



California Foster Youth

***We Can Make a
Difference!***

Cities, Counties Schools Partnership

*A Partnership of the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties
and the California School Boards Association*

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California Foster Youth We Can Make A Difference!

Cities Counties Schools Partnership 2008 Conditions of Children Task Force

The Conditions of Children Task Force has been in existence for four years looking at issues that cut across the jurisdictions of the three partners of the Cities Counties Schools Partnership. For 2008, the task force focused on issues of foster care.

The task force met four times in 2008 to learn from experts and discuss the role and responsibility of local governments in addressing the needs of foster youth. The task force heard from experts in prevention strategies, rural county issues, county systems, prenatal exposure to alcohol and drugs, and shared data systems.

The Issue

California has the largest number of children and youth in foster care of any state in the nation with approximately 80,000 children in care in 2007. While 10 percent of the nation's youth live in California, 20 percent of the children in foster care reside here. Outcomes for youth who remain in the system until they age out at 18 years old are predominately negative and include homelessness, unemployment or underemployment, incarceration and failure to graduate from high school. Half of the children in care are under the age of five and about the same percent have been in the system more than two years. Domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness are factors that contribute to the removal of children from their homes with 75 percent placed in care because of neglect.

Guiding Principles

Along with the State, cities, counties and schools each have a role to play in parenting foster children into adulthood. The CCS Partnership and the 2008 Task Force on the Conditions of Children set forth the following premises as the foundation of future actions:

- ❖ The foremost strategy to address the needs of foster children is to invest in **prevention** so that children do not need to enter the system.
- ❖ A **collaborative approach** yields the best hope of meeting the needs of foster children and youth.
- ❖ Children that enter the system have been taken from their families and placed in the care of the state. Therefore, **foster youth are the responsibility of the state and our communities.**
- ❖ No public care can replace **family care.**

What Can We Do?

The reality of the outcomes can be overwhelming; the remedies, however, are simple but not easy. They fall into five general areas of action:

1. Invest in and demand investment in prevention.
2. Develop shared data systems

3. Promote permanency
4. Create a web of support for youth aging out of the system
5. Support legislation that improves conditions for children

Investing in prevention

Addressing the underlying causes of why children are placed in foster care is the only real way to make lasting change. Thus, prevention strategies and programs are key to making a difference for foster youth. The major strategies explored in this report are:

- Change health education curriculum in schools
- Screen for fetal exposure to drugs and alcohol
- Support family resource centers and other forms of support for families
- Develop systems that include community norms and community involvement in changing the dynamic
- Address challenges faced by rural counties
- Strengthen the connection and communication between education and social services

Develop shared data system

Data is essential to coordination of services and supports and to the ultimate success of children in foster care. The task force recommends that counties and the state develop shared data systems similar to the one created by the San Diego Office of Education and San Diego County. This type of system includes data from everyone working with children and youth in care makes. The shared data makes it possible to track educational data, find siblings, have accurate mental health information and also to find family members who can become part of a permanency plan.

Promote permanency

What every human being needs is to belong. Everyone needs to know that someone cares about him or her and will be present in his or her life on a permanent basis. Having permanent relationships are vital for the success of foster children. Recommendations in this area focus on making permanency a high priority in any program that works with children and youth in foster care. They include creating programs that address permanency, using family finding software as a routine part of placement, and developing systems that help caring adults stay connected to youth for the long term.

Create a web of support for youth aging out of the system

*Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth*¹ the 2007 report of the Conditions of Children Task Force focused exclusively on the needs of youth who age out of the foster care system. Outcomes for these youth are dire. Few graduate from high school (42%) and even fewer from college (1%). Many are incarcerated and most experience homelessness and unemployment. Mental and behavioral health issues occur at a rate higher than the general population.

Five elements need to be addressed to begin to meet the needs of youth aging out of the system. They are employment, education, housing, mental and behavioral health, and permanency. Cities, counties and schools should work together and develop partnerships with local businesses, higher education and other partners to address the needs of youth aging out of the system.

¹."Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth" CCS Partnership. Conditions of Children Task Force 2007.

Support legislation that improves conditions for children

Many of the recommendations in this document require only local action: establishing communication, programs, priorities, and collaboration to provide a local network of support for foster youth. However, some of the recommendations made will require legislative action.

- Encourage the State of California to pass legislation to implement the provisions of **H.R. 6893, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act**, signed into law by President Bush in October, 2008.
- Extend foster care to age 21, as an option for all youth.
- Remove barriers to data and information sharing. Ensure that all personnel working with foster youth have a full understanding of rules surrounding confidentiality and information sharing.
- Require that educational programs in group homes meet state academic standards

Conclusion

“My goal continues to be to have foster youth treated as we would treat our own children.”

Current Speaker, California Assembly, Karen Bass
at 2007 CA Foster Youth Education Summit

Prevention is the starting point for efforts on behalf of foster children and youth. Keeping kids out of the system by supporting parents and caregivers is the real answer to foster care. Short of that, systems and supports are needed for the children themselves. Programs and efforts need to address the child or youth as a whole. They must also look for ways to coordinate and collaborate across jurisdictions in order to provide the best safety net.

Programs, policies and practices that incorporate prevention strategies and collaborative efforts provide the best opportunity for success. Several prevention strategies provide promising results. Testing pregnant women for drug and alcohol abuse can identify babies who will need early intervention. Educating youth and the public about brain development and the effects of drug and alcohol use can begin to establish community norms against such use. Providing struggling families with access to service and supports through family resource centers can provide tools to keep families intact.

City, county and school leadership can lead the way in developing programs that use collaboration to maximize the support available to struggling families and to foster youth. Children in the system benefit from the coordination of services. Barriers between education and social services need to be eliminated to best meet the needs of youth. Legislation is needed to facilitate the sharing of information and the development of a shared data system between agencies.

Programs like Differential Response in child welfare provide alternatives and integrate the community into the effort. Through programs like this, children are served earlier in their lives and fewer children are removed from their homes. When children must be removed, placement with relatives or in their home community should be the first choice. Child welfare workers and departments need to be trained in and use family finding software when relatives are not immediately known. The software has proven effective in identifying both relatives willing to provide care for children and relatives willing to provide connections for youth aging out of the system.

The California system needs to provide resources appropriate for all types of counties so that they can meet the needs of the populations they serve. Rural counties face unique challenges, such as, isolation, distance and lack of resources for basic services. Their unique issues need to be addressed.

Finally, a web of support needs to be created for those who do emancipate from the system. In order for those young people to successfully integrate into adult life, we must ensure that they have the tools and resources they need: education, employment, housing, access to mental and physical health care and connections to adults and systems.

Foster children and youth are our responsibility; they are wards of the State of California and it behooves all of us to work together to ensure that their needs are being met. Supportive legislation is important, but it is also important for cities, counties and schools to work together to improve the conditions for these children. Collaboration prevents duplication of services, enhances the quality of the services and saves valuable dollars. The solutions are simple, but not easy. Therefore, we need to look at exemplary programs across the state and replicate them in other areas. This is important work; children's lives are at stake.

California Foster Youth We Can Make A Difference!

Introduction

Cities Counties and Schools Partnership

The Cities, Counties and Schools (CCS) Partnership is unique in the nation. Incorporated in 1997, it is a nonprofit, nonpartisan collaboration of associations of local elected officials. The partners that constitute CCS Partnership are the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, and the California School Boards Association.

The Board of Directors of the Partnership is comprised of the officers and executives of the three statewide associations. Together the board members represent the majority of the 7,930 local elected officials in the state. The goal of the partnership is to create a culture of collaboration among local elected officials in California's 480 cities, 58 counties, and more than 1,000 school districts and county boards of education. The purpose of local jurisdictional collaboration is to improve the conditions and quality of life for California's children, families and communities.

2008 Conditions of Children Task Force

In 2005 the CCS Partnership established the Conditions of Children Task Force with each association appointing members to serve one-year terms. In 2005 the task force discussed multiple issues facing children and their families. The 2006 task force had a single focus – understanding childhood obesity and creating an action agenda for addressing it. For 2007 the task force took on a new focus, emancipating foster youth and in 2008, the focus on foster youth continued with a look more broadly at issues for all foster youth.

Members of the 2008 Task Force

| | | | |
|---------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Yvonne | Garrett | Community Services Director | City of La Mesa |
| Jean | Quan | Councilmember | City of Oakland |
| Tony | Thurmond | Councilmember | City of Richmond |
| Barbara | Kondylis | Supervisor | Solano County |
| Teri | Murrison | Supervisor | Tuolumne County |
| Henry | Perea | Supervisor | Fresno County |
| Janice | Friesen | Board Member | Castro Valley Unified School District |
| Sharon | Jones | Board Member | San Diego County Board of Education |
| Lynn | MacDonald | Board Member | Placer Union High School District |
| Kathi | McLaughlin | Board Member | Martinez Unified School District |
| Cindy | Marks | Board Member | Modesto City Schools |
| David | Gordon | Superintendent | Sacramento County Office of Education |
| Pam | Brady | President | California Parent Teacher Association |

The task force was supported in its efforts by staff from the three associations and CCS Partnership. They were:

| | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Farrah | McDaid-Ting | Legislative Analyst | California State Association of Counties |
| Dorothy | Johnson | Legislative Analyst | League of California Cities |
| Marguerite | Noteware | Research Consultant | California School Boards Association |
| Willie | Beaudet | Administrative Assistant | CCS Partnership |
| Connie | Busse | Executive Director | CCS Partnership |
| Luan | Rivera | Director Special Projects | CCS Partnership |
| Francesca | Wright | Special Projects Consultant | CCS Partnership |

The Process

The task force met four times in 2008 to learn from experts and discuss the role and responsibility of local governments in addressing the needs of foster youth. Speakers included:

- Miryam Choca, Director California Strategies, Casey Family Programs;
- Cathy Huerta Director of Children and Family Services, Fresno County
Howard Himes, Deputy Director of Children and Family Services, Fresno County
Andrea Sobrado, Deputy Director of Children and Family Services, Fresno County;
- Rebekah Elizondo, Independent Living Coordinator, Tuolumne County;
- Sidney L. Gardner, President, Children and Family Futures;
- Nancy Marshall, Acting Program Manager Family Maintenance, Cynthia Vanzant, Program Planner and Differential Response Coordinator, Paula Christian, Program Planner Sacramento County Child Protective Services and Lisa Schweiger, Community Response Coordinator The Firehouse FRC ;
- Michelle Lustig, Coordinator Foster Youth Services, San Diego County Office of Education.

The Product

California Foster Youth: We Can Make a Difference is the result of the group's efforts. It represents the viewpoint of local government for how to collectively address the needs of foster youth.

California Foster Youth: We Can Make a Difference

The Issue

California has the largest number of children and youth in foster care of any state in the nation with approximately 80,000 children in care in 2007. While 10 percent of the nation's youth live in California, 20 percent of the children in foster care reside in our state.² Children in care are the responsibility of the state and the state is an inadequate parent. Outcomes for children in foster care are disquieting. The 2007 Conditions of Children Task Force examined the issues facing youth who age out of the system and found the outcomes startling:

- **Homelessness** – 40-55% are homeless within 18 months
- **Education** – 40% complete high school; 75% are below grade level; 1% graduate college
- **Employment** - 50% unemployed in first 5 years; 60% with incomes at/below \$6,000 annually
- **Mental and Physical Health** – 30% no health insurance; 50% moderate to severe mental health problems; high rates of substance abuse
- **Incarceration** – 25% incarcerated within 2 years³.

The California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care cites other facts related to all California foster youth in its report released on August 15, 2008⁴:

- Half of children entering foster care in California are age five or under.
- Approximately 51% of children in foster care in the state have been there for more than two years, 17% of them for more than three years.
- Despite media coverage of tragic cases of abuse, more than 75% of foster children enter placement as a result of neglect.
- Domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness are factors that contribute to the removal of children from their homes.
- About 40% of children who first enter care are placed with a relative. These children are more likely to be placed with their siblings, less likely to have multiple placements, and more likely to maintain family relationships as they grow up.

² California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care Report, (August 15, 2008)
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/ic/tflists/bluerib-rec.htm

³ Barriers Facing Foster Care Youth: National and Local Statistics About Emancipating Foster Youth.

⁴ Op.cit.

- African-American and Native American children are more likely than other children to be reported as abused, more likely to be removed from their homes, and less likely to be reunified or adopted.
- African-American children constitute 7% of the state's child population but are more than 30% of the children in foster care.
- Native American children are 0.84% of the state's child population but represent 1.41% of the children in foster care.
- California spends an estimated \$4.7 billion a year on child welfare and related issues, half coming from the federal government, the other half from state and county funds.
- Society pays a huge cost because of child abuse and neglect. A recent study by Prevent Child Abuse America estimated that nationally, the U.S. spends more than \$33 billion in direct costs resulting from abuse and neglect (costs related to immediate needs, such as child welfare and court services, hospitalization, mental health treatment, law enforcement, etc.). The U.S. spends another \$70 billion because of secondary, long-term results of abuse or neglect, such as special education, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, and lost productivity.
- The above figures are economic costs only and do not take into consideration the incalculable long-term emotional costs to children and families in the system. Removal from their homes is almost always a traumatic experience for children, even when it is necessary.

Guiding Principles

Cities, counties and schools each have a role to play in parenting foster children into adulthood. The CCS Partnership and the 2008 Task Force on the Conditions of Children set forth the following premises as the foundation of future actions:

- ❖ The foremost strategy to address the needs of foster children is to invest in **prevention** so that children do not need to enter the system.
- ❖ A **collaborative approach** yields the best hope of meeting the needs of foster children and youth.
- ❖ Children that enter the system have been taken from their families and placed in the care of the state. Therefore, **foster youth are the responsibility of the state and our communities.**
- ❖ No public care can replace **family care.**
- ❖ Foster **youth are the starting point**, not agencies.

Humboldt

Louisa, now sixteen, entered care for the first time when she was twelve. She experienced nine placements and was in Juvenile Hall when she entered the CPYP project. Her caseworker credits the CPYP project and the use of WRAP services (including in-home therapy) for resulting in a recent successful reunification with Louisa's mother. The WRAP worker thought it was important for Louisa to also develop a relationship with her father. According to the primary case worker, without the project, this young lady probably *never would have met* her father's side of the family. Her mother was "extremely resistant to any connection with the paternal family." However, after the connection was made (and the relationship nurtured with WRAP services) the worker reported, "it was a good thing for all of them."

"It's important to know that there is someone I can count on who wouldn't turn their back on me." Foster Youth

What Can We Do?

The reality of the outcomes can be overwhelming; the remedies however, are simple but not easy. They fall into five general areas of action:

1. Invest in and demand investment in prevention.
2. Develop shared data systems
3. Promote permanency
4. Create a web of support for youth aging out of the system
5. Support legislation that improves conditions for children

1. Invest in and Demand Investment in Prevention

Addressing the underlying causes of why children are placed in foster care is the only real way to make lasting change. Thus, prevention strategies and programs are key to making a difference for foster youth.

Prevention is a difficult approach to fund at any time. However, prevention strategies and programs are especially vulnerable in times of economic downturn. It takes great leadership and vision to persevere in funding prevention in the current economic climate but in the long term, prevention is the most effective way to address foster care.

There are many excellent programs and strategies that have been successful in providing the kind of support parents need to provide safe, nurturing care for their children. This report is highlights six that can make a difference:

- Change health education curriculum in schools
- Screen for fetal exposure to drugs and alcohol
- Support family resource centers and other forms of support for families
- Develop systems that include community norms and community involvement in changing the dynamic
- Address challenges faced by rural counties
- Strengthen connection/communication between education and social services

Change health education curriculum in schools

Schools have a large but indirect role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The possibility of influencing future parental behavior through providing focused education is immense.

- ✓ Educated youth about **parental responsibilities and the impact of maternal substance abuse** on the prenatal development of a fetus. Health classes should provide an integrated message on brain development, which includes the study of brain scans, and other visual images of the brain. The impact of these visual images is dramatic and will help students

- to better understand the direct correlation between substance abuse and frontal lobe development.
- ✓ Include **infant care in the curriculum**, so that young people come to understand, such things as, the impact of shaken baby syndrome on brain injuries and development. Tools, such as the *Charlie Doll*, whose head lights up to show the brain damage caused by shaking, dramatically teach students about the impact of shaken baby syndrome.
 - ✓ **Pregnancy prevention education** is also crucial. Requiring students to care for a “*baby think it over doll*” for a twelve hour period and/or volunteering at a preschool can be useful strategies for imparting the high level of care required by young children.

Screen for fetal exposure to drugs and alcohol

The extent of the issue⁵:

- Between 40 and 80% of children who enter child welfare services are affected by their parents’ or caretakers’ substance abuse.
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the number one cause of mental retardation in children.
- 9% of all US children live in a home where one or more parent is chemically dependent on alcohol or illegal drugs. The issue cuts across all socio-economic strata of society.
 - In 1990, SB 2669 was passed creating a state policy requiring hospitals to test low-income women on Medical, yet the incidence of white, middle income women using alcohol during pregnancy is higher (reaching 10-12%) than that of low-income women.
- At least 400,000 babies born in our nation each year are affected by substance abuse exposure. If one expands the number to those currently under the age of 18, more than seven million were exposed to some sort of prenatal substance abuse
- California counties do not conduct universal prenatal screening or screening at birth.
- Due to the lack of screening “90-95 % of all children with prenatal exposure are not detected at birth and leave the hospital with no follow-up plan or services,” as reported by Nancy K. Young, PhD, and Sidney L. Gardner, MPA in their article, *Substance Abused Infants: Current Issues and Responses*.⁶
- The State is out of compliance with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) which has two requirements:
 - all drug affected births have to be reported to CPS;
 - all substantiated cases involving children 0-2 must receive comprehensive developmental assessment and treatment.

According to research⁷, there are five critical points for intervening in order to ameliorate the effects of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure. Actions taken at these points have the greatest chance of making a difference.

⁵ Sid Gardner. *Responding to Prenatal Exposure :the Potential for Policy and Procedure Changes*. Presentation to CCS Partnership Conditions of Children Task Force. June 25, 2008

⁶ 1. Nancy K. Young, PhD, and Sidney L. Gardner, MPA in their article, *Substance Abused Infants: Current Issues and Responses*.
<http://www.cfutures.org/documents/2007YoungGardnerAPSACSEI.pdf>

⁷ Sid Gardner. *Responding to Prenatal Exposure :the Potential for Policy and Procedure Changes*. Presentation to CCS Partnership Conditions of Children Task Force. June 25, 2008

Five Points of Intervention:

1. Pre-pregnancy public awareness of substance use effects
2. Prenatal screening and support
3. Identification at birth
4. Respond to infant and parents' needs
5. Respond to needs of children throughout their lives

Recommendations to address prenatal exposure:

- ✓ Support screening and early detection of prenatal exposure
- ✓ Promote and provide for early treatment of babies prenatally exposed to substance abuse to mitigate the harmful impact of this exposure.
- ✓ Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the harmful effects of prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol.
- ✓ Create collaboration between and among various agencies using a multi-funded approach to provide adequate resources essential to addressing comprehensive family needs.
 - Promote an approach that addresses children and families and not one at the exclusion of the other.
 - Develop a comprehensive approach to screening and treatment that allows for multiple intervention opportunities and addresses all stages of childhood development.
- ✓ Urge the Child Welfare Council, established with the help of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, to address substance abuse.
- ✓ Require the entering of substance data into county and state data systems.
- ✓ Support additional funding and enforcement of compliance to bring the state into compliance with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

Promising Practices in Screening:

- Sacramento: parents with children in the child welfare system are given priority for treatment. .
- Sacramento County Community Response Partnership
<http://www.ccspartnership.org/ppt/BandBCommunityPartnershipTrainingJuly162008.ppt>
- Kaiser Permanente Hospitals have a program to identify substance abuse exposure at birth.
- Sacramento and Merced Counties are training staff to track substance abuse; this practice should be replicated across the state.

Support family resource centers and other forms of support for families

Family resource centers are not a new idea. They have been around in various forms since the early 1900's with the founding of organizations like Hull House in Chicago, which served the needs of immigrant children and adults.

Current family resource centers are located in neighborhoods and provide either onsite or access to multiple services that families need. They provide support to keep families together and get children into programs faster and younger than in traditional settings. Family resource

centers and other coordinated support systems have proven effective in addressing family issues and challenges.

- Communities are involved in planning and decision making and thus community norms around child rearing can be supported and expanded.
- Services provided at family resources centers are effective
 - Prenatal services result in healthier babies.
 - Parenting classes and support are provided to teach parents much needed skills.
 - Child development services, child enrichment activities, family nights and social events strengthen and support families and enhance child development.
 - Children’s cognitive development and school readiness are improved
 - Healthcare is improved.
- Parents have access to services and support in their child rearing
 - Parents connect and learn from each other; isolation is diminished.
 - Parents learn anger management techniques and parenting skills.
 - Parents are more successful and families are more likely to be kept intact.
- Comprehensive multi-agency support is available in one location to assist families in getting the help they need.

Promising practices in family resource centers.

Many excellent examples of successful family resource centers exist in California. Following is a description of the family resource system in Sacramento County. It has developed over several years and integrates the kind of supports and services needed by families if we are to prevent child abuse and neglect – the major causes of children entering the foster care system.

Birth and Beyond Community Response Partnership

Sacramento County:

Vision

Every Child in Sacramento lives in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and a strong community.

Combining existing programs and strategies Sacramento County has created a comprehensive, community based prevention and early intervention service delivery system. The Birth and Beyond Community Response Partnership has three partners: Sacramento County Department of Health & Human Services, Child Abuse Prevention Council, Sacramento and LPC Consulting, the Program Evaluator.

The first element in the strategy is eight Family Resource Centers in the highest need areas of Sacramento County offering a large array of family support services. The centers are available to all community residents and involve the community in planning, delivery, and decision-making. Services are integrated, comprehensive and include partnerships with other agencies, such as, prenatal services with the University of California, Davis, Healthy Start, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. They offer a community-based system of family support and child development services, child enrichment activities with other community members, social events, family nights, potlucks, referral and follow-up services, parenting classes, home visitation, and Birth & Beyond Community Response Partnership Differential Response Joint Visits.

The centers have several goals: 1) to strengthen and support families 2) to create optimal family functioning; 3) to improve the health, cognitive development and school readiness of children; and to prevent or reduce adverse outcomes. They also develop parent leaders.

Differential Response (DR) is the second element of the overall partnership strategy. Differential Response is a new strength-based, collaborative approach by Child Welfare Services (CWS) to support families while remaining focused on child safety. This is accomplished by responding earlier to the families needs and before the crisis has escalated. Differential Response offers three pathways of action once a family comes to the attention of child welfare services. Those three paths are:

1. Child Welfare Services receives a call that does not require a referral, but the family has needs that can be met by a community partners; a referral is made to the appropriate partner.
2. A CWS social worker and appropriate partner(s) make a joint family visit to make an assessment. The DR home visitor will create a service plan, if there is no concern about abuse.
3. CWS responds alone or with law enforcement. They may also provide information about a community partner and subsequently engage the family with a DR Home Visitor in a later joint home visit.

Multi-Disciplinary Resource Team Meetings (MRT) are the third element of the comprehensive program. MRT's provide a forum for home visitors to present a situation to a variety of specialists in a group setting in order to receive input and access resources to enhance services to the family.

Child safety is a primary concern of this program. As a result of the combined strategies children have been placed in programs faster and younger than ever before. Additionally, programs of this nature save the state money, as they reduce the need for more expensive interventions, promote collaboration and eliminate duplicative services. **The cost of putting one family of five through the court system will keep the resource center open for five months.** This savings estimate is based on consideration of the costs of childcare, the courts, support, mental health services and social workers involved in taking a family to court. The support that families receive in the Resource Centers also eliminate trauma for many children who might otherwise be removed from their homes.

All of this cannot be achieved with one single funding source. Sacramento has a pie chart of funding sources, including seven or eight funding streams. Each county has these resources. Sacramento draws down funds from First 5, Medical Health Services Administrative Act, pass through from federal to state to locals, some discretionary funds for prevention; Children's Trust Fund (license plates), AmeriCorps (funding and community capacity building) and tobacco litigation settlement funds.

An important and critical element in the success of this program is a superstructure of collaboration that is necessary in order to create a common vision. The political will of county leadership is crucial to developing and maintaining this delivery system

Develop systems that include community norms and community involvement in changing the dynamic

Community partnerships are crucial to meeting the needs of children and families; child welfare cannot solve these complex problems in isolation. Communities that apply a community-based strategy to address prevention and early intervention have proven successful. Following are some recommendations for creating this type of system.

- ✓ **Create formal and informal networks** with neighborhood leaders. Members of the community will be able to identify who the leaders are. Engaging community leaders helps establish expectations and create positive changes throughout the community.
- ✓ **Include** neighbors, school staff and faith based-organizations as partners.
- ✓ **Recruit foster parents** from within the neighborhoods where children enter the system.
- ✓ It is important to **keep children in their neighborhoods**, if at all possible. This provides the children with continuity and is a big step towards permanency
- ✓ Employ a **Differential Response (DR)** approach in child welfare systems. DR is a strength-based, child welfare response system that offers a collaborative approach to support families. It is focused on child safety and well-being.
- ✓ The three pathways for child welfare referral in DR enable the system to respond to families faster and more effectively. The levels of response are:
 1. Referral to community resources
 2. Joint community and agency response
 3. Traditional CPS response

Communities have found ways to improve conditions for children and reduce the number of children entering the system. Our current economic conditions may result in more children in the system due to the stresses on parents. However, a strategy that includes the community can help. The following is a description of the engaged community system that Fresno County has developed.

Fresno County:

In 2003 Fresno County Children and Family Services (CFS) Department became part of the national Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family-to-Family Initiative (F2F). The Initiative focuses on keeping children in their own homes and neighborhoods. Becoming part of the Initiative was a turning point for Fresno CFS. The agency vowed to become transparent and to embrace data-driven decision making

The F2F Strategies are:

1. **Building Community Partnerships** by establishing formal and informal networks with neighborhood leaders and engaging the community in reviewing and interpreting the data. Together they established common ground and agreed that neither the agency nor the community wanted to remove children from the neighborhood. CFS established collaboratives to provide greater support to families. The result is that CFS is beginning to see a decrease in entry into care. Partners, including neighbors, school staff, and faith-based organizations, act as cultural brokers. Cultural brokers are liaisons between the community and the agency. Coming from the same community as the parents and children entering the system, they can accomplish things an agency worker cannot.
2. **Self evaluation using data.** Fresno started with a rate of 2-3 times higher representation of African-American and Native American children in all areas of child welfare services, including referral; substantiation; children entering care, and children in care. By examining the data, the department also saw that their earlier history did not provide early education and did not help ensure school success. The system did not address the issues of children in care whose school achievement, was affected by high mobility and higher suspension, expulsion, and drop-out rates.
3. **Recruitment, development and support of foster families** is focused on the children's home neighborhoods. The department actively recruits foster families in those neighborhoods. A plan of permanent guardianship with a family member is considered a successful permanent placement.
4. **Team decision-making (TDM):** CFS started TDM in 2004, bringing together folks serving various roles in order to make key decisions, such as, whether or not to remove a child from his/her home. The family's voice becomes a vital part of the decision-making process; family networks have a key role to play in ensuring the child's safety and well-being. CFS uses research-based structured decision-making tools.

Results:

Reduction in removal rate: Catherine Huerta, Director of Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services, attributes the TDM process with the reduction in the number of children removed from their homes. Department staff cannot imagine returning to the old model where removal was at the case workers sole discretion

Group Homes: Fresno has reduced group home placement from 300 to 130 children countywide and maintains a discharge and step-down plan for each child in a group home.

Reunification: The County has done some reunifications and reinstated parental rights for teenagers that were removed as very young children. Currently, Fresno has 1,100 children in long-term foster care.

Disproportional Representation: The use of Cultural Brokers has been the main factor in gaining proportional representation of African American children in foster care. Cultural Brokers are people in the neighborhoods who have credibility with families. Fresno continues to have over representation in referrals (12-13% of referrals are African American children who represent 6% of the community's population) but substantiation is going down, and **children entering care are proportionate to the population!**

Address challenges faced by rural counties

Many if not all counties have challenges in providing services that address the needs of children and families. In rural counties those challenges make prevention and early intervention services more difficult and exacerbate the difficulties encountered serving foster youth. The dispersed population and limited revenue sources contribute to the challenges rural counties face. Often policies and mandates that the state places on service delivery do not take into account the realities of rural counties. Following are some of their challenges.

Challenges:

- Rural counties are often vast in size with great distances between cities, towns or other centers where services might be delivered.
- Transportation – Public transportation is non-existent. Parents find it difficult to get to court ordered services and may have to choose between paying for gas to access these services and buying groceries.
- Rural counties contain few incorporated cities and various small communities with a shortage of resources.
- Multiple small school districts make collaboration and sharing of resources difficult.
- There are not enough foster families and the pool of available families is much smaller than in suburban or urban counties.
- Shortage of safe, affordable housing for reunification
- There is often a waiting list for mental health services and parenting classes.

- Shortage or complete lack of child psychiatrists or psychologist and other health and mental health providers
- Limited Alcohol and Drug treatment and rehabilitation services for teens and adults
- Lack of funding for differential response or other proven strategies outside traditional child welfare service
- County staffs are small and not always aware of all funding opportunities.

Recommendations:

The state needs to recognize the unique challenges faced by rural counties and take that into account when distributing funding and creating policies.

- ✓ Develop policies needed to address rural challenges.
- ✓ Ensure adequate funding allocations for small counties.
- ✓ Minimize costly mandated activities and services.
- ✓ Provide flexible funding.

Challenges Faced by Tuolumne County

Tuolumne County typifies many of the issues facing rural counties. Sonora is the only incorporated city in the county with a population of 4,500. There are nineteen other small communities spread throughout the county and multiple individual small school districts. Although collaboration and volunteerism are strengths, the county faces numerous challenges in delivering services including, insufficient foster families; transportation issues; a shortage of safe, affordable housing for reunification; waiting lists for mental health services and parenting classes; a lack of evening office hours in public and non-profit agencies, very limited AOD services for teenagers (the only service available is a weekly AAA meeting); no residential rehabilitation facility is available in the county; and no funding for differential response. The county’s children’s center closed. No child psychiatrist practices in the county. Of the children in foster care, 70% involve substance abuse issues in the family. Twenty-one percent of foster youth emancipate without a high school diploma.

Strengthen connection and communication between education and social services

While many communities have developed connections between the educational system and the social services system, much remains to be done to ensure that children and youth in foster care receive the attention and services they need. The need for coordination is paramount to greater academic success. One small example illustrates this. In a meeting between school districts and counties, the school liaisons pointed out the needed to ban moving high school students to new placements on days that the California High School Exit Exam is given. If the student does not pass the exam they cannot graduate and the exam is only given on a few specific days. There are many other examples of what can happen when one system is not aware of what is happening in another system. Some recommendations for strengthening cross system communication are given

below.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Create a system for communication across the multiple agencies and multiple funding sources that serve the needs of foster youth.
- ✓ Shared data across systems is crucial.
- ✓ County social services and school districts must work together to ensure timely transfer of records to prevent interruption of services and disruption of the student's education.
- ✓ All those involved with foster youth, including caregivers and educators, should receive adequate training to ensure knowledge of brain development and the needs of and resources and services available to foster youth.
- ✓ Co-location of those involved with foster youth enhances communication and coordination of services. Such options include housing social workers in schools, housing educational liaisons in child welfare offices, and housing all in community resource centers.

Promising Practices in coordination and collaboration

- **Sacramento County:**
 - The County established a system of eight Family Resource Centers. (FRC's). Each has a relationship with their individual school districts. The FRC's receive valuable services through the districts, including pre-literacy services. They use "Tupperware Parties without the Plastic". These are early childhood education parties for parents and are done in people's homes. The host family gets a basket of school readiness tools - books, etc. for the child.
 - The County Office of Education provides services to 13 districts within the county. Their first concern was a broader platform database. In the 2007-2008 school year, they created case managers with grassroots community connections to work in districts and schools in order to track and support foster youth. The County Superintendent and his deputy meet with the case managers weekly.
- **The Tutor Connection Program** was created by San Diego County Office of education and California State University, San Marcos with the involvement of San Diego County Health and Human Services/Child Welfare Services and Casey Family Programs. The program uses students from the university's College of Education as tutors for foster youth. More than 1,250 future teachers and 1,500 foster youth have participated in the program. In addition to 70 percent of the youth improving their reading scores and 80 percent improving their performance in at least one academic area, the student teachers have gained valuable skills in working with foster youth that they will bring with them into their future classrooms. The program was recently honored by and received a \$10,000 check from former President Jimmy Carter.
- **San Pasqual Academy** is the first residential academy in the country to serve only foster youth. It is a collaboration between the San Diego County Office of

Education, San Diego County and non-profit providers. The school serves high school students and their siblings who are as young as twelve years old. It meets A-G (college entrance requirements) and provides arts, sports, enrichment and remedial programs. The school addresses independent living and vocational skills while focusing on academics and incorporates college and career planning into its program. Students are encouraged to go to college and a private foundation provides funding for all who qualify.

- **Fresno Child and Family Services Department (CFS):** has created a system of support to address the educational needs of children in foster care:
 - They created educational liaisons who meet with the group homes. They will not place children in group homes where there is no educational support, advocacy and continuity.
 - They will be placing 10-14 social workers in the area high schools.
 - They have workers in target neighborhood elementary schools and will be placing some in middle schools. Prior to the creation of this support system, foster youth had three times the suspension rates of other children. Fresno has gone from less than 30 foster youth graduating to 127 graduating from high school. They have gone from 6 to 14 students graduating from the bridge program.
 - They are working on getting all children in preschool through a partnership with First 5.
 - Fresno County combines children's mental health and child welfare into one department which has helped in information sharing.
 - They have been able to co-locate workers in schools which provide office space
 - In order to carry out all of these changes, CFS supplements its budget with foundation funding.
 - Technical expertise from foundations has been critical for learning from research, fiscal strategies, and national field of practice.

2. **Develop a Shared Data System:**

Data is key to coordination of services and supports and to the ultimate success of children in foster care. Children who remain in foster care for any length of time have an average of six different living situations while in care. Many children have many more placements: in one extreme case, a girl had 60 placements. This kind of disruption for children and youth who are under duress makes it necessary for the systems that serve them to keep track of important information. A shared data system across jurisdictions increases the odds that children and youth will receive credit for all of the classes they have taken and correct medical information can be provided. Also, there is even a possibility that siblings who have been separated can find each other or that their relatives can be found.

Recommendation:

The task force recommends that counties and the state develop shared data systems similar to

the one created by the San Diego Office of Education and San Diego County.

San Diego County has developed a web-based, shared data system⁸ that provides easy access to all necessary information about foster youth to all agencies that serve them. It allows the agencies to share information and resources in order to better serve foster youth and improve their educational and personal outcomes. It took 300 hours of programming to build the system that serves over 5,000 young people in San Diego County. It has been highly successful and San Diego County is willing to share the system with any county that wants to replicate it. If the state were to develop such a system that disaggregated information by county, everyone would benefit from it, especially small counties.

- **Aspects of this system include:**

1. Memorandums of Agreement with all of the agencies that are involved:
 - Health and Human Services (HHSA), Child Welfare Services (CWS)
 - Juvenile Court
 - County Office of Education
 - Department of Probation
2. Interagency Agreements with 50 signatories representing the following agencies:
 - All 42 School Districts
 - The San Diego County Superintendent of Schools
 - San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), Juvenile Court and Community Schools
 - HHSA, CWS
 - Probation Department
 - Voices for Children
 - Public Defender
 - Alternate Public Defender
 - Superior Court
3. The system contains the following information:
 - Foster Youth Specific Information
 - Social Worker/Probation Officer Contact Information
 - Education Rights Holder

⁸ for more information visit <http://www.sdcoe.net/ssp/support/fys/?loc=fysis>

- School History
- Grades and Attendance Data
- Health Information, including immunizations and medications (restricted)
- Placement History (restricted)

4. The system contains the following information:

- Foster Youth Specific Information
- Social Worker/Probation Officer Contact Information
- Education Rights Holder
- School History
- Grades and Attendance Data
- Health Information, including immunizations and medications (restricted)
- Placement History (restricted)

- **How has this system changed outcomes?**

- It has enabled users to track down credits in real-time, which solves problems for individual children and has helped target students for appropriate supplemental resources. **One example:** A student was in 12th grade with only 7 credits showing; the system was able to find previous educational records which showed 100 credits which allowed the student to graduate on time.
- Assists students in receiving support services.
- The system provides long-range savings to the state.

2. Promote Permanency

What every human being needs is to belong. Everyone needs to know that someone cares about them and will be present in their life on a permanent basis. In the words of Regina Louise, author and former foster child, everyone needs to be “somebody’s someone”⁹ When asked what permanency meant to them, foster youth said things like, “your picture is on someone’s refrigerator”, “someone to share good news with,” or “your side of the church is full at your wedding.” These seemingly small indicators of belonging speak volumes about the needs foster children and youth experience.

⁹ Regina Louise. *Somebody’s Someone*. Warner Books. New York. 2003

Recommendations

- ✓ **Make creating permanency for foster children and youth a high priority** in every program and every community.
- ✓ **Adopt the permanency pledge** (see www.cpy.org) and utilize school, city and county communications to help families understand opportunities for providing permanency.
- ✓ **Develop programs** such as [FosterClub's Permanency Pact](#) that creates a formalized facilitated process to connect youth in foster care with a supportive adult.
- ✓ Make the use of **“family finding software”** available to all county workers involved with finding placements for children. Develop procedures and train staff in the use of the software and the procedures.
- ✓ **Develop a system like CASA** (Court Appointed Special Advocates) that provides long-range support of youth rather than the current two years.

3. Create a Web of Support for Youth Aging Out of the System

*Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth*¹⁰ the 2007 report of the Conditions of Children Task Force focused exclusively on the needs of youth who age out of the foster care system. Outcomes for these youth are dire. Few graduate from high school (42%) and even fewer from college (1%). Many are incarcerated and most are unemployed or underemployed earning on average \$6,000 or less annually. The rates of Post Traumatic Stress syndrome are higher for these youth than for war veterans. Clearly the current foster care system has failed them.

Recommendations

Five elements need to be addressed to begin to meet the needs of youth aging out of the system. They are employment, education, housing, mental and behavioral health, and permanency. Following are specific recommendations for action in each of these areas

- **Employment:** Cities, counties and schools should work together and develop partnerships with local businesses and higher education to ensure that youth have meaningful employment and job skills training before aging-out of the system:
 - ✓ **Link** Workforce Investment Act programs, high schools and community colleges with Independent Living Programs to coordinate outreach and recruitment and support foster youth in career technical education and employment pathways.
 - ✓ **Provide paid internships** in city, county and school district departments.
 - ✓ **Make workforce development services youth friendly.**

¹⁰.”Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth” CCS Partnership. Conditions of Children Task Force 2007.

Promising Practices in Employment of Foster Youth

Glenn and Humboldt Counties have overcome some of the rural issues of isolation, distance, lack of resources and transportation to create job training and employment opportunities for youth.

Glenn County

Leaders of youth employment in Glenn County wanted to establish a clearing house for relevant programs and to roll all funding sources together within the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC). They developed the **Youth Employment Services (Yes) Program**, a 16 week ROP program, which includes a classroom component that develops work and life skills and a six-week paid work experience. 10-15% of the students involved maintain their jobs throughout high school. **YES** is currently in its seventh year.

Humboldt County

Humboldt County's **Step-Up** Program encourages private-public partnerships that match high school students with part-time jobs. In order to pre-qualify, students need only to answer, "Yes," to two questions. "Do you want to work?" and "Are you willing to put time and effort into finding the right job?" Employers enjoy the benefit of having prescreened, ready-to-work employees. Businesses donate stipends for the students and the program provides stipends for students placed in nonprofits and government agencies.

- **Education:**

"Children in Foster Care typically don't have positive family support and guidance and it's our collective responsibility to provide this for them through public/private partnerships and regional K-18 partnerships that include all affiliated agencies. These are our kids and they are a part of all of our futures; we each have a role in filling the gap left by the absence of consistent parental support. When foster children are given the opportunity and support they need, they can achieve phenomenal success."

-Jack O'Connell,
California Superintendent of Public Instruction
Opening Remarks, 2007 CA Foster Youth Education Summit

Youth in Foster care often have difficulty accumulating sufficient credits for high school graduation, as changes in placement often result in changes in schools. Often credits from one school or district do not match those of another. Incomplete courses can create difficulties and education received in group homes does not always meet state standards. The following recommendations will improve the success rate of foster youth.

- ✓ **Provide a high quality preschool** experience to all foster youth.
- ✓ **Develop a shared data system**
- ✓ **Cross train child welfare workers and school administrators and teachers** on the needs of foster youth and what information can be shared between agencies and

what must remain confidential.

- ✓ **Ensure compliance and high quality implementation of AB 490 throughout the state.** This bill requires transfer of records within two days of the student's transfer between schools and requires that schools give students partial credit for work completed, among other things. It is unevenly implemented across the state.
- ✓ **Provide supplemental support services to foster youth.**
- ✓ **Ensure access**, including transportation, for foster youth to computers in libraries, recreation centers, adult schools, health clinics, community schools and after-school programs.
- ✓ **Coach guardians and youth** on high school graduation requirements, college admissions requirements and available resources, including grants and scholarships.
- ✓ **Partner with institutions of higher learning to supply mentoring and tutoring to foster youth.** Consider programs such as, **Guardian Scholars**, which assists with financial aid, tutoring, preferential registration and year-round housing.
- ✓ **Encourage foster youth to enroll in the AVID program** (Advancement Via Individual Determination), an educational program designed to assist students in preparing for and succeeding in college.
- ✓ **Ensure that non-public schools and group homes** serving foster youth meet state and district academic standards.
- ✓ **Replicate successful programs**, such as, San Pasqual Academy and Tutor Connection.

The Stuart Foundation has awarded The California State University System (CSU) \$600,000 over three years to create the **CSU Foster Youth in Higher Education Project**, which is designed to assist former foster youth in being successful in college.

The program is designed to increase retention and graduation rates of students who were in foster care. The CSU will work with the University of California, California Community Colleges, and independent colleges and universities to increase the quality and number of foster youth programs on their respective campuses.

"We intend to provide them with more friendly paths in college and eliminate some of the barriers they face in academic preparation, access to housing, medical services, and financial aid." said CSU Chancellor Charles B. Reed

The CSU has appointed Jenny Vinopal as Assistant Director of Foster Youth Programs. She can be contacted at (562) 951-4734 or jvinopal@calstate.edu.

- **Housing:** Housing is perhaps the most immediate need for emancipating youth, as many have been in the system for years and have no resources for obtaining housing. Additionally, affordable housing is often not available.
 - ✓ Ensure that a variety of **safe, affordable housing is available.**
 - ✓ Emancipating foster youth should be given **priority for subsidized housing.**
 - ✓ Housing agencies should be required to **leverage THP Plus Transitional Housing, Proposition 1-C funds and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program (EPSDT) funds.** EPSDT is the child health component to Medicaid and the primary source of mental health funds for former foster youth under age 21.
 - ✓ **Create youth hostels** for emancipated foster youth.

Mary's House in Escondido provides transitional housing in a unique, semi-supervised, 6-bedroom home setting for emancipated females ages 18 to 24 for up to 24 months. It is sponsored by the YMCA Youth and Family Services and provides on-site case management services designed to develop independent living skills and assist with job skills, education, employment and emotional development. Their goal is to help equip these young women with the skills needed to make the transition to successful, independent adult life. All residents of the home are required to work and/or attend to school full time. Aftercare support and referrals are also included in the program which is partly funded by the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation (CAPF).

Contact information: 760- 746-1944 http://www.yfs.ymca.org/english/index_rs_marys.html

- **Mental and Behavioral Health:** Youth in foster care have higher rates of mental health issues than other youth. Also, substance abuse is common in this population. They need help identifying and dealing with their behaviors before leaving the system, in order to live successfully as independent adults.
 - ✓ **Allocate mental and behavioral health resources** to foster youth in care, as well as, post emancipation.
 - ✓ **Address addiction issues.**
 - ✓ **Offer services to youth in after school hours.**
 - ✓ **Fully utilize EPSDT funds.**

5. Support Legislation That Improves Conditions for Children

Many of the recommendations in this document require only local action: establishing

communication, programs, priorities, and collaboration to provide a local network of support for foster youth. However, some of the recommendations made will require legislative action. While more than 30 pieces of legislation were introduced during the 2006-2008 legislative session not all of them were enacted and there still remains much work to be done. The following are recommendations for legislative action:

- ✓ Encourage the State of California to pass legislation to implement the provisions of **H.R. 6893, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act**, signed into law by President Bush in October, 2008. Provisions of the law include:
 - Providing a new grant program to support “family-finding” efforts.
 - Allow federal funds for guardianship payments for children raised by care giving relatives. Kinship assistance payments may equal payments given to foster families.
 - Allows children leaving foster care after age 16 for kinship or adoption placements to receive independent living services and education and training vouchers.
 - Requires states to make a good faith effort to locate and identify adult relatives of children removed from their homes within 30 days.
 - Allows states to waive safety licensing standards in order to facilitate placement with relatives.
 - Allows a child to stay in foster care until age 21 under certain circumstances.
 - Requires welfare agencies to develop a detailed, specific transition plan for all foster youth before they exit care.
 - Expands availability of federal IV-E training dollars for court personnel, attorneys, all guardians, and advocates.
 - Requires states to make a reasonable effort to keep siblings together.
 - Provides direct access to federal funds to American Indian tribes.
 - Requires greater health care provisions for foster youth.
 - Provides adoption incentives (some fear that this provision could result in abuses in the form of rapid, inappropriate placements and insist that provisions to better vet prospective adoptive parents should be implemented to accompany this law.)
 - Unfortunately, the law contains no prevention initiatives to combat abuse and neglect and better support intact families.
- ✓ Extend foster care to age 21, as an option for all youth.
- ✓ Remove barriers to data and information sharing. Ensure that all personnel

working with foster youth have a full understanding of rules surrounding confidentiality and information sharing.

- ✓ Require that educational programs in group homes meet state academic standards.

Conclusion

In 2007, the CCS Partnership Conditions of Children Task Force decided to study the topic of emancipating foster youth in order to explore ways that local governments can improve the plight of these young people. As study of the topic progressed, it became obvious, that it is important to address the issues facing foster youth long before emancipation. In order to meet the needs of this very vulnerable population and improve their outcomes, we need to address care within the system itself. Of course, the most desirable outcome is to prevent youngsters from entering the system at all.

If our focus begins with prevention, then we must educate both the general public and our school children about brain development and the adverse affects of substance abuse on fetal development. Drug and alcohol screening of pregnant women, infants and children at various stages of development are crucial. Then we need to develop a collaborative approach to supporting families through community resource centers that integrate programs and resources in order to provide tools to families so that they are more likely to be successful and stay intact. In this approach, communities are viewed as resources that can help support struggling families. Differentiated Response provides different levels of intervention to families in crisis, which results in the delivery of resources and services to children faster and younger than ever before and a decreased number of children being removed from their homes. If children are removed from their homes, it is important to seek a placement with relatives, before placing a child in foster care. “Family Find Software” is essential to this quest.

Additionally, children in the system benefit from the coordination of services. Barriers between education and social services need to be eliminated to best meet the needs of youth. Legislation is needed to facilitate the sharing of information and the development of a shared data system between agencies.

Furthermore, the California system needs to provide resources appropriate for all of our varied counties so that they might meet the needs of the populations that they serve. Rural counties in our state face unique challenges, such as, isolation, distance and lack of resources for basic services. Their unique issues need to be addressed, if we are to create a system that serves all of the people of California.

Finally, a web needs to be created to support those who do emancipate from the system. In order for those young people to successfully integrate into adult life, we must ensure that they have the tools and resources they need: education, employment, housing, access to mental and physical health care and connections to adults and systems.

These young people are our responsibility; they are wards of the State of California and it behooves all of us to work together to ensure that their needs are being met. Supportive

legislation is important, but it is also important for cities, counties and schools to work together to improve the conditions for these children. Collaboration prevents duplication of services, enhances the quality of the services and saves valuable dollars. The solutions are simple, but not easy. Therefore, we need to look at exemplary programs across the state and replicate them in other areas. This is important work; children's lives are at stake.

“My goal continues to be to have foster youth treated as we would treat our own children.”

Current Speaker, California Assembly, Karen Bass
at 2007 CA Foster Youth Education Summit

References and Selected Resources:

Birth & Beyond, Community Response Partnership/The Child Abuse prevention Center of Sacramento County,
http://core2.pca-ca.org/capc/services/programs/amicorps/birth_and_beyond or
<http://www.ccspartnership.org/ppt/BandBCommunityPartnershipTrainingJuly162008.ppt>

2007 California Foster Youth Education Summit, Recommendations to Improve Foster Youth Education Success in California
<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/CaliforniaFosterYouthEducationSummitReport.htm>

California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care Report, (August 15, 2008) www.courtinfo.ca.gov/ic/tflists/bluerib-rec.htm

The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), a project of the Public Health Institute, offers many resources on permanency. www.cpyp.org

California State University System (CSU) Foster Youth in Higher Education Project
<http://www.calstate.edu/PA/news/2008/fosteryouth.shtml>

Cities, Counties, Schools (CCS) Partnership. (2008)
Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth, A community Action Guide,
<http://www.ccspartnership.org/pdf/OurChildrenActionGuide.pdf>

FosterClub is a national network for young people in foster care. www.fosterclub.org

Glenn County, Youth Employment Services (Yes) Program,
<http://www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/GLENNYES.pdf>

Humboldt County, Step-Up Program (a youth employment project)
<http://www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/ytat/promisingpractices/HumboldtSTEP-UPProgram.pdf>

Pew Charitable Trust, *Aging Out and on their Own*

http://www.pewtrusts.org/our_work_report_detail.aspx?id=26082&category=8&WT.srch&source=google

San Diego County office of education: Foster Youth Student Information System (FY-SIS) <http://www.sdcoe.net/ssp/support/fys/?loc=fysis>

San Pasqual Academy <http://www.sanpasqualacademy.org/>

Tutor Connection, California State University, San Marcos
<http://www.casey.org/MediaCenter/Newsletter/Archive/Winter2005/TutorConnection.htm>

Young, PhD, Nancy K., and Gardner, MPA, Sidney L., *Substance Abused Infants: Current Issues and Responses*.
<http://www.cffutures.org/documents/2007YoungGardnerAPSACSEI.pdf>

Organizations and Additional Resources:

California Youth Connection (CYC) promotes the participation of foster youth in policy development and legislative change to improve the foster care system. The California Youth Connection is guided, focused and driven by current and former foster youth with the assistance of other committed community members. Visit their website for current policy proposals at www.CalYouthConn.org

Casey Family Programs is a national operating foundation that has served children, youth, and families in the child welfare system since 1966. Its mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care. www.casey.org

Child Welfare League of America is an association of nearly 800 public and private nonprofit agencies that assist more than 3.5 million abused and neglected children and their families each year with a range of services. www.cwla.org

California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) is a collaborative effort of five foundations assisting public child welfare agencies and their communities to build comprehensive transition-aged foster youth supports and services for youth 14 through 24. It is currently working in Fresno, Orange, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Stanislaus Counties. www.f2f.ca.gov/California25.htm

Family to Family The Family to Family (F2F) Initiative was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1992 to address the growing challenges in the nation's child welfare system. Within California, twenty-five counties representing almost ninety percent of the children in foster care have implemented this Initiative. www.f2f.ca.gov

HEY (Honoring Emancipated Youth) strengthens and connects San Francisco's systems of support for Bay Area foster care youth so that all youth emancipating or aging out of the foster care system can enjoy a healthy transition to adulthood. www.heysf.org

L. A. Youth is an online newspaper with monthly articles for and by foster youth. www.LAYouth.com

John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes currently has several initiatives focused on helping California counties connect foster youth to housing and social security benefits. The Foundation also researches policy options. www.johnburtonfoundation.org.

National Foster Care Month is a national campaign to promote greater awareness of foster youth. It is in May. www.FosterCareMonth.org

National Center for Youth Law seeks to protect abused and neglected children, expand health care and other public benefits for youth, and improve child support collection. www.youthlaw.org

New Ways to Work helps communities prepare youth for success as adults. www.nww.org