



County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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PRESS RELEASE:

Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services Release a Report on Improving Outcomes for African American Children

(LOS ANGELES, January 16, 2013) – On Wednesday, January 16, 2013, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will release a report on the Institutional Analysis conducted to identify problematic institutional assumptions, policies and protocols that contribute to poor outcomes for some children, particularly African American children. While the analysis identified a number of factors that may negatively impact all children served by DCFS, special attention was given to the experience of African American children and families due to their disproportional representation in child welfare caseloads.

The report, titled “Child Welfare Practice: Creating a Successful Climate for Change – Findings and Considerations from an Institutional Analysis,” is the result of a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The State of California funded this study through the federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII), a multi-site demonstration project designed to improve permanency outcomes among children in foster care who have the most serious barriers to permanency. Los Angeles is one of four counties, including Humboldt, Santa Clara and Fresno counties, participating in similar studies focusing on barriers to permanency for children in foster care.

The report cites the commitment of the leadership of DCFS and Judge Michael Nash, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, for working on county-wide solutions to improve practice, policy, and outcomes related to racial disparity. **Judge Nash remarks, “The Institutional Analysis of the Los Angeles child welfare system done by the Center for the Study of Social Policy provides a significant road map for change to our system. All of us who work in the child welfare system should study the report carefully and work together to implement its key recommendations. I am convinced that this will improve outcomes for all children and families involved with our system in Los Angeles County.”**

The Institutional Analysis collected data primarily from the DCFS regional offices in Pomona and Torrance, and the Wateridge office serving south Los Angeles. The study details actions

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already taken to address common problem areas uncovered in preliminary findings. Some of those problem areas are shown below with the measures implemented to improve services:

- Lack of effective engagement: All three offices have begun using Child and Family Teams, as well as Team Decision Making, to better engage their families and promote successful reunifications.
- Inadequate matching of services to needs: Improvements include reducing the time needed to link parents to resources, and working closer with group homes to reduce transition children to a lower level of care.
- Workers are not organized to maximize opportunities for safe and timely reunification: Improvements include establishing faith-based partnerships to help children stay connected to their family, and working with local community agencies to provide expedited support to families to facilitate reunification with children.

Another measure being implemented to improve outcomes of African American children in foster care is the Core Practice model, a joint initiative of DCFS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). The model will help DCFS and DMH professionals identify and address the underlying needs of children and families. The four elements of this approach are: Family Strengths/Child Needs-Based Approach; Multi-Agency Collaboration in the Community; Teaming; and Cultural Responsiveness.

Philip L. Browning, Director of DCFS, states, “This study has helped focus our efforts on improving the outcomes of our African American children in foster care. We believe in keeping children in their parent’s home whenever it is safe and in reducing the time children spend in foster care, so we are hopeful that by using this report as a guide we will reduce the disproportional representation of African American children in foster care. We also think this study will help us reduce the timeline to reunification and permanency for all children in our care. We look forward to working with our community partners to make this happen.”

The full report can be found at: <http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare/institutional-analysis/Child-Welfare-Practice-Creating-a-Successful-Climate-for-Change.pdf>

The Executive Summary can be found at: http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare/institutional-analysis/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-Child-Welfare-Practice_Creating-a-Successful-Climate-for-Change.pdf.

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