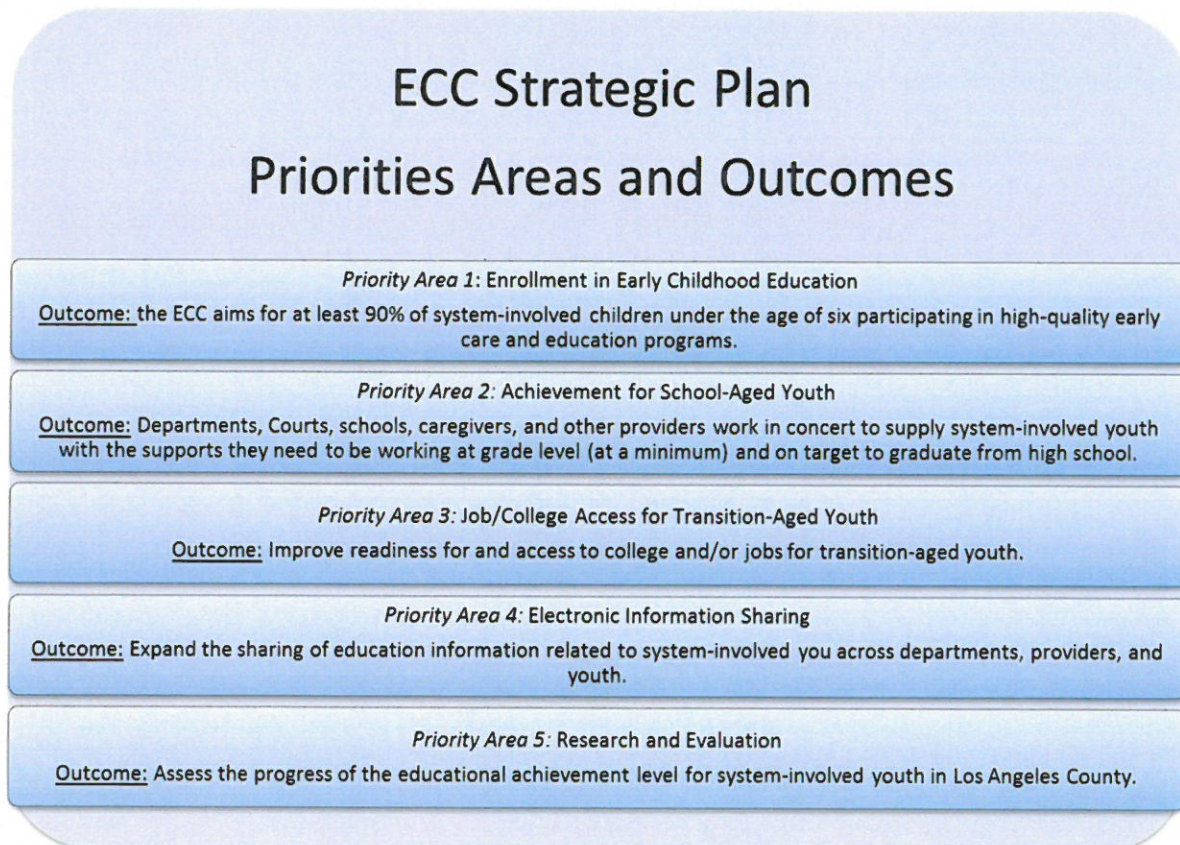
lowest graduation rates of all student demographics. The single-year dropout rate for students in foster care is 8%, compared with 3% of students statewide. Likewise, just 58% of students in foster care graduate from high school, compared with 84% of students statewide.<sup>3</sup> This data demonstrates the clear and continued need for improvements in educational achievement for this population.

Consistent data regarding these measures at the county level does not currently exist. It is a priority for the ECC to facilitate the collection and sharing of robust county-level data to assess these measures locally.

The purpose of the ECC is to coordinate efforts across organizations and jurisdictions, encouraging varied networks to cooperate to expand best practices and help fill gaps to prevent system-involved children from being left behind educationally. It does this by mobilizing supports across stakeholder groups, brokering solutions and collaborations among child-serving entities, and spearheading strategies that bolster the increased educational achievement of the County's foster and probation youth.

### **ECC Strategic Plan (2016–2021) Implementation**

The 2016–2021 ECC Strategic Plan outlines priority areas, outcomes, and action items around which the ECC engages to accomplish its mission. The chart below shows the five priority areas and their related outcomes.



<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### **Priority Area I: Enrollment in Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

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.

In partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the ECC created a workgroup to address the issue of connecting foster youth in Los Angeles County to early childhood education programs. Workgroup members—diverse stakeholders including the County, advocates, universities, nonprofits, and ECE providers—shared work currently being done in this area and examined and collaborated on both short- and long-term solutions.

Immediate workgroup 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, and enhancing DCFS's ability to make referrals electronically and to track whether or not services are received. Over the longer term, this workgroup hopes 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.

Since the June 2017 release of the OCP's prevention plan, *Paving the Road to Safety for Our Children*, this workgroup has been subsumed into the overall prevention work and transferred to the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development (staffed by the County's Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education), which now leads it.

### **Priority Area II: Achievement for School-Aged Youth**

#### School Stability

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed by President Barack Obama in 2015, requires local child welfare agencies and school districts to jointly establish long-term transportation plans to enable prompt transportation to foster youths' schools of origin—at detention or placement change—to facilitate educational stability for foster youth.

On February 7, 2017, the Board of Supervisors directed the OCP and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)—in consultation with DCFS, the California Department of Education, the ECC, County Counsel, various public-interest law firms, philanthropy, and community-based organizations that serve foster youth—to create an implementation plan and timeline for compliance with ESSA's school-stability provisions.

To address this Board motion for Los Angeles County school districts, the ECC and LACOE convened the named parties into an ESSA Transportation Workgroup. Members soon determined that an interim ESSA transportation pilot could provide opportunities both to ensure the transportation of foster youth to their schools of origin in the short term, and also to collect data to project future costs and identify lessons learned, thereby informing a long-term transportation plan.

To facilitate the ESSA transportation pilot, the Board passed a motion on May 2, 2017, requiring a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the funding and logistics for transporting youth to their schools of origin. The ESSA workgroup developed a pilot that includes transportation methods such as caregiver reimbursements, bus passes or transportation vouchers for public transportation, and using or modifying existing school bus routes within districts, as well as a private transportation vendor, Hop Skip Drive, which has contracted with LACOE. (As part of the company's stringent safety features, Hop Skip Drive hires trained drivers who must have a minimum of five years of child care experience.) The workgroup also developed a standardized joint protocol to guide "best-interest" determinations—whether students should remain in their schools of origin (the presumption) or change schools.

Implementation of the ESSA transportation pilot began in September 2017 and is projected to continue through June 2018. To date, at least 70 students from a variety of school districts have been or are being transported through this pilot. Substantial new procedures have been developed as well, including an electronic system that allows child welfare to notify school districts when students are detained or change placement. In addition, systems changes (such as enhanced engagement with children's Education Rights Holders) have been the subject of school-stability trainings for 817 children's social workers and are being implemented in the field.

An evaluation of the pilot (being conducted through the Children's Data Network by Dr. B.K. Elizabeth Kim, professor of social work at the University of Southern California) will help us understand, analyze, and effectively incorporate lessons learned into long-term ESSA transportation plans between DCFS and local education agencies (LEAs)/school districts. As ways to improve the pilot emerge, the Workgroup and pilot parties continue to update procedures. Once the pilot ends in June 2018, a report to the board will be submitted in July 2018.

With input from the Workgroup and data from the evaluation, the Alliance for Children's Rights is taking the lead in developing an initial draft of a Long-Term ESSA Transportation Plan. This plan will be used as the interagency agreement between DCFS and LEAs and includes the legal requirements of ESSA. Processes developed during the pilot will guide the plan's content, which will incorporate clear written procedures governing how transportation for children to remain in their schools of origin is provided, arranged, and funded for their duration in foster care.

The workgroup will conduct outreach to help facilitate DCFS and all 81 school districts signing on to long-term ESSA transportation plans.

#### Continuum-of-Care Reform (CCR)

In November 2017, the ECC entered into an interagency MOU regarding continuum-of-care reform (CCR) with the Los Angeles County departments of Children and Family Services, Probation, and Mental Health, and LACOE. The ECC's role in this agreement is to work with members and stakeholders to gather input on and advocate for best practices regarding:

- Addressing the educational and emotional needs of system-involved youth in schools
- Coordinating school-based mental health services with other mental health supports
- Utilizing Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)/school district special-education dollars for foster and probation youths' mental health needs
- Creating transparency as to how schools are providing and funding mental health programs, as well as the quality of and access to these programs for system-involved youth

The ECC began by facilitating a robust discussion between MOU members and school districts following presentations from Public Counsel and the Alliance for Children's Rights. From this, the group formed a local CCR education subgroup to focus on the education implications of continuum-of-care reform, including coordinating educationally related mental health services between school districts and community providers. Specifically, the group will create school district policies/agreements that allow outside providers (wraparound teams for example) on school campuses. Additionally, group members hope to contribute to clarifying issues that are barriers to the coordination of care, including health privacy laws, Medi-Cal billing, and explicit standards and expectations for the required coordination of services.

#### Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

The ECC encouraged school districts' Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to maximize educational support for system-involved youth through its regular attendance at Coalition for Educational Equity for Foster Youth (CEEFY) meetings until the organization's dissolution in September 2017. We provided guidance in integrating key areas for foster youth, encouraged school districts to complete LCAP evaluations, urged the state to develop a rubric to help districts better assess their LCAPs, and reviewed a number of completed LCAPs looking for college readiness programs and the targeting of transition-age youth (TAY). Moving forward, the ECC will participate in the meaningful stakeholder engagement that the school districts are now required to employ under the law. The ECC will use this engagement as an opportunity to advocate for district LCAPs to be aligned with the goals in the 2016-2021 ECC Strategic Plan.

#### Trauma-Informed Care

The ECC examined trauma-informed care at the classroom, individual, and systems levels. At the classroom/individual level, ECC members engaged with a variety of partners—including the Los Angeles Unified School District, LACOE, the Pasadena Unified School District, the Probation Department, the Alliance for Children's Rights, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Alhambra Unified School District—to gather best practices. Alhambra had particularly positive outcomes, including increased graduation and attendance rates, parent engagement, and positive school climate. The ECC is disseminating these best practices to other school districts and identifying funding models to adopt trauma-informed care in the classroom.

Based on ECC members' decision also to pursue trauma-informed care efforts at the systems level, the ECC joined the Los Angeles County Trauma- and Resiliency-Informed Systems Change Workgroup run by the Center for Collective Wisdom. This workgroup developed a blueprint—*Trauma and Resiliency: A Systems Change Approach* (June 2017)—for assisting County systems:

- To effectively respond to trauma by promoting resiliency
- To strengthen well-being
- To help prevent future trauma

The ECC provided feedback and input on the blueprint, as well as on steps to ensure that trauma-informed care is implemented Countywide.

#### Access to the Arts

The ECC wants to increase access to evidence-based arts education and alternative programming that improves outcomes for system-involved youth, and has engaged with several nonprofits on this issue.

- The Spirit Awakening Foundation is dedicated to assisting at-risk youth and children in the juvenile justice system. This organization has brought arts-based anti-bullying programs to juvenile halls and camps in the past (at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, for instance, from June 2013 to August 2015), and an evaluation of that program showed a significant decrease in fights and suspensions over the course of the program sessions.
- The Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (AIYN) is a nonprofit collaborative with nine community-based member organizations that bring high-impact, high-quality arts programming to youth detention facilities throughout Los Angeles County in partnership with the Probation Department and the County's Arts Commission.

Through the ECC's efforts, DCFS and DMH have pledged to explore expanded partnerships to support arts interventions both in detention facilities and in public schools. The ECC can now facilitate meetings between key players to shape this and explore funding and sustainability.

#### Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services

On July 18, 2017, the Board of Supervisors directed the Commission for Children and Families to convene a workgroup of multiple partners in the County and community, including the OCP, to propose a Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services for Los Angeles County. The ECC participated in the workgroup's Communications Subcommittee, which strategized about how such a document could be disseminated countywide through multiple platforms, along with web and print mediums—primary media outlets on television, foster-youth news features in prime news outlets, journals, and newspapers (the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning [LGBTQ] press and social work publications, for example). The goal is to raise community awareness of foster youths' rights and ensure that all current and future foster youth, biological

parents, and resource families have access to their rights and services. A proposal is expected by February 2018.

### **Priority Area III: Transition-Age Youth (TAY)**

#### **Demonstration Site for System-Involved Scholars**

The ECC is working with FosterEd and other partners, including philanthropy, to develop and implement a career/college pathway for transition-age youth (TAY). At a pilot demonstration site, partners plan to work with the Palmdale School District, Lancaster School District, and Antelope Valley Union High School District to place five education liaisons in middle and high schools having high concentrations of system-involved youth to implement educational teaming practices and address college preparation. Liaisons will also maintain strong collaborative ties with regional DCFS and Probation offices.

The cross-collaboration with multiple funders in Los Angeles County on this pilot should help inform a statewide policy agenda and promote the adoption of effective practices for system-involved youth across California.

#### **Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM)**

Since submitting its TAY self-sufficiency report to the Board of Supervisors on September 28, 2016, the ECC has led a workgroup to identify policy barriers that prevented full implementation of a TAY Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) introduced in 2013. The workgroup recommended modifying DCFS's training for child-and-family team (CFT) meeting facilitators so they can better inform and engage youth and families about the importance of including a breadth of County departments around the table.

The ECC workgroup also began to develop ideas for a single transition plan across County departments for TAY transitioning out of care. This approach would prevent duplicative services, better identify barriers to services across departments, and facilitate a unified approach to help youth reach self-sufficiency. The workgroup is exploring possible concepts for creating an electronic single transition plan with both the National Center for Youth Law and LACOE's Education Passport System. These electronic tools can help facilitate the teaming process so youth are more engaged in CFT meetings and in crafting their transition plans to focus on their underlying needs. If these needs are addressed in a complete and integrated manner early on, through CFT meetings and a single transition plan, youth can receive consistent, targeted services and supports that will greatly improve their chances of graduating high school as well as becoming and staying employed.

### **Priority IV: Electronic Information-Sharing**

The ECC moves parties toward increased electronic information-sharing so that the Health and Education Passport (HEP) mandated for each foster youth can be effectively populated with needed information. A proposal for an electronic connection between the Los Angeles Network for Enhanced Services (LANES)—the system designed to enable local information exchanges across health providers—and the Department of Public Health (DPH) was approved by the LANES Board in April 2017.

As envisioned in this proposal, child welfare public health nurses employed by DPH would use the LANES portal to view timely health information about child-welfare clients as needed to coordinate care and ensure effective treatment. Depending on their role, nurses could access the portal while in the office preparing for emergency-response site visits and/or as part of their ongoing management of a client's health care. As appropriate, they would incorporate essential health information and documents from the LANES system into the HEP in the youth's child-welfare file. This will make legally permissible (and often crucial) health and mental health data available to appropriate members of child-welfare teams for the purpose of care coordination.

Multiple ECC-led planning meetings have brought LANES, DCFS, DPH, County Counsel, the Chief Information Officer, and the Chief Executive Office to consider issues that include funding access to LANES, the privacy of data being accessed, the security of the technology being used, and the development of a link. The key parties have come to agreement on the majority of these issues, and applicable security and privacy protections are currently in development. We hope to have full access completed in 2018.

To make the Health and Education Passport a robust and effective tool, more complete and accurate collection and sharing of education data regarding system-involved youth is needed. The ECC facilitates moving toward the development of a single electronic data system shared among all school districts within Los Angeles County, with connections and access to a variety of providers. Much progress has been made in this area, and great opportunity exists.

Two of the data-sharing systems that the ECC will examine are DCFS's Student Information Tracking System (SITS) and LACOE's Electronic Passport System (EPS). Both these systems collect data from local school districts. Currently, EPS has 59 school districts sharing data with its system and 81 MOUs signed to do so. SITS has 53 school districts sharing data—including the Los Angeles Unified School District, which enrolls nearly half of the County's system-involved youth. The benefits and barriers of merging into a single system will be addressed at the first ECC meeting of 2018.

If you have questions about this report, please contact me at (213) 893-1152 or via email at [mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:mnash@ocp.lacounty.gov), or your staff may contact Stefanie Gluckman at (213) 893-2507 or via email at [sgluckman@ocp.lacounty.gov](mailto:sgluckman@ocp.lacounty.gov).

MN:CDM  
SKG:BS:AE:EO:eih

c: Chief Executive Office  
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
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Children and Family Services  
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Health Services



Each Supervisor  
January 31, 2018  
Page 9

Mental Health  
Office of Education  
Probation  
Public Health  
Public Social Services  
Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services  
Education Coordinating Council

ECC Annual Report\_2017