



## **Education Coordinating Council**

**May 3, 2017**

**9:30 a.m.**

Room 743 Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Present: Helen Berberian, representing Brandon Nichols  
Maria Brenes  
Jessica Chandler  
Jesus Corral, representing Terri McDonald  
Sylvie de Toledo  
Debra Duardo  
Stefanie Gluckman  
Judge Victor Greenberg, representing Judge Michael Levanas  
Leslie Heimov  
Brian McDonald  
Bryan Mershon, representing Jonathan Sherin  
Judge Michael Nash  
Fabricio Segovia  
Erika Torres, representing Michelle King

Guests: Emily Williams, Second Supervisorial District  
Michelle Newell, Second Supervisorial District  
Genethia Hudley-Hayes, Third Supervisorial District  
Michelle Vega, Fifth Supervisorial District  
Rachelle Touzard, Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Akuyoe Graham, Spirit Awakening

In the absence of Chair Mónica Garcia, Vice Chair Fabricio Segovia brought the meeting to order at 9:39 a.m., welcomed everyone, and thanked the Probation Department for sponsoring today's meeting costs. He then asked ECC members and the audience to introduce themselves.

### School Stability for Foster Youth | Transportation to School of Origin

At the request of a Board office, the ECC changed the order of the agenda and began with an update on the Every Student Succeeds Act before returning to the main portion of the meeting.

Following January's discussion of the transportation provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), LACOE and the Education Coordinating Council formed an ESSA Transportation Workgroup that has been meeting regularly for the past three months. Stefanie Gluckman, Rachelle Touzard from LACOE, Erika Torres from LAUSD, and Helen Berberian from DCFS expressed appreciation to everyone who stepped up to do this work at lightning speed, creating, among other things, the draft one-page Best-Interest Determination Checklist found in meeting materials as well as a pilot to immediately transport foster youth to their schools of origins.

Stefanie emphasized the importance of school districts being involved in these efforts and thanked LAUSD for stepping up and leading the charge around transportation and school stability. (The Office of Child Protection's April 7 progress report to the Board of Supervisors on this issue was also included in meeting packets.)

Yesterday, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion requesting a Memorandum of Understanding for a school transportation pilot—starting this month and going through December 2017—that will be jointly funded by the Department of Children and Family Services, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and LAUSD. The motion also enabled DCFS to transfer \$300,000, which they had committed to this pilot, directly to LACOE for implementation. The pilot will not only ensure that foster students are transported to their schools of origin if that is in their best interest, but will also collect data to inform longer-term transportation plans for all 81 school districts in Los Angeles County. Furthermore, it will allow the time for DCFS and districts to jointly create informed and thoughtful long-term transportation plans for transportation to the school of origin, as mandated by ESSA.

The pilot uses transportation methods such as caregiver reimbursements, within-district modifications of bus routes, public-transportation TAP cards when appropriate, and a private-vendor car service (contract to be developed). LACOE will hire two full-time employees to coordinate transportation and also plans to eventually modify its computerized Education Passport System to generate alerts to school districts when placement changes for students are pending. “Best-interest determinations” are determined by the education rights holders with input from the school districts’ Foster Youth liaisons, and the students themselves.

LAUSD has already begun modifying their bus routes and providing transportation to school of origin. They also provide transportation to their homeless youth population.

Next steps for the workgroup include finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding, completing the funds transfer as directed by the Board motion, developing a contract with the car service, training LACOE staff in transportation coordination, distributing TAP cards and caregiver reimbursements, and modifying bus routes as needed.

#### Trauma-Informed Care: Systems Change

“The discussion of individual trauma-informed care began at January’s meeting,” Stefanie Gluckman said, “and today we’re going to continue on a systems/organization level.”

John Ott from the **Center for Collective Wisdom** gave some context for the conversation unfolding in Los Angeles County about integrating an awareness of trauma and resiliency into health and human services. First 5 LA, The California Endowment, the California Community Foundation, and the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation have taken the lead in funding this exploration, and have asked Ott’s organization to support an analysis of systems-change efforts across the county (lessons learned, resources to move to the next level, etc.) and to facilitate a process with diverse stakeholders to create a developmental framework for trauma-informed care, a summary draft of which was included in meeting materials as PowerPoint slides. After further conversations with system leaders to assess readiness and interest, Ott expects that workgroup’s final report to be completed in June and made widely available at that time.

“So—why does this conversation matter?” Ott asked. Despite dozens of definitions of ‘trauma’ and hundreds of promising practices to treat trauma in specific contexts, very little progress is being

made in trauma-informed learning across systems. Establishing common definitions is a first step, as is becoming familiar with the documented impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as:

- Physical, sexual, and verbal abuse
- Physical or emotional neglect
- An imprisoned family member, one with depression or other mental illness, or one with a substance addiction
- Witnessing a mother being abused
- Losing a parent to separation, divorce, or other reason

The ACEs framework should be expanded, Ott believes, to include violence in communities, intergenerational trauma, and the effects of this country's history of institutionalized racism.

Research on adverse childhood experiences has brought the issue of trauma out of the clinics and into communities, and is creating a foundation for further conversations across diverse regions, cultures, and systems. The ACEs framework includes only 10 experiences, however, and in reality many more are involved. "The conversation is always personal," Ott said. "How do we create supports for resilience? How do we create safe spaces for staff to process their own trauma that is triggered by their clients' experiences? It's a very challenging aspect of systems change. You can't simply mandate that staff do that interior, highly personal work unless they feel profoundly safe."

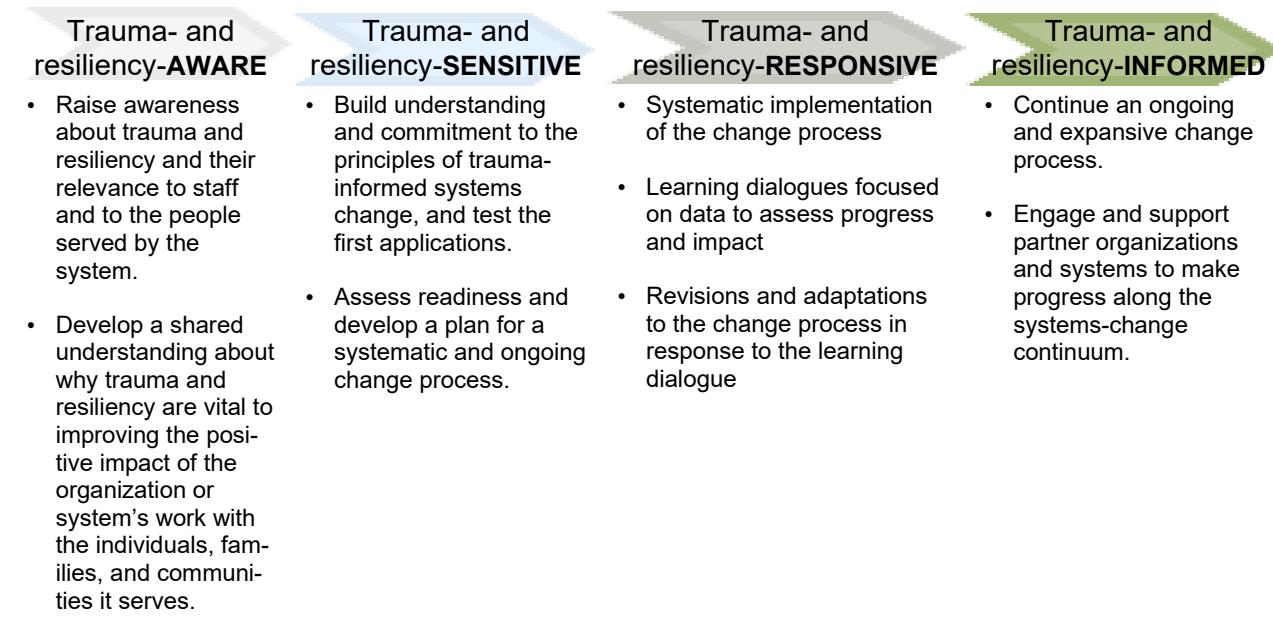
Studies show that children with an ACEs score of 6 or more have a life expectancy that is 20 years shorter than youngsters who score 0. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, 98 percent of the children screened report at least one ACE, and the average is between 6 and 8. Almost three-quarters of LAUSD fifth-graders have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and over half report those symptoms as moderate to severe (compared to 7 to 12 percent in the general population). "These are *not* kids coming from the foster system, either," Ott emphasized. "This is *all* the students in LAUSD. The whole issue rises to the level of a public health concern."

The drawback to ACEs research is that childhood trauma can be seen as a life sentence—but that doesn't need to be the case. *Resiliency* is defined as the capacity of individuals, families, and communities to heal from trauma and to strengthen their adaptability and experience of well-being in ways that can prevent future trauma.

Understanding and acknowledging trauma, plus promoting resiliency among staff as well as the people they serve, is instrumental in achieving each system's desired outcomes. "It's really a culture shift," Ott remarked, "and it doesn't happen overnight. Take the Department of Mental Health's move from a medical model to a recovery model. They committed to it, but the transition isn't complete quite yet."

Both the funders of this initiative and the stakeholders with whom Ott works are passionate about building a framework for trauma- and resiliency-informed care in Los Angeles County. They believe all organizations will be strengthened by integrating these concepts into their work.

The four developmental stages shown below are inevitably generic, Ott said, but they are a starting point for system-by-system conversations and for senior leaders' adapting the framework to coordinate with congregate care reform, the shared core practice model, and other initiatives, as well as considering how to extend this culture to creating a safe space for staff.



Trauma- and Resiliency-Informed Systems Change: Four Developmental Stages

Finding a ‘home’ for the trauma- and resiliency-informed movement as it advances through Los Angeles County is another issue. Some entity is needed to connect efforts, update and share resources, meet with systems players to identify promising practices, leverage place-based initiatives around the region, and so on. Once the systems-change report has been finalized, Ott and the workgroup will look at expanding a next level of leadership to move to action.

Gluckman thanked Ott for his presentation and offered to represent the ECC and its members on his workgroup to facilitate getting cross-systems information out via ECC members.

Bryan Mershon from the **Department of Mental Health** also provided photocopied PowerPoint slides, the first of which delineated the reasons for focusing on treating trauma:

- To prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- To build resilience and protective factors
- Early referrals for trauma symptoms can reduce health disparities resulting from ACEs, support normal development, and build a family’s coping skills early.
- For DCFS-involved children, trauma- and resiliency-informed treatment can stabilize placements, accelerate reunification, and reduce re-entry into the child welfare system.

“Things are beginning to happen in DMH,” Mershon said. “In the kids’ bureau, with TAY [transition-age youth], with training. We want to unify everything and make some progress as a whole. I’d say now that the department’s somewhere between the developmental stages of ‘aware’ and ‘sensitive.’”

DMH is proposing strategies for innovative approaches such as building trauma-resilient families for children birth to age 5 (focusing on education and on screening for ACEs), and providing trauma-informed psycho-education and support for school personnel. Under the Prevention and Early Intervention rubric of the Mental Health Services Act, the department is also:

- Creating a birth-to-5 resource map including DMH providers, First 5's Best Start Communities, various home visiting programs, Regional Centers, medical resources, and DCFS
- Documenting prevention and early intervention evidence-based practices to address trauma
- Encouraging school-based services using a trauma-informed care approach
- Gathering partners in suicide prevention efforts
- Working on anti-stigma and anti-discrimination programs

DMH has partnered with DCFS to create a five-day intensive training series to improve coordination and collaboration between the two departments, focusing on trauma and its impact on children's placements and school functioning, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, toxic stress and early intervention for young children, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth.

Systemwide trainings are provided both to groups directly operated by DMH and to contract agencies serving children and families, with special attention to the child welfare population:

- Shared core practice model (used by DMH, DCFS, and Probation)
- Trauma-informed practice for the mental health professional
- Infant and toddler development within a relational context
- Underlying needs: a strength/needs-based service crafting approach

Next steps for the department include:

- Conducting an assessment of DMH as a trauma-informed system
- Developing a trauma institute within the department
- Continuing inter- and intra-agency collaboration
- Creating a trauma screener for non-clinicians
- Continuing training to build capacity
- Building in reflective practice supervision to its system

In answer to questions about the mental health assessments children undergo when they enter the child welfare system, Mershon explained a two-pronged process. Children's social workers—usually in emergency response—administer a mental health screening tool immediately upon a child's intake; those results are forwarded to co-located staff in DCFS offices, who arrange mental health services as indicated. In addition, a comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment is done within a month to six weeks of the child's being detained, and additional referrals are made then or at any time the CSW observes or is told of behavioral changes in the child. Weekly e-mails are sent to CSWs based on the DCFS/DMH data match to inform them about mental health services the child is receiving, including the provider's name, address, and contact information. "As we focus more on a trauma-informed system," Mershon continued, "we're also considering a brief screening instrument that focuses directly on the child's exposure to trauma, following up with a more thorough assessment." Mental health screening numbers are reported regularly to the Board of Supervisors; Mershon will make the latest statistics available to Gluckman for the ECC's information.

"Lots of kids are not getting the mental health services they need," Leslie Heimov commented, "and many providers simply won't take CSEC [commercially sexually exploited] kids. We've had the multidisciplinary assessment team [MAT] vehicle for many years, but it tends to provide shallow information because it's done so soon. A kid in crisis is different than a kid who's settled into placement, and there's little depth derived from an assessment done too soon."

Available services are good, Heimov continued, “but the problem is connection. Multisystemic therapy foster homes are a great idea, but in practice there are very few of them and they are underutilized. Placement stability can facilitate school stability, which in turn makes room for ongoing positive therapeutic relationships. We can better use what we already have.”

Paul Freese of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles finds many immigrant communities increasingly reluctant to talk about what happens at home because of the current anti-immigrant climate in many locations. “Kids bottle up that stress,” he said, “which corrodes their well-being and certainly contributes to the school achievement gap. Resilience comes out of a sense of being protected and having hope. I’d like to see mandated reporting replaced with protective harbors—safe havens, where caring adults can let these kids and their families know they aren’t alone, and that they matter.”

Pasadena Unified School District is providing personalized support for its families, Superintendent Brian McDonald said, going into homes to offer resources. “We’re being told it’s not a good idea, however,” he added. “We need a conversation about sanctuary settings.”

Gluckman thanked the presenters and asked that suggestions for how the ECC might facilitate further work in trauma- and resiliency-informed care be sent to her to pass along. Bryan Mershon provided follow up materials and answers to the questions about mental health’s services and screenings from this ECC meeting.

Bryan Mershon provided the first six pages from the February 6, 2017, annual report to the Board of Supervisors regarding implementation of the Katie A. Strategic Plan. These pages contain details regarding the number of DCFS children who (figures below are for calendar year 2016):

- Were eligible to be screened for mental health services and were screened—95.6%
- Screened positive and were referred to DMH for mental health assessment and services—97.7%
- Were referred and received mental health services within the required timelines—95.7%

#### Trauma-Informed Care: Alternative Programming

Akuyoe Graham, founder of the Spirit Awakening Foundation, spoke of the organization’s background and its experience taking alternative programming into probation camps and schools over the past two decades. “Restorative justice was not part of the lexicon twenty-two years ago,” she said, “but I knew that kids needed holistic practices to heal from trauma and abuse. Meditation, stillness, the release of abuse and fear and emotional suffering—the use of writing as a tool to explore issues, using the arts to get into all the nooks and crannies inside these kids. We need to listen to them. They have solutions; they know what will work for them. They’re some of the most compassionate and forgiving people I’ve ever met. The cornerstone of Spirit Awakening program is to create a safe, respectful environment for them and then hear what they’re saying.” Graham passed around several books of students’ collected writings, noted that during the first month of an SAF anti-bullying program at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, fights were reduced by 43 percent, and other disruptions and referrals went down by 73 percent.

“The foundation has a good deal of accumulated wisdom and can be a resource,” Graham said. “We would love to be at the table with the trauma- and resiliency-informed movement.” Probation’s Jesus Corral thanked Graham for her gift of connecting to probation youth, and expressed

his hope that programming could be expanded from the agency's residential facilities into the community, to keep young people from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system in the first place.

Akuyoe Graham provided examples of how the arts had helped kids heal from trauma and abuse. For example, one of the kids in the program from Los Padrinos wanted to go on a retreat with the Foundation. In order to get permission, he presented his writing to the Judge who released him to the Foundation. The youth did not go missing or run away, and this increased the confidence and spirit of the other youth at Los Padrinos, Graham reported. Furthermore, Graham also stated that not just one program can be the solution; there has to be a collective effort to create a continuum of care.

#### Member Updates

Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools **Debra Duardo** believes that screening for and identifying trauma early in a child's life is an optimal approach. "If kids were identified in pre-school and something was done, how would outcomes change?" she asked. Duardo noted the data systems that are now in place after years of hard work, particularly mentioning DCFS's communication with school districts to support children and youth in the child welfare system. "When people are working together," she said, "we're blending resources, sharing money, sharing data, inviting others to come to the table—advocates, lawyers, parents, group homes, and so on, all of us wanting to make things better."

The Los Angeles County Office of Education is the school district that serves incarcerated students and students with severe disabilities, and it administers two comprehensive high schools. In addition, it supports the other 80 school districts within Los Angeles County via the computerized Education Passport System, online and in-person trainings on parents' rights, school-district responsibilities, etc., and sharing records on its 1,600 students.

One of LACOE's primary goals is better supporting foster youth, and its participation in the ESSA Transportation Workgroup has allowed it to look at what's working elsewhere, figure out best strategies, and offer guidance to school districts.

"Our Head Start program looks at the very youngest kids," Duardo said, "finding the best ways to work with them and engage their parents. Screening for trauma can help us develop plans and solutions to address it, so we can do right by our children and families. LACOE is one hundred percent on board with this partnership. We appreciate it and look forward to the work ahead."

#### Public Comment

- A representative from the Pasadena Unified School District reported on the personalized support plans being used there as elements for trauma-informed schools and to support students' families.
- Mary Donnelly-Crocker, executive director of the Pasadena nonprofit Young and Healthy, wants to bring its health services to scale over the next three years to every school in Pasadena Unified, and offered the help of the private sector with the trauma- and resiliency-informed movement.

- Paul Freese expressed his opinion that “the number-one trauma for the system is *liability*, not risk to children. A grandmother from Lancaster was all set to take two of her young grandchildren, a boy and a girl, but was prevented from doing so because her house couldn’t accommodate their sleeping in different rooms. We need to start assessing the liability to *children* of our system’s actions.”

Adjournment

Vice Chair Segovia adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Next Meeting

The Education Coordinating Council's next meeting is scheduled for:

**Wednesday, October 25, 2017**

**9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Room 739, Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012