

# Midcourse Lessons Learned from the Los Angeles County Prevention Initiative Demonstration Program (PIDP):

## Early Successes, Partnerships, and the Challenges That Lie Ahead

### Executive Summary



**Revised January 22, 2009.**

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Special thanks to the participants of the PIDP-POE Learning Session for sharing their ideas and recommendations. We appreciate the advice and support of the DCFS staff, First 5 LA, the other PIDP/POE evaluation team members, and the Casey Family Programs' Systems Improvement, Communications and Capacity-building teams: Clare Anderson, Bonnie Armstrong, Joni Byun, Angela Carter, Christina Castro, David Dreger, Joanne Edgar, David Fetterman, Walter Furman, Ruben Gonzales, Bill Gould, Louise Grasmehr, Ricardo Hernandez, Felita Horton, Harvey Kawasaki, Susan Notkin, Debra Nakatomi, Patricia Perez, Peggy Polinsky, Erin Saberi, Susan Smith, Myra Soto, Dan Torres, Laura Valles, Alan Weisbart and Robert Wiltse. Finally we thank Erin Hall of TriWest Group for carefully transcribing the discussion tapes and Margaret Polansky for carefully editing the entire report.

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# Midcourse Lessons Learned from the Los Angeles County Prevention Initiative Demonstration Program (PIDP): Early Successes, Partnerships, and the Challenges That Lie Ahead

## Executive Summary

On February 26, 2008 the Board of Supervisors approved the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP), an innovative countywide effort to demonstrate effective approaches to reducing child abuse and neglect. This unique partnership between the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and community-based organizations is designed to strengthen families while providing opportunities for government agencies and community residents to increase the safety and well-being of children, families and the community. PIDP is a \$5-million, one-year child abuse and neglect prevention project led by community-based providers selected in each of the eight regional Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Guided by the core value of collaboration, DCFS and community organizations are working closely with each other and residents to find the most effective ways to ensure child safety and family well-being. The community organizations are creating strength-based networks of family support that maximize and align resources to connect families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

At the same time, DCFS offices have also been able to use the financial flexibility afforded by the Title IV-E Waiver to help and support families at their “Point of Engagement” with the child protective services system by providing differential responses to individual needs, including linkages to community-based resources, services and supports. Started in 2004, Point of Engagement (POE) has become the Department’s umbrella term for a number of reform strategies including Team Decision Making, Structured Decision Making, Concurrent Planning and others. Since all of these reforms require closer connections between DCFS regional offices and community-based resources for families, DCFS administrators are working hard to enhance relationships with other County departments, cities, school districts, faith-based networks and civic groups to “connect the dots” among those who support and serve families in order to offer just-in-time help, referrals and supports to families.

As DCFS works to integrate many strands of reform into a more effective overall model of child welfare practice, community-based organizations throughout Los Angeles County are developing local networks that provide family-centered services in response to DCFS referrals, as well as

engaging a broad range of people in family support activities, relationship-based community organizing, and opportunities for economic success. Because DCFS offices are changing their internal practices in parallel with the emergence of these community-based networks, the evaluation team has focused on collecting qualitative and quantitative data on the interactions and synchronicity of PIDP and POE. During 2008, evaluators have reviewed documents and analyzed emerging networks, administered on-line surveys on organizational change, and conducted interviews and focus groups with DCFS staff. During the next six months, the evaluation team will also interview participating parents and staff from community-based organizations.

Although the PIDP partnerships are only about six months old—having been launched in the summer of 2008—there is a palpable sense of enthusiasm and excitement among participants. This mid-course report was designed to illustrate some of the changes that are underway from the perspectives of those who are most involved. It draws on information from a number of sources to describe a very complex set of reform efforts and prevention activities designed to address the unique needs and resources of the different regions of LA County.

Most of the “lessons learned” are drawn directly from the comments of over 150 people who attended a PIDP learning session on November 17, 2008. The design for the day included afternoon breakout groups where representatives from all the different SPAs were asked to discuss, compare and contrast their experiences to date in implementing new concepts around preventing child abuse and neglect. The full report that follows this executive summary is based on transcriptions of detailed group discussions guided by four key questions: (1) What are your early successes?; (2) What have you learned about the best ways of communicating child maltreatment prevention concepts to others that you are working with in your community?; (3) What have you learned about how DCFS offices can best partner with existing community-based networks?; and (4) What are the major challenges for the next 6 months for the initiative and how do you plan to address them?

While the full report notes comments made by participants in each of these four groupings separately, the following summarizes lessons that were discussed in at least two groups. The sidebars scattered through this report describe some of the activities and partnerships underway in different communities. Some of the specific examples were drawn from program documents, monitoring reports and interviews with DCFS staff.

## **Early Successes**

**1. Including multiple levels of child maltreatment prevention and outreach is very important.** One of the early successes of the PIDP relates to the three different levels of

prevention that are now integrated in each region. Rather than limiting or labeling families as being eligible for certain kinds of services based on their relationship with DCFS, most PIDP participants believe that any family can benefit from “primary prevention” activities such as employment or job training opportunities, joining with their neighbors around community improvement, parent-child recreation or arts projects. Although each SPA-based partnership includes primary prevention activities, as well as secondary and tertiary prevention activities (referral services for families who are known to or have an open case with DCFS), the families aren’t categorized as being “eligible” for only one kind of help or support.

When some families come in contact with the program in one way, they start to feel empowered and then take on some leadership. For example, a family that came in as what we would call ‘tertiary’ is now leading or co-facilitating a group in primary prevention. That is a huge success. With outreach efforts and trying to get the community engaged, we had over 500 families (total at 2 events) across the SPA that came out to learn more about what it is that we are trying to do and to get more information.

Project Safe Participation, along with Friends of the Family and lot of other community agencies, took part in the Festival of Readers last week, which was a huge success and brought out over 1,000 people to participate in a real community building activity and to have a positive experience in promoting literacy and activities that were family centered. It was really a wonderful day.

In SPA 8 and SPA 7 we are working with specific populations. In the past we have worked in very small geographic areas, since partnering with our family support agencies we have been able to organize very specific populations. For example, people who are in recovery for substance abuse, people whose children have been taken by DCFS and are now part of the system, pregnant and parenting teens—very specific population groups. We are finding the same success we have seen with geographic community organizing with special populations. This is exciting because people have said in the past that certain people can’t be organized, don’t want to get involved and we are finding this is not true. We are having a lot of success with groups who are generally excluded from community life.

I am from Rio Hondo and we invited the residents (we house 26 families) to our meeting. We had 9 families come to our meeting. They looked at us like ‘what is your problem? You are supposed to tell us what to do.’ These are families that are currently in the system and as children they were in the system so it is really difficult for them to explore that relationship, to allow

them to think on their own without DCFS and Probation telling them what to do. It is really exciting and I hope we see great success.

**2. Effective strategies to improve the economic status of families are even more important now, and some PIDP agencies are learning how to help families improve their own finances.** Some of the community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide counseling, therapy or other service-oriented interventions are realizing that they haven't focused enough on family economic success. PIDP has given those agencies a chance to partner with others to learn more, and to develop their own internal capacity to help families with economic issues. In some places, neither DCFS or CBO staff were familiar with or ready to offer effective financial supports for families, so they are learning together.

We had our first graduation last week of about 45 students from a combination of our fiber optics, medical billing and business office communications. That was a success because they all finished. Most of our students are single parents—both men and women—and now we are placing them in jobs with other agencies like Time Warner, who we have established relationships with. Also, like \_\_\_\_\_ was speaking about, what emerged from that group was a men's support group because different issues came up as they met during the classes. They established relationships and partnerships and it took off on its own.

The new way is DCFS is not at your door telling you what you need to do. It is 'if you can help identify that you have a need, there is somebody else that you can go to.' Basically, you don't have to see a DCFS worker at your door. We know time and time again these unfounded referrals are going to keep coming in. If a family calls the hotline for services, they are identified as a referral, just because they called to get a resource of some kind and here we go, we have a referral at our office. But if they go through the ASK centers, there is everything there. Jobs, employment opportunities, training, legal services, counseling. You name it. There is a support group for everything and if there is not one, they have identified a need and they will start one. So everything you need is in a one stop shop.

**3. More services and supports are being offered where families live, so there are opportunities for families to get involved in neighborhood-based conversations, to get to know and support each other, and to spread the word about helpful services.**

We went to places where the people we wanted to reach would be. We went to the grocery store, to the Laundromat, [and] other providers. We told people that it was about preventing child abuse. That is something that is important to everyone in the community.

I think from our perspective (DCFS), .... one of the current school-based programs started from our being involved in a social network initiative that started out in Pacoima. It basically was a result of one of our supervisors having a relationship with a person and was being invited to come to a parent-focused, driven project. Parents had come to the school. There were having concerns. They had questions about parenting their children and being afraid of law enforcement, the system, of their own children, probation and gangs. By us going there and talking with them and listening to their issues, [it] gave us the idea to use the schools (which isn't foreign to us, we used the schools in the past).

**4. New partnerships are being formed and people are deepening their relationships.** Some SPA networks are doing new and exciting work with different populations, such as parents of incarcerated youth, pregnant and parenting teens, parents in substance abuse recovery programs. Many are using relationship-based community organizing strategies instead of or in addition to traditional service delivery approaches.

We are finding the same successes with these new populations as with the geographically-based community organizing. We are bucking the stereotype that certain groups cannot be organized. We went from existing relationships developed under Family Support partners to starting NACs [Neighborhood Action Councils]. There is a foster family agency as a partner and temporary housing with residents in recovery as a partner.

The thing that we are focusing on is to reconnect people to the fact that they are part of a community that is serving a family rather than individual agencies.

In our collaborative, one of the successes is the collaboration with our three agencies. .... we have divided down to our program group, those who

are actually doing the work and setting up meetings on a weekly basis as opposed to once a month or even every other week. I think that has created a relationship between us as the coordinators and being able to take that back to our families, our other staff and the other partners we are working with; making sure that everyone understands that it is starting with our three agencies but we are all part of a bigger network.

One of the things that is a positive is we've created our own relationships and we have now come together as a collaborative and we are now saying 'here's how we want to do work in the community in partnership with each other.' Certain Department staff... have been incredible.... They have sat side by side with us through all this. They have said 'what makes sense for us may not make sense for you' but let's try and have this discussion together. Carrying that forward we have decided that one of the DCFS populations that is really important are relative caregivers. We are going to be creating a NAC with relative caregivers within a specific geography with the hopes of expanding that later on. I think those are important accomplishments for us.

##### **5. DCFS staff are seeing that community based organizations and groups can be full partners with shared goals, not just “contractors” who do or do not take “referrals.”**

What I use as a success is when we finish a team decision-making meeting all of us walk right out with the clients and start work immediately. There is no delay. Everything starts happening now.

One of our partners was there from Free Arts and the woman said 'Wow, you know everyone, every family, needs support like this. Maybe what we really need is a casa [home] for some of these families who are at risk. She is in the process of developing a non-profit that would do that. That would work with the faith-based families, draw them in and coordinate providing support to families who have lots of things that they have to get done and services that they need and they need someone to support them, advocate for them and coordinate. It was just really remarkable. Just one person with energy who was in the right place at the right time and a lot of people will wind up benefiting from that. So I think that one of the issues—all of us have these different networks—not only are we isolated, we keep the networks isolated. So we have a family preservation network but it is separate from our Westside Infant Family network. And now everybody is in the same place at the same time once a month and it is a network of networks that is making some progress.



I am also a Chaplin for the sheriff's department so I get to meet with the captain monthly and with a lot of new deputies. I like lights and sirens and it is a good excuse to get out of the office and into a squad car once in a while. There are so many open doors that I created, partly out of my own selfishness because I like being at the firehouse and in the squad cars, but I have found that it is a great platform to share thoughts about what we are doing. Most of the church folks and leadership, even our city leadership, never considered the notion of working directly with Children's Services. We all have the same desire to help people, to bring families to a point where they can be more self sufficient and independent from the system. When I bring all those folks together they agree it makes sense. When you meet a family's needs and get them back on their feet they'll listen to your spiritual message. I think it is good to have that platform.

## **Communicating Prevention Concepts**

### **1. Mutual respect and personal relationships are essential prerequisites for effective work.**

Sometimes social service staff think that they know "the community" well because they know the agencies and organizations that serve communities. But traditional strategies, such as attending meetings, don't necessarily lead to shared leadership or developing essential relationships. Personal relationships among staff members in different agencies, among community residents, and among community members and the professionals who seek to serve them are critically important building blocks in this prevention work.

We learned how to be on the same level with others and not steer but row. You equalize yourself. Now we reach out and check on those relationships. You build trust with relationships and when the community trusts you, they invite you in. We empower groups by allowing them to have a voice and make choices through the Neighborhood Action Councils (NACS). NACS are also becoming funded partners; we have subcontracted with them to do some prevention work. Many parents did not have the opportunity to make choices before.

I think one thing we absolutely shouldn't do when we talk about prevention is talk about it with the psycho-babble jargon stuff that we sometimes communicate. I think the most powerful way to talk about this initiative is 'who owns it?' We will be successful if in the end, residents own the initiative and we don't own it. As long as institutional folks own it, it is never going to be embedded into communities in the way it has to be embedded in order for it to sustain itself.

## **2. Having clear concepts about prevention is the first step toward effective communication.**

Assuring that members of the collaborative are clear about what they want to communicate—and able to talk about it in simple down-to-earth terms—is very important. It may take some time to work through this process, but it will be time well spent.

Participants spoke to the successes in operationalizing the theoretical construct of a strengths-based approach. This involves not saying “what do you need and what are your deficits?” but asking “what are your gifts, talents and assets? What do you have to contribute to the community?”

This new method of thinking about prevention and service delivery from a prevention viewpoint was a challenge. It took a few meetings. Every meeting we would have to reiterate or word it in a different way. Once we got it, it became easier to take it out to the community. First we needed to make sure our message was the same across the 4 family resource centers, 7 collaborations, 3 DCFS offices. So that is really key. You make sure your own collaborative has a clear understanding of how you are going to communicate it.

I'll give one example of how communication works and how it doesn't. We were in the process of putting together a faith-based event and we were working very closely with a priest of a large congregation and trying to figure out how to message this for a flyer or an invitation. Fortunately he had some experience with the [Torrance] office that developed a large faith based initiative. He said, “keep it simple, our kids are your kids” and that worked. It was beautiful and resulted in a very well attended faith based event. That is how it does work, when you get help in your messaging from the organization you are trying to seek help from. How it doesn't work is: DCFS, like any large organization has a number of people working on a variety of different things at the same time....

One of the things that I have been noticing with staff is that we talk about prevention as a concept and it is a little bit hard to grasp as a concept. I have been talking to my supervisors about the prevention initiative and the concept of prevention and there weren't any light bulbs going off. One day, one of the supervisors brought a case to talk about because we wanted to get it referred to Friends of the Family. We started talking about prevention connected with that specific situation and they got it. They understood prevention, and started looking at it as a concept and how it can impact families.

**3. Being strengths-oriented requires a shift in thinking.** This paradigm shift will not happen overnight because so much of the training and orientation for social services leads people to be more comfortable thinking about problems and problem-solving. A orientation that focuses on strengths, while realistically assessing problems or needs, does change the way that professionals talk to each other, and the way they deal with families. Although difficult for some who are deeply immersed in the “service delivery” orientation, this shift is essential for prevention.

You don't really say prevention; you actually just talk about how life is going. One thing that has been added to our prevention language is protective factors such as the resiliency of a family. For example, ‘Wow, your family just came through a tough time. How did you do that?’ Show them the strengths they have that they may not think they have. Also, there is no family that says, ‘I don't want my kids to be successful.’ So we can discuss factors that make kids successful and talk about how we can make that happen in their family, in their community....

I really like the community aspect. Getting the community involved and not making it an individual problem or a family problem, but really getting folks who aren't involved with DCFS or who may not even have children, but make this a vested interest of theirs.

We have taken this same concept into other communities in Pacoima and North Hills. There are a lot of gangs in North Hills. We are tying the initiatives together so we are able to leverage all of our resources to connect the families to what it is that they need and want. The thing that makes me so excited is that we are able to look at families for the first time, in a way that allows us to focus on their gifts and talents. We have a pot of money that allows us to do that. Every one of us in our individual departments in the community-based organizations has to seek out money based upon the deficits of the family. So this is the first time I can remember that we are able to take this money and shine the light on their assets—and use families, use the residents, and use the youth for what they have to bring to the table. Gang involved families have assets and gifts. If we can figure out how to harness them and bring them to the table to reclaim communities in a different way, other than the way that is being done, we will have done something. We are not going to get a whole bunch of money coming down the pipe to do that kind of work very often.

## Partnerships Between DCFS and Community-based Networks

- 1. Broadening definitions and rethinking assumptions is key.** Focusing on prevention requires people to rethink their own assumptions and vocabulary, and it opens up a shared space for communication between County agencies, community based organizations, schools, community residents and others.

Many of our agencies and the work we do is more intervention and not prevention. I think DCFS historically has been that, as well as Children's Bureau. To look at it in a preventative view has been exciting and really that is limitless....

We have a program called Alive and Free based on a program by Dr. Joe Marshall in San Francisco. The city of San Francisco has just adopted this program throughout the city. In a nutshell, what he is promoting is how kids become infected almost like a disease. We started meeting with kids one evening a week and we started talking about how do you become infected? When your father beats up your mother, when your friend says 'Hey, I need some money, let's go into that liquor store, I'll go in, you just drive the car.

- 2. More DCFS office leaders and staff are realizing that they need community residents and community-based agencies as core partners in keeping children safe.** The PIDP has helped to accelerate culture change inside many of the DCFS offices. DCFS staff members are thinking in terms of community more frequently rather than just focusing on individual families as they reach out to better understand the neighborhoods they serve, and as they develop new intervention strategies. Staff are stepping out, looking at the neighborhood, meeting their neighbors and thinking about what they have in common. The same thing is happening in many community-based organizations.

I think at DCFS we learned to take a humbling approach because as an agency we are not very well-liked out in the community. But agencies and the community didn't trust us and maybe it was all in our approach as we thought we had the answer to everything. When we stepped back and said, "help us to do a better job, tell us what we are not doing right, and tell us how we can do it better," I think that is when the doors opened up in the community. They accepted us as someone who truly was able to listen to what they had to say and that the community knew better than we did. [We acknowledge] all these years of coming into the community but not being part of the community.

As part of the process through our SPA Council, this rose to the surface as a big issue across our entire community. Our gang activity shot up 41 or 42% at the beginning of last year. We were able to take our DCFS family support funds to be able to work with families who had children in juvenile hall up in Sylmar to do parenting [classes] because they determined that parenting was a big problem. The way we usually do things is to engage the families first and then they tell us what it is that they need and want. So these turned out to be families from across the entire SPA area because kids are sent to Sylmar from everywhere. From that group came a solid group of parent leaders who came out to the SPA Council and said ‘these are the things going on with families.’ They brought their gifts and their assets to the table to help us focus our work. At the end of the day, these same parents are still active and a group of youth is active as well.

The thing that we are focusing on is to reconnect people to the fact that they are part of a community that is serving a family rather than individual agencies. We have activities at the monthly meetings that try to break people out of thinking about services but reorienting. Let’s first experience the way the family experiences it. We use vignettes and stories. Not by beginning to ask people to do anything different but by seeing themselves as only one piece of what the family is involved in. When people start reorienting around that we start to see some change.

**3. School-based strategies are very important as they help connect DCFS and its partners with families before problems become acute.** Many DCFS offices have had difficulty implementing effective school-based services, but others have been quite successful.

I think the Department has done a fabulous job in the last, specifically, five years to be able to support that. I think that is when I realized the benefit of us just being out in the schools—which is a safe zone for people, it doesn’t have the same stigma as our office or other county offices—hearing and making connections with community partners and school personnel who see children on a regular basis.

One of the things I found effective is when the social worker goes out to the school on Wednesday nights. The parents are there and they are talking about the needs of their children and what they need to help their children and from [trouble and] referrals. Whatever the parent may need, they communicate it to the school. The school sends me a referral and I connect them.... So that

is a big help right there for a family and making them feel comfortable. They never come to our attention as a hotline referral. They are in their community talking to their school saying “this is what I need to help my children to succeed. I need this, my child needs this.”

I am with Avalon Carver and we are collaborating with Shields for Families and we too had our open house in October and as a result of that we got a lot of community people that came in and realized we have a great deal of resources for them. They are now receiving it. .... through our collaboration with East LA College .... [we] located our site in a school certificated program for EMT and EDA. They will receive a certificate and a job at the end .... Shields for Families will .... be providing the transportation to there so they can complete their program.

- 4. Changing relationships among established players is challenging, but shared goals help people realize that together they can create more resources for families.** Some PIDP collaboratives are working on changing roles, while others are focusing on helping everyone understand why DCFS and other County departments work the way they do, or challenging misconceptions that have built up over time. Many community-based organizations are also meeting new partners and learning what each has to offer to local families.

From the Metro North [DCFS office] perspective, we are not the one that always takes the lead. Instead, our lead agency takes the lead, plans the meetings in their facility. So the working relationship is definitely our first success.

Someone recently mentioned something I really had to think about and it was that some of us do the same things, but we do it differently enough that we complement each other. That made me think differently about all the agencies we partner with and that we cooperate with, because we don't need to reinvent the wheel. But if somebody is doing it differently enough that it compliments what we are doing, then don't mess with it, let it be. I thought that was a good lesson.

There is definitely an understanding (at that basic level) that this is a challenge we share.... You have this vastly growing population, a relatively thin resource base of traditional community based agencies and so you see this clash in action. How do you maximize the potential of what is there, and how do you grow it quickly to keep up with the changes in population?

## Major Challenges for the Next Six Months

### 1. Expand the involvement and employment of parents and community residents.

Collaboratives in a number of the SPAs are adding community organizing strategies to their current roster of services because they have seen the results in SPA 8. Others have developed self-help or mutual support strategies. Some parents who have been through the DCFS system themselves would love to support other DCFS families as they work through the child protective services process.

For SPA 7 the 3 lead agencies—ourselves, Alma Family Services and HSA we are going to be creating partnerships with residents in 12 NACs [Neighborhood Action Councils]. We are working with organizations that historically have not been part of a funding stream from DCFS. For example, Rio Hondo temporary homes, which works with homeless individuals and families. MAOF and Old Timers, the South Gate Domestic Violence Collaborative.... We are working with groups that are institutions in the community but have been doing work in a different way. They are now partnering through this initiative. We have actually called ourselves the SPA 7 Partnership for Change.

It is a group of some moms and some seniors who go and ask for food at a church food pantry. We asked them: “how long do you sit around here?” One lady shared .... “I don’t really come for the food; I come to talk to other people because my stress level is really high. My kids don’t like me to come and ask for the food but I like to sit and watch the people.” So just me coming in, I know for a fact that people are hungry for those relationships and it makes me feel really good. She was the first one to say. “I’ll be at your meeting next week.”

My part on this PIDP is really engaging the males and it has always been a challenge. For the 4 years I have been doing it, it has always been a challenge to get guys to come together. One of the things that I have found that works for me is we are fortunate enough that I can encourage to them to bring their kids. So we have kids that come to those meetings with their guys, they are with their role models. They range from newborns to teenagers. But my biggest promotion is if I can make it interactive enough and those kids can notice that spending time with their Dad is fun and they love it, they become my commercial. So, now it’s Wednesday and Dad is home and they are saying, ‘Are we going? Are we going to MENFOLK? We have a meeting tonight, it’s on the calendar.

**2. Continue to develop relationships, build on resources that are already in place, and enhance existing infrastructure and capacity.** The eight SPA-based prevention collaboratives have grown to include over 60 organizations and agencies, many of which did not have previous relationships with DCFS. Some of these groups have little bureaucratic infrastructure, but they represent important resources for families. Others have long-standing relationships with County departments that can be leveraged and enhanced on behalf of the entire network. DCFS and other County administrators need to think about more flexible approaches for supporting a wide range of groups with different needs and capacities. At the same time, early successes are encouraging other partners who are stepping up and want to be included.

I think part of my struggle is (and I don't know if this is true for everybody else) that we have the funding but the checks are slow in coming. We have 4 checks in the mail right now and that's huge for us. I'm being very positive about it, and when it comes it is money we have spent and billed for, but that process is slow on the county side and luckily we have Friends of the Family and they are going to bat for us because they are in the same boat. That is part of the disassembly of the mistrust. We are really invested in this and we really want to make it work.

I'm \_\_\_\_\_, LA County Head Start state preschool. I have reserved my comment for now because I am a resource in the community. We began talking to DCFS about being not a lead agency or a collaborative agency, but a viable resource to all of you. I looked at the list [of attendees] and I heard about schools but I didn't hear anything about Head Start. So there must be some challenges or something because we didn't make the list. I am just putting that out there. We want to work, we cover all the SPAs and we are in almost all the areas. The resource is there and we want to be in the forefront of your mind when you are working with these families because we know there is a need out there for Head Start services.

**3. DCFS and PIDP network agencies need to begin thinking about and planning for sustainability now.** This is a 12-month initiative and much is expected, but it will be difficult to sustain the effort without some additional resources.

In SPA 4, for example, a collaborative of 3 agencies got married about 5 months ago to make this work. We are truly just rolling things out and we are concerned that 6 months [from now] is really going to be our peak, not when we are done. So I'm thinking now, how is sustainability going to work?



How we will capture and convey the correct picture in just 6 months is a daunting task. But I know that [we] are committed and we are really feeling our relationship with DCFS getting stronger every time we meet. So I can't imagine it is going to stop in 6 months.

Unfortunately, I don't know if it can be done, but I would hope that statistics are somehow being generated to show what is happening. There is almost not enough time to do that. The mere fact that a meeting like this is taking place, the mere fact that agencies are talking to each other, having that translated so that it does continue. I have to touch on finances. Finances obviously are a major challenge for each of us. One of the things that has sustained us all these years has been the number of volunteers that have stepped forward. That is all well and good, but it also is perhaps not real realistic. It means that people draw from within. I don't know if that is a challenge or a necessity of what has to come.

The big issue around sustainability is that it takes a while to get up and running.... We have staff people who are doing this. We are going to have to find something else for them to do. It can't just end. Everything we are doing, we are constantly thinking about how can we make this last after there is no funding. But, it is like ending therapy. There is an exit strategy that basically has to start by January 1st and the winding down right after you have just ramped up is difficult.

**4. Consider using some of the savings from the POE/Title IV-E Waiver reforms to continue some of the most powerful community-based PIDP activities and local initiatives.**

PIDP/POE initiative leaders and CBO staff are worried that there won't be enough time to develop and cement relationships, implement and fine-tune new activities, and demonstrate the results of their efforts. The financial flexibility offered through the IV-E waiver could offer an immediate opportunity to continue these promising efforts long enough to demonstrate concrete results.

I just have concerns that we have worked in Pomona for five years to get volunteers that will come to the meetings. We only have four [now] and one dropped off because she needed to be paid. If we can't keep up the funding we can't get cultural brokers there. People have to earn a living [especially considering] the way the economy is now. It kind of scares me to do such good work and be working so hard and think of the possibility that there won't be funding to go on after June.

There has been investment in case management and neighborhood-based organizing. Neighborhood based organizing is less expensive. Sustainability should focus on reallocating existing money from case management to relationship-based organizing because relationship-based organizing may be every bit as effective as case management.



# Los Angeles County Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP)

In February 2008, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP), an innovative countywide effort to demonstrate effective approaches to reducing child abuse and neglect. This unique partnership between the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and community-based organizations is designed to strengthen families while providing opportunities for government agencies and community residents to increase the safety and well-being of children, families and the community.

## What Is PIDP?

PIDP is a \$5-million, one-year child abuse and neglect prevention project led by community-based providers selected in each of the eight regional Service Planning Areas (SPAs). This initiative will inform DCFS' continued development of successful child abuse prevention measures that can be sustained and replicated across the County.

Guided by the core value of collaboration, DCFS and community organizations are working closely with each other and residents to find the most effective ways to ensure child safety and family well-being. The community organizations are creating a strength-based network of family support that maximizes and aligns resources to connect families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

## Goals

- Support healthy communities to prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs
- Increase social and community connections of families
- Strengthen family economic success
- Expand networks of support for families by leveraging opportunities and resources
- Evaluate strategies and initiatives to identify innovations for potential replications and use results to enhance the way DCFS does business in LA County

## Structure

- A unique partnership between County government and community-based agencies
- 12 contracted community organizations in eight regional SPAs lead the implementation
- 17 DCFS Regional Administrators working in partnership with social service agencies
- Casey Family Programs, a national foundation that works to improve child welfare, is supporting the initiative in three areas: capacity building, strategic communications, and evaluation, with additional support for evaluation provided by First 5 Los Angeles

**Casey Family Programs** is the nation's largest foundation entirely focused on foster care. Since 1966, we have worked to provide and improve foster care in the United States. As advocates for change, we are committed to our **2020 Strategy**—an ambitious yet attainable reform to safely reduce the need for foster care and better the lives of those in it. [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)