

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

2023

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

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COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2023 ROSTER

FIRST SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Hilda L. Solis

Maria Brenes
Wendy Garen
Samuel Prater

SECOND SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole
Zaid Gayle
Franco Vega

THIRD SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath

Dr. Khush Cooper
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Roman James

FOURTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Janice Hahn

Tiffany Boyd
Dora Jacildo
Eli Romero

FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT

Supervisor Kathryn Barger

Shimica Gaskins
Dr. Jeanette Mann
Lou Moore

COMMISSION OFFICERS

(2022/2023 Term)

Wendy Garen, Chair
Shimica Gaskins, Vice Chair
Zaid Gayle, Vice Chair

COMMISSION OFFICERS

(2023/2024 Term)

Shimica Gaskins, Chair
Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole, Vice Chair
Franco Vega, Vice Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Tamara N. Hunter
(January- October 2023)

Barbara Spyrou Lundqvist
(Interim, October - December 2023)

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MISSION STATEMENT AND ORDINANCE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Commission for Children and Families advises the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County's at-risk children and their families.

ORDINANCE

The Commission was created by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) on May 8, 1984, and is charged by its ordinance to:

- ▼ Review all programs administered by County departments that provide services for at-risk children.
- ▼ Receive input from appropriate community groups and individuals concerning administered children's services programs.
- ▼ Review and make recommendations to the Board concerning legislation dealing with children's needs.
- ▼ Make recommendations, as necessary, to various County department heads to improve children's services.
- ▼ Make recommendations, as necessary, to the Board on action to be taken to improve children's services; and,
- ▼ Provide an annual report to the Board concerning the status of children's services, along with recommendations for their improvement, to be utilized for broad community distribution and discussion.

YEAR IN REVIEW: KEY ISSUES IMPACTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

HOMELESSNESS EMERGENCY

On January 10, 2023 the Board of Supervisors (Board) voted to proclaim a local emergency for homelessness in LA County and directed County Departments to work with the City of Los Angeles to address this crisis. The proclamation allowed the County to utilize additional tools including faster and more streamlined housing creation, expanded services, expedited contracting/procurement, and coordinated efforts with State and Federal Governments as well as cities within LA County.

According to the 2023 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Youth Count, there were 6,230 youth experiencing homelessness throughout LA County, a 10% increase from the year prior. Many of these unhoused youth are youth with prior or current involvement in LA County systems.

While there are transitional housing programs available for Transitioned-Aged Youth (TAY) including the Supervised Independent Living Program (SILPs), Transitional Housing Programs, and housing vouchers, there are not enough housing options to serve TAY involved in the child welfare system. Additionally, youth have reported challenges in navigating complex housing systems and eligibility requirements. With the overburdensome cost of housing and rising rental rates due to inflation create yet another barrier to TAY securing affordable housing.

In addition to housing resources, youth and providers have lifted up the need to provide more healing-centered and mental health supports to help youth maintain housing while they are going to school and/or working.

YOUTH WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

In 2023, the County, which included the Chief Executive Office (CEO), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Probation Department, and Office of Child Protection (OCP), submitted a report to the Board regarding placements and interventions needed for youth in foster care with the highest complex needs who are being placed in hotels, Transitional Shelter Care Facilities (TSCFs),

and Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs). This multi-agency group identified several barriers and needs to providing youth with complex needs with greater stability, permanency, and overall well-being, including:

- ▼ Instability and lack of appropriate treatment options for youth has a compounding effect in that their underlying trauma is further exacerbated by insufficient interventions and frequent placement changes
- ▼ Need to build capacity for a robust continuum of care including more resource families and providers who can care for youth with complex needs
- ▼ Lack of funding/resources to pay for the true cost of care
- ▼ Need to recruit/retain quality workforce and caregivers
- ▼ Need to develop child welfare services and program funding around child needs, especially as the child's placement/services needs change
- ▼ A need for a stronger System of Care partnership to enhance service integration and care coordination

While DCFS and other County Departments are conducting ongoing work to address issues and expand the continuum of care, more efforts and investments will be needed in the coming years to increase capacity to serve youth with complex needs and facilitate youth engaging in services in the County's system of care.

CRISIS IN JUVENILE PROBATION

In July 2023, the Probation Department finished a months-long effort to relocate nearly 300 pre-disposition youth from Barry J. Nidorf and Central Juvenile Halls to the newly reopened Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. This relocation was ordered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) after the agency deemed both Barry J. Nidorf and Central Juvenile Halls to be unsuitable juvenile halls. The Probation Department reassigned staff to Los Padrinos to support service delivery and safety of the youth and staff. However, staff shortages continued to impact the department during this period of review and insufficient staffing numbers diminished the halls' capacity to properly supervise youth and provide for their needs.

Throughout this period of review, there were several reports of contraband and overdoses in

the juvenile hall facilities, including the death of an 18-year old youth at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in May 2023. Critical staffing shortages, inadequate supervision of youth, and lack of training and access to Narcan by staff and youth in the halls has contributed to this crisis.

An effort being led by OCP in partnership with DPH, DHS, DCFS, DMH, and Probation is implementing a medical model approach to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) by increasing access to Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT) for system-involved youth. This partnership has identified, among other gaps, a need to ensure Narcan is readily accessible to youth, make Narcan training mandatory in all Departments, and increase the number of providers who are initiating MAT services for youth.

NARROWING THE FRONT DOOR TO THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

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

On April 7, 2023, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) announced that the federal government had approved [California’s Five-Year State Prevention Plan](#). Los Angeles County’s Three-Year Comprehensive Prevention Plan was subsequently approved by the State in July 2023. This plan, developed by DCFS in collaboration with Chapin Hall, OCP, the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) initiative, and other departments, included feedback from an extensive group of stakeholders.

DCFS, in partnership with the Center for Strategic Partnerships, OCP, the Commission, and many other partners has developed, implemented, and is continuing to implement several efforts to support implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), including:

- ▼ Launching a Prevention Advisory Group integrating individuals with lived expertise into implementation of the County’s Comprehensive Prevention Plan
- ▼ Building out community pathways to FFPSA and other services, including home visiting, prevention, and after care
- ▼ Leveraging the State Block Grant to fund community organizations and/or consultant leads on eight prevention and promotion pilots that are part of the Comprehensive Prevention Plan

In July 2023, the Board of Supervisors passed a [motion](#) to build upon the work of the County's Prevention Services Taskforce to create a prevention and promotion services delivery system to address the wrongs of historical disinvestment and lift County residents in their pursuit of positive life course outcomes. As part of this Motion, the Board created the Prevention and Promotion Systems Governing Committee (PPSGC) to improve collaboration and coordination of the services and supports that prevent negative outcomes, promote well-being, and help residents thrive. The three initial key focus areas to anchor foundational prevention and promotion services infrastructure are 1) child welfare and family well-being; 2) homelessness and housing; and 3) behavioral health. The inaugural Committee is comprised of the following County Department and Initiative Directors: CEO, DPSS, DPH, DCFS, Racial Equity, CEO-Homeless Initiative, Chief Information Officer, Mental Health, and First 5 Los Angeles. In September 2023, Dr. Tamara N. Hunter transitioned from the Commission for Children and Families to serve as the Interim Executive Director of PPSGC.

Finally, the Commission's leadership of the cross-sector Los Angeles County Mandated Supporting Initiative (MSI) continued in 2023. This work involves partnering with local and State-level partners to reform mandated reporting and safely divert families from the child welfare system to community-based services and supports. In October 2023, the MSI work moved under the PPSGC; however, the Commission continues to be involved in the leadership and implementation of this important work. Additional information is provided in the Commission Activities section of this report.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACTIVITIES IN 2023

The Commission heard from agencies, advocates, and community members on several issue areas impacting children and families this year. The topics presented informed the Commission on ongoing challenges and provided opportunities to address the exigent need arising for children, in particular, children experiencing homelessness, transition age youth, and youth in the probation system.

With the end of the COVID-19 State of Emergency this year, the Commission shifted back to meeting in-person and now also provides a hybrid option for members of the public to join Commission meetings in-person or online. During this period of review, the Commission worked closely with cross-sector partners on a wide array of efforts spanning the child welfare services continuum. The Commission's work is supported by the Commission Services Division of the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors.

MALTREATMENT PREVENTION

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

Mandated Supporting Initiative (MSI)

The MSI works originates from the vision and leadership of the Commission's Racial Justice Committee. Commission efforts to lead mandated reporting reform in LA County continued during this period of review.

On May 2nd, Supervisors Horvath and Hahn passed the [Evolving from Mandated Reporter to Mandated Supporter motion](#), which formally endorsed and elevated the MSI work. The motion encompassed and built on existing MSI strategies:

1. Community Response Guide web-based decision support tool for MRs, started building LA County's version in August
2. MSI Community Pathway – services component
3. Comprehensive MR Training and Training Development Guide
4. DCFS Front-End Redesign
5. Policy and Legislative Advocacy
6. Strategic Collaboration
7. Narrative Change

In August 2023, the MSI Leadership Team kickoff event took place. During the event, a cross section of more than 70 decision-makers from key reporting sectors, such as law enforcement, educators, medical and mental health providers, community members, and lived experts, convened to begin their work as stewards of the MSI that will shape its strategic direction.

As previously noted, in October 2023 Dr. N. Tamara Hunter, the former Executive Director for the Commission for Children and Families, began serving as the Interim Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Prevention and Promotion System Governance Committee. The Committee Interim Executive Director continued with leadership of MSI in this new role. The Commission for Children and Family Commissioners continue to serve on the MSI Leadership Team and participate in various MSI workgroups, including the MSI Data Committee and MSI AB 2085 Training Supplement workgroup.

In November 2023, the PPSGC submitted the [Report Back on Evolving from Mandated Reporter to Mandated Supporter](#) to the Board with updates on the MSI workgroups and strategies.

Commissioners are also involved in MSI related efforts at the state level. In March 2023, the California Child Welfare Council established the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force (Task Force) to lead statewide efforts to reform mandated reporting. Commission representatives were appointed seats on the Task Force, co-chair the policy and practice subcommittee, and sit on the research and data as well as the legal and liability subcommittees.

Los Angeles County Prevention Services Task Force

In March 2022, the Los Angeles County Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative launched the Prevention Services Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force was established in response to the November 2021 *'Establishing the Los Angeles County Office of Prevention Services' Board motion*, which called for development of recommendations for integrated countywide infrastructure to prevent negative outcomes and promote holistic well-being, with a focus on countering racial disproportionality.

During this period of review, Commission representatives continued to serve on the Prevention Services Task Force and subcommittees, which focused on developing recommendations to inform the recently established Prevention and Promotion Systems Governing Committee.

Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development

Commission representatives served on the Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development (Roundtable). Some of the key priorities for the Roundtable included 1) preparation for the upcoming legislative session with a number of key early care and education issues including rate

reform, workforce retention and development, and cost studies to assess the real cost of care; 2) examine limited spaces for infants and toddlers as Transitional Kindergarten is implemented; and 3) maintain a mixed early care and education delivery system.

First 5 LA

A Commission representative continued to serve on the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. During this period of review, this role involved working on First 5 LA's new 2024-2029 strategic plan. In October, the Executive Director and Executive Vice President, Center for Child and Family Impact of First 5 LA briefed the Commissioners on the Strategic Plan and received input from Commissioners.

The [First 5 LA 2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) was formally approved in November 2024. The three core strategies of the plan include: catalyze public policies, strengthen public systems, and continue to build a prenatal-to-five social movement in partnership with community members.

Prevention

Commission representatives were actively involved in the County's planning for implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) in 2023. This included participation in the FFPSA Community Pathways Working Group, SPA 2 Learning Site Team, and FFPSA Fiscal and Contracts Workgroup.

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

Additionally, Commission representatives served as panelists during the CDSS and DCFS-led Building the Bridge from Planning to Implementation 2023 Statewide Collaborative Prevention Convening.

Lastly, the Commission held meetings and worked with stakeholders to advocate for carve outs for children to be added to the Governor's plan to modernize the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The proposed modernized programmatic and allocation changes to MHSA will significantly impact Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) dollars, the majority of which are utilized by the County to serve children and youth.

Thriving Families, Safer Children

Commissioners continued to serve in leadership roles with the Thriving Families, Safer Children (TFSC) initiative. During this period of review, the TFSC Lived Expertise team continued to hold monthly meetings with people with Lived Expertise. Four themes were identified related to

county accountability to be explored over the course of the year, including: providing access to resources, being responsive when families reach out, having advocates for parents, children and caregivers, and the County’s responsibility for the well-being of children in care. The LA County TFSC initiative also participated in the TFSC National Engagement.

Lastly, community-driven projects that began in 2022 being implemented in partnership with the organizations Para Los Ninos, SHIELDS for Families, Strength Based Community Change (SBCC), Children’s Bureau and Chinatown Service Center.

MENTORING

In February 2023, the Commission provided feedback on the Mentorship for At-Risk Black Girls in Los Angeles County Board motion, where it elevated concerns regarding large mentoring organizations parachuting into communities and displacing smaller organizations with authentic ties and effective models.

ADDRESSING TAY HOMELESSNESS

During this period of review, the Commission continued to identify preventing and addressing homelessness among systems-impacted Transition-Age Youth (TAY) as a priority. The Commission Committee on TAY Housing and Homelessness held meetings to identify possible gaps and solutions to address these complex issues.

EDUCATION

Commission representatives continued to serve on the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) during this period of review. The ECC was created in 2004 to improve education outcomes for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The ECC is housed under the OCP.

During this period of review, Commission representatives participated in listening sessions with OCP staff to inform the ECC’s new strategic plan. The new strategic plan is anticipated to be finalized by May 2024.

COMPLEX CARE

The Commission held meetings focusing on youth with unmet complex needs. Additionally, in June the Commission representatives participated in discussions led by OCP to discuss balancing youth independence and accountability.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2023 MEETING TOPICS

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

- UCLA Pritzker Report: Child Welfare and Domestic Violence: The Report on Intersection and Action
- Transition -Age Youth (TAY) Mentorship Initiative
- Black People Experiencing Homelessness Convening
- Ensuring Child and Family Well-Being by Addressing the "Hunger Cliff"
- California State Budget Allocations for Safety Net Programs
- DCFS Placement Support Team
- Family Urgent Response System (FURS)
- Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD)
- Addressing African American Infant Maternal Mortality
- TAY Housing Legislative Updates
- Experiences of LA County's Relative Caregivers
- Upfront Family Finding
- Turning West DCFS Management Audit Report
- Chapin Hall Report on Assessing DCFS: Programming Audit
- Mandated Supporting Initiative
- Education Coordinating Council
- Community Schools Initiative
- TAY Housing Barriers
- UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent
- Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)
- Updates from the LA County Ombudspersons for DCFS and Probation-Supervised Youth Placed in STRTPs and Facilities
- Meeting the Needs of Foster Youth with Complex Needs
- Civil Rights Lawsuit Regarding TAY Housing and Services
- First 5 LA Fiscal Environment and Strategic Planning Efforts
- Updates on the Prevention Services Taskforce
- Overview of the Department of Youth Development
- Understanding the Perception in Foster Care: Changing the Narrative Report
- Civilian Oversight Commission Quality of Life Ad Hoc Report on the LA Sheriff's Department's School Resource Deputy Program

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2023 MEETING TOPICS

Education Coordinating Council	Dr. Jeanette Mann (January – May 2023) Wendy Garen (June – December 2023)
Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity Advisory Committee	Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Wendy B. Smith
Family First Prevention Services Act Planning and Implementation Work Groups	Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jeanette Mann Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey Lou Moore Dr. Wendy B. Smith
First 5 LA Board of Commissioners	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Los Angeles County Faith-Based Collaborative	Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jeanette Mann Lou Moore
Los Angeles County Mandated Supporting Initiative	Dr. Tamara N. Hunter
AB 2085 Training Supplement Work Group Data Committee Leadership Team	Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole
Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Statewide Taskforce	
Policy and Practice Sub-Committee	Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole
Research and Data Sub-Committee	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2023 MEETING TOPICS

Office of Child Protection Permanency Work Group	Lou Moore
Policy Roundtable for Child Care and Development	Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Prevention Services Task Force	Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole Dr. Tamara N. Hunter Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Racial Justice Committee (Commission-Led)	Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole, Co-Chair Zaid Gayle, Co-Chair Tiffany Boyd Maria Brenes Shimica Gaskins Dora Jacildo Roman James
Reimagine Child Safety Coalition	Roman James
System of Care Workgroup	Tiffany Boyd
Transition-Aged Youth (TAY) Housing and Homelessness Committee (Commission-Led)	Samuel Prater, Co-Chair Franco Vega, Co-Chair Tiffany Boyd Maria Brenes Dr. Charity Chandler-Cole Wendy Garen Zaid Gayle
Thriving Families, Safer Children Los Angeles Team	Tiffany Boyd Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey

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