

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

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



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January 28, 2009

Dear Colleagues:

Only six months ago, we launched the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP) marking important progress for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and allowing us to expand our commitment to collaboration, a core value in all aspects of work; with other County departments, with the community in which we work and live and within our department. PIDP has provided the opportunity to integrate our reform efforts Countywide, identify new innovations and effective practice, while engaging a broad range of individuals in new approaches to child welfare practice.

I am pleased to share with you a mid-course report that was drawn from individuals who came together to share lessons learned at the inaugural Peer Learning Roundtable for the PIDP. On November 17, 2008, 150 participants shared their stories and perspectives on the changes underway designed to strengthen families while increasing the safety and well-being of children.

The event served as a milestone for DCFS, SPA lead agencies, community partners and others to share experiences and best practices in implementing new strategies and concepts to prevent child abuse and neglect in Los Angeles County.

Ongoing community collaboration with community partners and County departments is the only way to keep moving forward on this path toward success. By joining together as a unified force we can realize the value of the PIDP. The PIDP will continue to inform and fulfill the vision of a sustained long-term child abuse and neglect prevention strategy for Los Angeles County.

Thank you to the countless individuals, community partners, organizations, County agencies and Casey Family Programs who have contributed to support the Countywide prevention efforts. We are making important progress and you will see that from the exciting "lessons learned" highlighted throughout this report. Thank you again for your support as we move forward with this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia Ploehn".

**PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW**  
Director



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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.



# **PIDP-POE Learning Session: A Report of Key Themes from the Evaluation Discussion Groups on November 17, 2008**

## **I. Introduction**

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 Los Angeles 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. On November 17, 2008, PIDP agencies and evaluators gathered together in Los Angeles to share what they have been implementing and learning during the first few months of operation. This report summarizes the key themes and observations of the participants who attended a special discussion session during that convening. Future evaluation reports will focus on PIDP network formation and initial results, as gathered through interviews, surveys and focus groups.

## **Participants**

A diverse group of agencies and community representatives were in attendance. (See Table 1.)

The breakout groups included staff from the DCFS Regional Offices, PIDP lead agencies for each Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas (SPAs), representatives of community-based agencies involved in each local network, and other key County and community leaders. The regions included in each of the afternoon learning sessions were as follows:

- SPA 1 Antelope Valley & SPA 4 Metro
- SPA 2 San Fernando Valley & SPA 3 San Gabriel Valley
- SPA 5 West & SPA 6 South
- SPA 7 East & SPA 8 South Bay

The report session summaries are grouped into these four groups, with cross-cutting observations, lessons learned, challenges, and recommendations reported in the last section.

**Table 1. The PIDP First Peer Learning Roundtable Attendee Agency List**

<p><b>PARTNERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Children’s Council of Los Angeles County</li> <li>• Education Coordinating Council</li> <li>• First 5 LA</li> <li>• LACOE Head Start Program</li> </ul> <p><b>Casey Family Programs and Consultants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casey Family Programs</li> <li>• Casey Capacity Building Team</li> <li>• Casey Communications Team</li> <li>• Casey Evaluation Team, including representatives from Casey Family Programs, USC, UCLA, Claremont Graduate University, Cal State Long Beach and First 5 LA</li> </ul>	<p><b>CBOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPA 1 Grace Resource Center</li> <li>• SPA 1 Lancaster</li> <li>• SPA 1 M.E.N.F.O.L.K.</li> <li>• SPA 2 Friends of the Family</li> <li>• SPA 2 Grandparents as Parents</li> <li>• SPA 2 NESFV Work Source Center</li> <li>• SPA 2 The Help Group-Project SAFE</li> <li>• SPA 2 Urban Education Partnership</li> <li>• SPA 2 Youth Speak Collective</li> <li>• SPA 3 Prototypes</li> <li>• SPA 3 D’Veal Family &amp; Youth Services</li> <li>• SPA 3 Parents Anonymous</li> </ul>	<p><b>CBOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPA 4 El Centro Del Pueblo</li> <li>• SPA 4 Salvadorian American Leadership and Education Fund (SALEF)</li> <li>• SPA 4 Southern California Counseling Center</li> <li>• SPA 4 Children’s Bureau</li> <li>• SPA 4 Children’s Institute International (CII)</li> <li>• SPA 4 China Town Service Center</li> <li>• SPA 4 Clean Slate Inc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CBOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPA 5 Westside Children’s Center</li> <li>• SPA 6 SHIELDS For Families</li> <li>• SPA 6 Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP)</li> <li>• SPA 6 Avalon-Carver Center</li> <li>• SPA 6 LUNNS Hope Corp</li> </ul>	<p><b>CBOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPA 7 Alma Family Services</li> <li>• SPA 7 Helpline Youth Counseling</li> <li>• SPA 7 Human Services Association</li> <li>• SPA 8 South Bay Center for Counseling</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neighborhood Action Councils</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAC Mujeres Unidas</li> <li>• NAC Parents In Motion</li> <li>• NAC Top Notch Teens</li> <li>• NAC Washington Elementary Youth</li> <li>• NAC Wednesday Play</li> <li>• NAC Youth Pledging Peace</li> </ul>

<p><b>DCFS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Team representatives: Angela Carter and Ted Myers</li> <li>• Community Based Support Division</li> <li>• Children’s Court</li> <li>• Office of the Medical Director</li> <li>• Public Affairs</li> </ul>	<p><b>DCFS Service Offices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPA 2 Chatsworth, West San Fernando Valley</li> <li>• SPA 3 Glendora, Pasadena, Pomona</li> <li>• SPA 4 Metro North</li> <li>• SPA 5 West Los Angeles</li> <li>• SPA 6 Compton, Vermont Corridor, Wateridge</li> <li>• SPA 7 Belvedere, Santa Fe Springs</li> <li>• SPA 8 Lakewood, Torrance</li> <li>• Youth Development Services (YDS)</li> </ul>
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## II. Study Methods

### Afternoon Learning Session Design

Each of the discussion groups was asked to share what they were learning as the PIDP initiative was being implemented in their communities. Each group was asked to focus on the questions listed below so that people could share their insights both within and across communities.

The discussions were transcribed by a research firm in Seattle and the notes were reviewed to identify key themes, innovations, challenges and recommendations for moving forward. No comments have been identified by name, and the tapes were destroyed after Peter Pecora of the PIDP/POE evaluation team reviewed the transcriptions.

A draft of the discussion summary was shared with participants for their review before report finalization.

### Questions Asked

Listed below are the questions that were asked for the afternoon group break-out sessions:

1. What are your early successes?

2. What have you learned about the best ways of communicating 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?
4. What are the major challenges for the next 6 months for the initiative? How do you plan to address them?”

## Transcription Methods

Wherever possible, this report uses the exact words of the participants. Each change of speaker is indicated with a bullet point. When probing questions were asked, the transcriber included them in the transcription. If the response immediately following a probing question is not bulleted the speaker did not change. These next four sections report participant comments by each discussion question, with each SPA cluster summarized separately.

## III. What are Your Early Successes?

### SPA 1 and SPA 4 Early Successes

- One success we have had is we have three lead agencies in SPA 4. It has taken time, but I think we have really gotten a collaborative decision making process down. It does slow things down a bit, so that in terms of actual services we are just getting started.

#### *Q. Can you give us an example in terms of collaboration?*

- One interesting piece is we have the two very large agencies—Children’s Institute International (CII) and Children’s Bureau—and El Centro is fairly large but not in that league. We have been talking about who should take the lead on various pieces and I think that was done pretty well. El Centro is working with the youth and the other agencies are working more with families. What is also interesting is it created a working relationship between CII and El Centro that I don’t think existed. We then worked together on a city project so it created a new partnership of a big agency and CBO.

***Q. Does anybody else see that, in terms of partnerships between DCFS and other agencies?***

- Yes, it has worked well for us, Grace Resources has been going along for 17 years and we are a standalone that started a food bank. We feed about 8,000 people per month, we have power classes, we teach computer training, we do a lot of things. Our mentor agency is Friends of the Family; it doesn't get any better than that. We have learned a lot, but we have never taken the time to get involved with the SPA council and .... children's planning..., we are just so busy doing what we do.

Now we have a reason to do that, so now I am meeting with the council of executives with United Way, the Executive Director is meeting with the Children's Council and all those other folks. We stepped in and took the lead on the block party they had planned which was originally to reduce child abuse but we made it a healthy family thing and snuck in the child abuse thing so people who needed to be there would show up. It was a great experience. We had never worked that intimately with the folks before. At the same time because we are at the tip of LA County, we are kind of like the step kids. We have close relationships with 36 partners just to survive because we don't depend on folks from down below (down the hill).

The reality is as close as we have been we have never worked this closely together. I just am really thrilled with that option. It isn't about giving out groceries and hot meals and all the things that we do. For example, this week we are giving out 2,000 Thanksgiving baskets and that is cool, but that doesn't change people's lives. It does build trust. Now with these new tools we have been given and the new way to communicate with all the other folks in the valley I see no problem showing some huge differences over the next couple months. It has taken us a little longer to get up and rolling because we are all new to this. We are learning some of the acronyms and learning it is alright to say, "don't say that, what is the real word?" The reality is our successes have been internal first and now we are seeing successes with our people. Our power class has changed and our computer training has changed to lean more toward people increasing their family income and all those social isolation issues and it has been very cool. It has been a great experience for us.

***Q. In terms of the internal successes, can you tell us little bit more about that?***

- I think that I've been on the Board of Directors for a couple years now and we have never really worked this closely with agencies like DCFS and we are just enjoying that relationship. Its new and it's a little bit scary because we don't know all the different acronyms and what they mean. We don't know all the different ins and outs, but they are very patient in teaching us and working with us and we're just loving it. So it is going well with the inter-agency relationships.

- From the Metro North 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.
- 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.

SPA 4 is one of the most densely populated SPAs and also has a lot more organizations working independently of each other. We are all doing similar things but we are all very independent. Even with the small collaborative we are bringing in our other partners that are not funded. That is the hardest part, bringing in partners that are not funded and helping everyone see that we are all here to benefit the community and see what we can do. We don't necessarily need to be tied together by funds.

- 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 yes, 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.
- What we have seen is that it's led to a sort of a culture change within the office. We are thinking in terms of community on a number of interventions. I think we are stepping out, looking at the neighborhood and seeing who our neighbors are. The same is happening with our partners. We all have functioned within an insular capacity up until the last few years, and a variety of social and economic forces are encouraging everyone to try and work together. It's true in a social sense for DCFS but it is equally true for our partners. Considering the capacities of those around us, [it] has become an increasingly important part of how we plan and how we roll out different initiatives from our agency. We have enjoyed working collaboratively.

### **Q. Can you give us an example of culture change?**

- Well, it is not going to sound breath-taking, but at our general staff meetings we increasingly are spending much more time on what community service organizations are available that wish to and are able to work with us in a variety of ways. How can we plug in the agencies that we learn about in some of the on-going efforts that we are doing with families. Also, we've been working with the Casey's programs for a number of years and at some point, all the different threads come together to the point that you don't know if this is Building Partners or PIDP or is this Faith Based. You start doing one and it ends up being something else. When we talk about these different initiatives that we have been doing it almost always encompasses PIDP initiatives.
- I'm from the Children's Bureau. Success that I see for SPA 4 is that this initiative offers us an opportunity to take a step back and take a look at what we know and what we don't know. For example, three of our agencies have been doing work in SPA 4 for quite some time, but we are coming to realize, as we focus on family economic success, that we weren't really clear about what that means and how do we get there. So, working together, drawing upon strengths that we had, as well as looking to outside experts really helped us devise our strategies for what we want to do as well as give us opportunities to seek further knowledge. This may not help SPA 4 in the next 6 months, but years down the road it will. I think this initiative has allowed us to understand DCFS and create that relationship. They have many initiatives that they are responsible for (and that is really complex) and the end goal is always support for families and preventing child abuse and maltreatment. So how do we all work together? This provided a nice, sure way to try it out and see what happens.

### **SPA 2 and SPA 3 Early Successes**

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

The SPA 3 PIDP network led by Prototypes serves the three DCFS offices in Pomona, Pasadena and Glendora. Guided by long-held concerns about the disproportional representation of African American children in child welfare caseloads, the three offices have identified zip code areas that contribute to disproportionality. Prototypes has adapted the "Parent Advocate" model created in Contra Costa County to use trained paraprofessionals in supporting families through the protective services process. They are also implementing a modified version of Fresno County's "Cultural Broker" model to advocate on behalf of families throughout the family's involvement with the system.

In addition, Parent's Anonymous® is guiding a "Shared Leadership in Action" training that emphasizes strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect. This leadership model prepares community members to identify and develop prevention-oriented programs that fit local needs, a primary prevention strategy that is designed to help decrease social isolation and improve family well-being.



- One of our successes relates to having the 3 different levels of prevention available. 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 preventions. So, for us, 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. Those are just a couple of our successes.
- We went to places where the people we wanted to reach would be. We went to the grocery store, to the laundromat, other providers. We told people that it was about preventing child abuse. That is something that is important to everyone in the community. Sometimes we perceive what is important to other people and I think we are a little misguided. The feedback we received from our team doing the outreach was that when people were told the information was about preventing child abuse they walked right up, took that material and said they would share it with other people. I think that made a big difference because people tell their friends and it spreads that way.
- I am \_\_\_\_\_ with Grandparents as Parents. We have had groups throughout LA County for 21 years. The group in Pacoima was a success from the get go. Usually it takes time for a group to develop trust and to feel they can say what they need to say. This group immediately went to 11 persons and is growing. It is very exciting. This is needed all over LA County. Also, our format is very open—it is similar to what happens with the parent café. It is a chance for people to meet others in their situation, form those bonds and use each other to grow.
- Project Safe Participation, along with Friends of the Family and a 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 our SPA, Friends of the Family attended some of our TDMs and the success has been that they are already connected. These are cases that we don't promote as a case and they just take it as a referral. In regard to PFF we have also been able to connect the families with them without having to bring them into our system. They are fully connected with everything. PFF is there for 6 months and Friends of the Family is for 6 months to a year. So that has been our success.

- With all of the partners in SPA 2, both the DCFS partners and the other partners in the network (the other CBOs), I think one of the things that has been important is that we have been able to model for the families. We talk about relationship-based organizing and we as a network have been able to get organized. We are cross-referring within the network and strengthening the relationship with our partners and again, also strengthening the relationship that we have with our DCFS partners.

***Q. Question specifically for SPA 2—What part of the network was already in place before PIDP came into being?***

- Maybe a third of this network. At our last collaborative meeting we did an interesting exercise. On a huge piece of butcher paper we wanted to paint a picture of all the various networks that are like a kaleidoscope. If you turn it, there are common pieces to all of the networks. We were able to visually see how many of the subcomponents of any particular network belong to another network. So, if you went up one level to look at that as the entire SPA 2 network, it is quite impressive and quite phenomenal.

This network was built, interestingly, with the notion that any agency who wanted to join the PIDP network had to agree .... to be the sponsor of or the facilitator for one community action group. It could be a geographic community action group, an identity-linked action group. For example, with Grandparents as Parents the people share a like identity. We have a couple of youth community action groups and that was the price of admission. As well, the contracts are supporting other activities, resources and services that everybody is providing. It has been a very interesting learning experience for all of us to have that piece in common. That would be what differentiates this network from the numbers of other networks that we are all involved in.

***Q. So, part of the success obviously is expanding the network of partners but also, you are getting deeper into the relationships with your partners, right?***

- Absolutely, yes.

***Q. So, you are going to know each other in quite different ways and then it sort of levels the playing field.***

- Yes. With SPA 2 being the largest (population wise) of all the SPAs and covering a tremendous geographical area, we have really had a challenge to first identify who the community partners are. We have traditional partners we have worked with for years. We are also finding new ones developing all the time. As we commented to you when you

In SPA 6, Shields for Families, in collaboration with Avalon-Carver Community Center, AADAP (Asian American Drug Abuse Program), Institute for Maximum Human Potential, West Angeles Community Development Corporation and Wings of Refuge, provides four drop-in Family Resource Centers. These ASK Centers—Ask, Seek, Knock—provide community workshops, vocational services, legal services and linkage and referral to a broad range of resources for all families. In addition, Shields has developed a Vocational Certification Program that offers career opportunities in medical billing, fiber optics and telecommunications. The 12 - to-14-week classes (3 hours per day, 4 days a week) are designed to give people the skills they need to find jobs, be self-employed, or perform additional tasks at their current job. There were 22 students in the first graduating class; of those who were unemployed, eight were offered employment, so roughly 50 percent of those previously unemployed are now working.

visited, Santa Clarita is the fastest growing part of the county right now. So we have growth occurring and with that a lot of additional needs and new opportunities to cultivate more providers. Using the Department's core strategy of team decision making we are finding that getting these providers identified, letting them know of one another's existence, and also letting them interact with our own staff through the TDM process is a tremendous opportunity to all start to see this as the community's challenge, if you will. Not just the challenge of DCFS or of any one provider group.

- 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?
- When we look at our region you are really going close to 100 miles to get from one side to the other. I think \_\_\_\_\_ mentioned we are larger as a county than all but 6 states. You look too at the geographics of LA County, [and] it is quite challenging and then you overlay that with cultural and language diversity, [and] it is quite a challenge.

*Observation by the group facilitator:*

*The issue of connecting the networks seems like an important piece of the success because in the parts of the county where you have had these partnership efforts going on for some time now (10-20 years), the networks may not relate to each other very well. You can be a member of multiple networks and you can sometimes lose sight of how they can be connected better. How does that help us sustain them over time? Does it help us to sustain them over time rather than recreating [them]?*

## **SPA 5 and SPA 6 Early Successes**

- There is power in integration. We had already established some of our community networking prior to the PIDP coming into play but I think the success of this collaborative is that it built on something we already had and made it that much stronger. We

had communication open with Shields for Families and we had one with our faith-based community. But when we came together as a group, it basically just multiplied the strength of resources we have for families. Something that we didn't anticipate, some of the things that DCFS can't provide were actually out there in the community already, particularly the vocational training and the legal services that families truly need but that we can't provide as a DCFS agency. I think \_\_\_\_\_ can talk about some of those vocational training sessions. Once they had those vocational training sessions some of the members decided to come together and form a support group because they felt there was a need for that.

- Just to piggy-back or expand upon the issue of the vocational training program. 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. As an agency we just provided space and food for the men's support group. A separate parent support group emerged out of that.
- I had the opportunity to attend the graduation and that was very rewarding to me. One of the candidates graduated and was hired by AT&T. We have been in contact and we always focus in terms of economic base to lift the community in terms of economic achievement. With this success story - when I went home, I was able to sleep very well.... [because] one of our visions or missions....had been accomplished. So, it is one of the greatest success stories that I will keep repeating until I am not around. It was very rewarding.
- One of the things that we are doing out in SPA 5 is working on a comprehensive database. Actually it is a success in the making right now. We have a lot of our networking partners at the table right now and we have the monthly meetings and basically we are working on a more comprehensive database that is going to be more easily navigated and accessible for everyone.

***Q. Is there a story, \_\_\_\_\_, that you can share about that coming together? What has been going on at the table as you are building that database? Anything come to your mind that was unique or different?***

- I guess it is probably a natural phenomenon that comes together when you have so many people from so many disciplines and community agencies that are there together and

when you have someone that says: “You know what, we have a lot of information here, we have a lot of resources why don’t we just put it together so that it is easily accessible and easy to navigate.” And that is what happened. I think it was just a naturally occurring phenomenon.

- I have a story building on \_\_\_\_’s. This has to do with what happens when you bring networks together because one of the reasons that all of us as lead agencies became lead agencies was that we already had relationships. So building on SPA 5, the DCFS office has a wonderful faith-based organization that is really remarkable and we have invited them to have representatives come to our monthly prevention initiative luncheon. It has been very cool. One of the things that has happened is that they are available to do some support for the families. Forgive me for those of you who were in the morning session. We were having a meeting and the woman who was representing the faith-based group was talking about how they help families, and it happened to be at a meeting where we were trying to help the agencies understand the family experience rather than just the experience in relation to the exact thing that each of us as an agency does with a family.

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 [a 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.

***Q. Are there residents who are members of that network? You talked about developing that database. How would an association of residents be found as a result of that database building***

- I think we have parent partners that are part of that group as well. ....For one reason or another they have found themselves involved with a community organization or with the Department but they are not employees. They are there at the table as well. Most of the people at the table are community-based organizations, but there are a smaller number of people such as the parent partners who were there as well just representing the interest for the community.

***Q. And that database, what will happen with that database?***

- Whatever the need is for the particular family, it will be a multi-disciplinary multi-agency resource guide and would also have point people. So it isn't just that you are calling someone for service. You know where to call, who is involved, who the point person is and a description of what is going on there. It started out fairly small but it has grown to be more comprehensive. And these are community resources.
- We are relatively new to this initiative and we just had our open house. I am with the Asian American Drug Abuse program and we are working with Shields. We just had our open house. .... we have such a vast agency, and they are all in different places, and sometimes they don't realize they can go to one spot for resources. So, now the excitement is, "Oh my goodness, it is right all within our own office that we can do all this and get all our resources, it is actually a one stop." So, that is something that came out of all this. I think it is going to be a great collaboration.
- 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. We also through our collaboration with East LA College (we have clients funded through East LA College) located at our site in school in a certificated program. EMT and EDA and they will receive a certificate and a job at the end. So they have completed their first component and are now venturing into their second component and into their third one, Shields for Families will (they have to do their internship at the college) be providing the transportation to there so they can complete their program.

***Q. So for you, are these open houses new that you would not have done otherwise?***

- Yeah, for PIDP. But we do have regular health and resource fairs which the community at large are very familiar with. They are annual events. They come in and they get health services, resources and linkages to where they need services so we piggyback with that in the PIDP program.

***Q. I am just curious, how many people attended?***

- Our collaborative is seven agencies total within SPA 6 so between Shields for Families, Avalon Carver, Los Angeles CDC and Asian American Drug Abuse programs we have established family resource centers, one for each site. The purpose of the Open House was to let the community know about these new one stop centers right here in the



For the Lakewood DCFS office, a visitation center was one of the staff's highest prevention priorities, so the PIDP network lead agency, South Bay Center for Counseling, and other network members worked on implementing that idea first. The center is located at the Park Crest Christian Church about two miles from the Lakewood DCFS office in a high-referral zip code area. The primary focus of the SPA 8 PIDP network, however, is on expanding previous successes in establishing Neighborhood Action Councils (NACs). NACs use a relationship-based community organizing strategy based on the Asset Based Community Development model to connect people who want to improve their neighborhoods and their lives through working together. SPA 8 is not only expanding the number of NACs in the South Bay, but is offering training and support to other networks throughout the county who want to augment their initial PIDP efforts using the same methods.

community. The other half of it was letting the other community-based organizations know that we were there. We had about 20-30 different community based organizations at each open house, we had three [open houses] total. So it gave them an opportunity to let the community know what they did and then also to see what other services are available in SPA 6 and how they can partner together. It was almost like a resource fair. I think that is a good way to put it. We had anywhere from 100 to 150 people at the open houses.

- I'm from the Compton office SPA 6. We also have faith-based network members, where we connect with them. We have a monthly meeting on the 3rd Thursday of every month. They provide an array of services to our families such as transitional housing for mothers (in the process of opening this). \_\_\_\_\_ came to me and said we need furniture so I was able to connect her with another agency to provide furniture for that housing. And they are going to do the mental health piece; they are going to do counseling for our parents as well. I mean it is just a host of connections in our faith-based community. After all we have realized that our families go to church and what better way to connect them with community resources. They trust their churches; they trust their pastors, so that was a very good connection for us.

## **SPA 7 and SPA 8 Early Successes**

- One of the things that I learned in the beginning was to develop relationships of mutual respect. The reason I say this, is because when you have been working in the community for a long time, you already know people on different sides of the bridge. You know people on the other side of the bridge because you are going to these fancy meetings. But a lot of times when we go to these fancy meetings the only thing we do is put on different masks. We don't have enough time to develop relationships. When I was invited to be part of this work, I knew a lot of the people. My first question was, "What are you going to expect from us?" The answer was, "Develop relationships." I said, "Wow!"



So one of the things that I learned was how to down-load myself so that I can be at the same level. I am \_\_\_ years old, I have my own way of seeing things and a lot of times we have a tendency to come down and tell people the shortest way around. So that helped me to be equal to the rest of the people. Second thing, now that we are part of this prevention grant, I am available to go to other people and have a good conversation to do business but also see how we are doing with our relationships. So, this is one of the ways, I feel real comfortable. Why? Because I have 6 grandkids and you never know what they are going to do in the future when they grow up. Maybe they want to be dating some of you girls or vice versa. If we have a good relationship, guess what? We are not afraid for these two kids to date. This is why we need to make this community better.

***Q. What else would people like to talk about in terms of early success you are starting to see?***

- .... our American Indian population in LA County and Riverside County is huge. The diversity of who we are helping now, they can be Apache and Hawaiian, they are Filipino and Navajo—so we have all these different ethnic groups we are helping so we can work with the Asian Pacific Islander Center, and the African American and the Latino Hispanic Centers, so the relationship is building with the ethnic groups. So that is what it is coming out to be—international.
- 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.
- I just want to make a comment on the relationship that is created through SPA 7 and SPA 8. We knew \_\_\_\_\_ from Helpline Counseling, we have worked with him on several things but now we are working with other agencies, a human services ssociation and Alma Family Services and that has really expanded our knowledge and our collaboration. Working with them and learning from them. We started out as mentoring them and it has ended up going both ways. We have learned from them and the collaboration has become very strong and in the long run I think it is going to benefit the community residents
- In SPA 8 we started 14 new Neighborhood Action Councils under the prevention program while working with our prevention partners who wouldn't have normally started neighborhood action councils. Also we have designed and are now implementing two DCFS visitation centers, one for the Lakewood office and one through the Torrance Office.

- In SPA 8 and SPA 7 we are working with specific populations. In the past we have worked in very small geographic areas, and 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, and [they] 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.

***Q. How are you reaching out to those groups? Some of those groups are hard to reach, how are you doing that?***

- We do it like we do everything in SPA 8—which is] is to go from existing relationships. We have a 12 year old family support collaboration that has been doing a variety of services throughout SPA 8 and each family support partner is starting their own Neighborhood Action Council. We had a group that was doing mentoring [in a school for] pregnant and parenting [teens]... school so that is where they decided to put [their NAC].... We have a foster family agency as one of our partners, we also have an NCADD [National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence] who does recovery work and preservation work. They have Building Blocks which is a temporary housing for people in recovery that is where they decided to do theirs. \_\_\_\_ maybe you can talk about the choices for SPA 7.

***Q. So relationships are allowing you to reach out to agencies and families?***

- Yes, existing relationships.
- For SPA 7 the 3 lead agencies—ourselves, Alma Family Services and HAS—are going to be creating [12 NACS] in partnership with residents.... We are working with organizations that historically have not been part of a funded 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.

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.

#### ***Q. How about from Alma Center?***

- Just to build on what they were saying, I am from SPA 7, \_\_\_\_\_ our community organizer can add to it, is the fact that you were asking about how do we outreach to these individuals. With these relationships you build a trust and when the community trusts you, they invite you. Two of the communities that she has been working with are the gay men’s community, which was really surprising and.....what is that other group?
- 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 that “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.”
- And the gay community was interested. One of the things that was exciting for them was to be connected to the larger community, not just to each other. So the fact that it’s been a challenge but at the same time very well received, because it is very much part of the human culture, not the ethnic culture, it is the human culture, human needs. It has been received by the groups who have invited us in, because we don’t force our way in, we are asked in.
- I think one of the successes is operationalizing the theoretical construct [of a strengths-based approach] that when you go to people and [don’t] say .... “what do you need and what are your deficits” but you say, “what are your gifts and talents and assets, what do you have to contribute to the community?” That is how we formed all these groups in 7 & 8. Coming from an asset-based place and coming from a place of believing that everyone, whether they suffer from substance abuse or their children have been removed, everyone has something to contribute and I think that that speaks to the power and foundation of building a community .... [based on] respect and an acknowledgment that everyone has something to contribute.

- I just want to say one other thing. I have been incredibly impressed, I have been involved with pretty much everyone involved in this project in both SPAs. \_\_\_\_\_, who had to leave, said this in the earlier session, he said “the dedication of the community organizers and the organizations that are involved in this project says so much about whether or not people are going to go with you on the journey and take this risk.” I have been incredibly impressed with every single person involved in this. The level of dedication is so far beyond any kind of a job, with all the organizers, with all the agencies and it is really, really incredible and I think it has a lot to do with the success in both 7 & 8 of this project.

***Q. It sounds like it is personal relationships, people say “It is my community; I have a stake in this.” We have to try and capture some of this. I think that many of you who have been working in the community for a long time see this as an opportunity, sort of a seize the day on this.***

- One of the things I really like about the groups and I think the community likes as well is that we empower them and we allow them to have a voice and to make choices. A lot of these parents have never been in that situation where they are able to make choices and decisions. I think that is very empowering for them.
- 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.

***Q. Let’s do one more, and then we are going to move to a related topic***

- I just wanted to add a little bit about the visitation center and the partnering with the faith community in SPA 8. We have opened two visitation centers (ours and Torrance). We have rallied 17 of our faith based partners to do all the monitoring for our parents. This Saturday was the first time. There were 7 families who had their first visits on Saturday.

***Q. So there is the faith based volunteers who are getting that special training from counselors to monitor those visits.***

- Yes, and they have also provided a home in Torrance where the families can go and visit. This brings it more to home. I think a significant success in 7 & 8 we are involving the

residents in the evaluation process. We are coming from a place of believing that if we can't talk about the impact that this \$5 million made in the lives of residents, then we didn't do our job. So the instrument that Todd Franke is developing is an instrument that we developed in partnership with the residents.

*Q. The best items are the ones the parents created, right? They get real with the wording. We are hoping to use 2/3 of the instrument you have created for the parents County-wide, LA wide, because we think the items capture some really important things that come from the parents themselves. They can bring some truth to that. They can bring their stories alive. We are really grateful to you folks for that. We are also hoping to use parts of the video that was shown this morning. We think when it is time to show some of the findings of the evaluation and there are some data tables, we've got to pair it with real live parent stories.*

- I just want to add for part of the success, our NACs are partners with us and they are subcontracting with us to do some child abuse prevention projects so they are an equal partner in the prevention initiative.

*Q. So dollars are flowing*

- Yes

In SPA 4, three key community-based organizations—Children’s Bureau, Children’s Institute Inc, and El Centro del Pueblo—are working with the Metro North DCFS office to develop a two-tiered referral system for families whose cases are either evaluated out by the DCFS hotline or seen by social workers, but determined to be unfounded or unsubstantiated. The network is also using a number of other strategies to address local community issues, including a “Powerful Families” financial literacy program, a “Promotora Network” to develop parent leadership capacity, and a “Youth Leadership” conference for emancipated youth, young parents and gang-involved youth. Children’s Bureau’s new Magnolia Place Center is also hosting out-stationing of County staff and serving as a key linkage point to help families better understand and access a range of County services.

## IV. Communicating Prevention Concepts to Others

The question asked was: What have you learned about the best ways of communicating child maltreatment prevention concepts to others that you are working with in your community?

### SPA 1 and SPA 4 Communication of Prevention Concepts

- My initial thoughts are that 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. What does that mean—community-building, organizing and engagement? That is one strategy for doing things, but there are other ways that we can pursue—like a policy model and the coordination of efforts. How do you find those pockets of community that would really benefit from the prevention, without losing sight of those necessary intervention services that are needed? There are families that are in crisis and they just need that helping hand for a short period of time.
- I was in the communication group in the morning and one of the things they were talking about was trying to make sure that not only the services, but also the message you are trying to get out to communities, are culturally relevant and competent and in the appropriate language if that is possible. I know SPA 4 is very diverse—you’ve got the Korean community on the west side, you’ve got Spanish speaking on the east side, you got the whole Pico Union District, which is a melting pot. I was just wondering how you guys are doing and if you are collaborating on reaching the different cultural communities as far as communicating the prevention strategies.
- I am from SPA 1 but one of the things about the prevention and getting it out to the community that M.E.N.F.O.L.K. does is we literally go out into the community to create those parent groups. I have had to nurture relationships with agencies. Mostly schools

because our organization targets the male role model, so most of my communication has been with school districts. One of the things about the Antelope Valley is that the school districts tend to separate themselves from each other.

There is one unified high school, but the K-8 school districts don't like to be linked in with each other. So, what I have to do is then go out and nurture all these relationships with all of the 8-9 different school districts. That has been the one thing that really helps me. I don't go right to the school district or the principal. I go right to the parents. I go to community events and I tell parents what I am trying to do. The parents then become my voice. They say, "Look, we need to have this here. How do we go about it? Can this guy come and speak to you?" So, I have really focused on nurturing relationships. Whether it is was just by recognition, they knew my face, they knew the name, but it was really just a matter of me going out to them, instead of having them all come to one meeting. That worked for me.

- In our case, because of the nature of the valley being so spread out and part of the reason we got picked to be part of this process is all the partners that we already had. But, for us personally, we work with about 40 churches: we are both pastors so we get to speak at a lot of churches. I plan my message around this issue. I think the church has been guilty of having one focus and I think it is an important focus, in fact it is an eternal focus. However, sometimes they forget you earn people's trust by meeting their needs and then they will listen to your message. I have been really blessed to be at a place to tell my pastor friends that, and I sometimes take their place in their own pulpit and tell their people that. That has been good. We also have something unique that I don't know if SPA 4 has. We have a local TV station that I can be on any day of the week. I just call and ask if they can squeeze me in and they say, "Sure, come on down." Sometimes they call and ask if I want to be on the show in 10 minutes because someone didn't show up. We have a local radio station, we do a lot of that kind of stuff and that's cool.

I am also a Chaplain 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.



Sometimes you can just get creative and do some weird stuff that gives you a chance to speak your piece and say what you are doing and what makes you tick. Our clergy council, which is most of the chaplains, wanted to meet some needs so we developed a book of all the services in the Antelope Valley. It includes emergency services, food banks, help places, where to get counseling for child abuse and family issues, etc. My rotary club paid to have it printed. Every squad car has a handful in their glove box. We have gone to all the briefings and told all the deputies what the books are there for. When we see them we all ask how those books are going.

One of the outcomes was talking to the deputies to say that people need help. One of the deputies mentioned that more than half their calls are family calls and they only have a couple minutes because they have other calls lined up. So, they can hand them that book and tell them to call and it has all our names and how to get a hold of us. It has free dinner at Grace and how to get groceries if they need it. That really has been huge.

One of the schools asked if we could do the same for them. So all the teachers could have them for their kids. In reference to the comment about schools not cooperating, there is a backwards result from some of the legislation that has come out. Some of the schools are struggling to be the lowest rated so they can get more funds and if they cooperate with the other districts they may not qualify for some of the funding they really need. Honestly, they all need that money. I found there has been a very open door through some of the things we have been able to pull off as a result of the conversations from this initiative.

- 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. Sometimes within our organization we don't talk about what we are doing and how we are doing it. In this faith-based initiative Grace Resources was left off.
- This may not be an example of a success. In Pico Union we have some little challenges with communication. We have a very dense and diverse population. We have a number of Latinos and within the Latinos there are differences. We have Central Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Each of these communities has different issues. We have Koreans

and they are more like businesses. When we wanted to reach the Koreans we went to every business in the area and talked to the owners. They helped share flyers and spread the word. We also have an African American community. In every group there are very different issues to address. So communication is very challenging.

- Because of this work, we were working on gang prevention and looking at the demographics. It was amazing because we had SALEF (Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund). We had El Centro, Korean Youth and Community Services, and \_\_\_\_\_ which is a Filipino service organization, and Chinatown Service Center. We are ethnically diverse and our network is ethnically diverse and this is going to be an advantage for us.
- I think when talking about prevention we need to look at the word. When we say this word to a school principal or a parent they ask, “what are you preventing? What are you trying to work on?” If you say prevention of child abuse then they wonder if social workers are involved—and they may not want to get involved. In our SPA we have focused on just 2 zip codes because we are so large and so diverse. In the one that I am working with, when I talk to the parents I tell them it is just to get them involved and see what they can do whether in the school or within their family, whatever the need is for that group. Eventually you get to the real reason, which is by getting people involved we are preventing X, Y and Z. The amazing part is that a lot of them know that. What I have found, is that they didn’t know how to be involved—whether it be at a church, school, another service agency or with a scholarship fund. Whatever it is, they are starting to see there are different things they can plug into or develop on their own.

***Q. Can anyone share more examples of being able to describe prevention with families?***

- Most of the time we don’t address prevention directly with people, we do most of it indirectly with people. We just start having conversations. If we let them know we are going to talk about gangs and drugs, they don’t want to talk about it or hear about it. They may know their kids are involved, they may be involved, they may be scared, or they may be worried they are going to be reported. You have to open up the conversation with something else.
- 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?” Showing 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

Friends of the Family is working with DCFS offices in the San Fernando Valley, West San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita to implement a unique referral system. DCFS Emergency Response (ER) social workers who have received specialized training on identification, assessment and screening of high-risk cases, refer families who would benefit from prevention-related measures to the PIDP network. Dawna Yokoyama, Regional Administrator of the San Fernando Valley Office says, “We strongly believe that the development and strengthening of resources and services in communities with economic challenges will create a solid foundation and robust safety net. Thus, the future results will ideally result in a decrease in the likelihood that children and families will re-enter the child welfare system at the previous rates.... Ultimately, the relationship between Friends of the Family and DCFS means less bureaucracy for the family.”

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factors that make kids successful and talk about how we can make that happen in their family, in their community. I feel fortunate to have the protective factors language to use in the work that we do in talking with families and to make it bigger than families to make it community-wide; because that is where success is really going to occur.

## **SPAs 2 and 3 Communication of Prevention Concepts**

- One of the things that I do talk about is that it is local, but this is a national movement that is happening, and an awareness of the importance of the community and importance of the village is coming back. This is what my long speech is about (I don't have an elevator speech).
- I always use too many words. The communications workshop this morning used some headlines which I thought were really good. Although what I would say is that this initiative is part of a national movement to help support a movement away from [focusing on] the provision of professional services toward [focusing on ] community self-care. We do that through a variety of strategies that don't eliminate services, but still provide beneficial family-driven, family-selected, supportive services that are nested within an economic strategy and also a social networking strategy. That is what I would say which is way too many words. I liked some of these headlines: Resilience Sprouting Up All Over, Families Getting Help to Help Themselves, Families Taking Ownership of Their Neighborhoods, Relationship-Based Community Organizing Comes Out of the Shadows, Families Helping Their Children Succeed, Nurturing Families by Nurturing Communities and, Families and Communities In the Driver's Seat. Some of those I think do help communicate a little bit in a pithier way about what is going on.

***Q. I am going to put those of you who are new on the spot. What did you hear that convinced you it was something you wanted to be involved in?***

- Regarding prevention, I think we know that it exists but we wait and we spend more resources on intervention when it can be done in an earlier stage.
- I think that I became interested because I saw from a social work perspective how some families in our system could have been helped more easily if they had been connected to a community resource instead of having to be part of our system in order to receive help. I see prevention and connecting them to services prior to our getting involved or making a case for the family is more beneficial for them.

***Q. Do you feel that other CSWs in your office are hearing that same message or getting the opportunity to be exposed to that message?***

- I think they are exposed to the message, but whether they are accepting or buying into the message is different because a lot of people are afraid of making the wrong decision or thinking that if we don't make it a case, something may happen—someone may not follow through. So they may feel liability is too high. But the fact that we have support from our management makes a lot of difference.
- 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.
- I am going to be honest. I got involved because someone brought up the words “parents anonymous.” That was the first thing I did 30 years ago and when I mentioned that, I ended up involved but I didn't know what I was getting into. I went to a meeting and it was good and there were people there who were not involved in the agency and that was refreshing. It was a different look, a different think, a different reality. A reality that I think just hasn't been tapped at all. If it wasn't for this [referring to the SPA 2 & 3 discussion and previous sessions] meeting I don't think I would have

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At the same time, the San Fernando Valley DCFS office has focused on developing relationships with County departments and other civic entities. In addition to having great success with the Department of Public Social Services Linkages program (linking DCFS clients immediately to economic benefits), they have strengthened relationships with the Department of Mental Health, and ER workers have developed good relationships with the Los Angeles Police Department and the Sheriff's Department. This office and Metro North also stepped up in response to a Board mandate to improve interaction with the Child Support Services Department by pilot testing worker training and a more systematic approach to documenting paternity.

been as excited. I can't wait to get back to the office now. "Guess what, this isn't exactly what we thought it was, [and] we can add really a lot to this." It is an interesting concept in my head now.

***Q. Can you expand a little on the different reality part?***

- I think the perspective that has been missing is that huge piece from the people we are working with so we know what is best for them. We have done this. OK, then, this is what you should do next." Rather than, "what do you think? What do you want to do? How can I help you do that?" That is a different think. This is not just their neighborhood, it is my neighborhood too. I live in the area where many of our families live. It has become more important than it would have been if this was just a job I was assigned to. Initially it was just a job, but it is a different thing now....
- Yeah, I thought it was Parents Anonymous. I thought wow! I really like that, Parents Anonymous is a really cool thing. I met \_\_\_\_\_. I thought, Wow! What is going to happen now? It has become a very different thing now (the hope that I carry now for myself). It isn't what the parent might need or what that kids might get out of it or what that school might do: It is what we can do and it's on my street, what can we do? I have never thought of it that way.
- I have a question. I guess I am going to play devil's advocate. (I have been in the other workgroup.) I haven't heard anybody talk about the youth crossing over into probation and the gangs and the drugs and the community. We don't seem to have a forum for that. That is in the community, and it is a strong force in the community that could take over and rob a community of a whole lot of things. I haven't heard anything about this.
- I'm really glad that you brought that up. It is always hard to remember to make some of this explicit because we are living in that sea. Two things that I can respond to in SPA 2. As part of the prevention initiative, two of our partners (the Youth-Speak Collective and the other Total Family Support Clinic) have community action groups. They are both youth groups built around youth activating an anti-violence initiative and approach specifically in the Pacoima area. Likewise, one of the other networks that is partnering with the prevention initiative is the Gang Reduction Youth Development initiative. They have a different lead agency but many of the same subcontracting partner agencies. The hope is to be integrating the PFF, the PI, and the grid, all of those kinds of networks together to make sure that we are knitting that safety net ever more densely.

- From a case management level I can say that we are getting more gang-affiliated families. It has been very challenging and what we are really working to do is tie them to community resources and try to catch them as they are getting out of camp or jail and help those parents figure out how to deal with that before they are actually released. It has been interesting.

*Q. Friends of the Family has been doing fantastic work particularly with the kids in Barry J. Nidorf and the whole family situation there. One of the things I find so fascinating is if you are from one bureaucracy you keep your eye on the particular aspects of what is going on in a community that relates to your core mission. Understandably, you have to. You may not get the opportunity to know the work that Friends of the Family is doing with this different focus that you just brought up. I wanted to put \_\_\_\_ (from Friends of the Family) on the spot to have you talk about how you build on that, how you connect those networks.*

- I just want to say that .... we are connected with the SPA 2 Council, that has been part of the mission for the Children's Planning Council for some time to make that connection between juvenile justice and the disproportionate incarceration of minority youth etc, etc. We know that there is a connection between families who are in the juvenile justice system, who are also in the DPSS system, who are also in the DCFS system, etc, etc. The county is working in the particular institutions to break down those silos so that there is some connection to those families when they get into one system and so that they are assisted and it is not so hard for the families. Specifically to the juvenile justice issue, it has come up in our SPA Council. It has come up in our agency, that we are working out in the community with parents who are asking, "How do I know if my kid is in a gang? How do I know if my kid is about to go off the deep end?"

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. There is so much to this that I want to tell you, it would take all afternoon, we feel so passionate about this.



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 the assets and use families, use the residents, and use the youth around 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. It is really exciting to have those voices of those parents to whom people have said, “It is your fault your kid is doing 25 years to life.” [The son of] One of those parents (15 years old) got 4 life sentences. He did not kill anyone, I want to make that clear, he did not kill anyone. Something is wrong in a society where we can do that.

***Q. It seems to me that one of the successes is creating the space to have these kinds of conversations where we can actually know that they are not all parallel efforts. We are trying to connect them in communities where it matters most.***

- 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.”

When any of those things happen then, you become part of that disease. We are now taking it into the schools. We just started in one of the high schools and we have one group. At first it was like pulling teeth because when you walk in there the kids already think you think of them as a gang banger. Most of them are “wanna be’s” at this point but there are others that are far more than that, who pretend to be something they are not. So we are doing that. We also have one in a grade school using the same Alive and Free model.



## SPA 5 and SPA 6 Communication of Prevention Concepts

- 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 the community knew better than we did after all these years of coming into the community but not being part of the community.
- I want to follow up in SPA 5, maybe not as much for primary prevention but for secondary and tertiary. We are telling our community partners, "You know what, you come in, you come to our TDM meetings, let's look at Family Preservation, let's look at alternative response, let's look at all the vehicles we have to try and keep these families from re-entering the system (preventing re-abuse or re-entry into the system)." I think the community-based organizations are hearing that and I think they are making a concerted effort to come into the TDM, to be part of that assessment process.

***Q. So, what's working? Let's tease this out a little bit more.***

- That they are engaged actively with us to work with our families in the Team Decision Making process.

***Q. So that is the message that is communicated, that they are actually involved?***

- Yes, and I think they hear that and see the result. As they are here and as they are looking and listening to the families - they know what the family needs to tailor a case plan along with the family so that these recurrences of child abuse and neglect don't occur.
- 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 [them]. 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. The thing I was talking about before, the CASA question came out of this exact discussion, where people were saying, "how would any family be able to do this? They must need someone who can help them organize all this." That has been our focus at the agency levels.

- Part of the outreach for our SPA 6 initiative is not only having the community out there getting the word out, but DCFS as well. We have social workers to go out to the schools and law enforcement agencies because they see families all the time but they don't refer.

***Q. What are they saying?***

- I have a social worker right there down the street—they can go and get services there. I have a flyer for the \_\_\_\_\_ center you can go and get services there. Because they know these families keep coming back to our attention and their attention as well. So the outreach is at DCFS: “We have an agency right down the street and you don't have to see me at your door if you come and knock at their door.”
- It is a lot about doing face-to-face work. Our resource navigators and I go out to DCFS, we go to their staff meetings and do presentations to be sure everybody down from the RA to the line staff understands what the prevention initiative is, what it looks like in SPA 6. We are going into schools and speaking at the PTA meetings. We are going to the Community Advisory Council meetings and just sitting and representing “this is what it looks like, these are the flyers”. I went last week to the DMH providers meeting, because they had been hearing about it, but they didn't know what it was. So, OK, here is something tangible. We have our flyers. It is really user friendly. It gives you a center and tells you the services and people say, “Oh, OK, simple” and they just walk through the door. But a lot of it is old school, on your feet, hitting the street, grass roots, communicating to get the word out.

***Q. So are you folks communicating about services available? Is that what you see your goal as? Are you talking about the new way of approaching business?***

- 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 A.S.K. (or “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 for, and they will start one. So everything you need is in a one-stop shop.

***Q. So, that is great about you going out and hitting the pavement, and working differently together, right? A big part of what I hear is you are working as a team, rather than this is government and this is—what are you finding is effective in engaging with residents?***

- 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 that—referrals. Whatever the parent may need, they communicate it to the school. The school sends me a referral and I connect them with \_\_\_\_\_. 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.
- We do the same thing. All of our sites do that. We are all connected to the schools. We will go out to the schools and to the parent conferences. They are not aware of the services available to them and when they hear of it and they know that they can take those services and they can be linked to satisfy their needs, they are just astounded. They are really amazed at the legal services, tutoring services, anger management, counseling, all of these services that we can link them with and they are amazed at that.

***Q. Sorry, just so I can get an equal representation of different perspectives. Any other SPA 5 DCFS offices? I know we have been hearing from SPA 6 and Shields which is wonderful and we hear from West LA, what about any of the other SPA 5 DCFS offices? Oh, there is only one? What about community agencies? Any other community agencies in SPA 5 that want to share best practices about getting the message out?***

***Q. (second facilitator) What I wanted to probe a little bit is—you work with the schools and they know who you are—Do you have any stories about how they have actually been connected to the network?***

- We have a family, a father who had no services. He had no services, they were living in their car and we were able find him shelter, reunification of family. One parent was able to do our outpatient substance abuse program. We address the parenting groups, we stay in contact with the parenting groups, with the outpatient groups. We talk constantly and they are referring to us prop 36 and GR clients. They are referred to us and they have to have some kind of job development, so we keep them in job development trying to get them skills. And we have gotten employment for some of them. Those are success stories that we enjoy.
- I just wanted to add a small dose of reality if you were ever to re-implement and kind of copy this model .... it wasn't this easy, even among us in SPA 6. I think it was great because

there was already a relationship there, but I think a big thing is we had to learn how to communicate even among ourselves. It was so important that we all thoroughly understood this new way.

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.

***Q. How did you do it?***

- Lots of talking, lots of communication. We meet once a month as a collaborative and you take that back to your own organization and make sure you are talking there. Bring it back, “is everyone understanding it? Can you reiterate it to me?” Bringing it back each time and making it clearer and clearer. Lots of communication, lots of e-mail.
- It’s really interesting that you ask this because one of the things that happens in our meetings when we use a vignette, people immediately talk about services. They don’t talk about the family. The idea is “how is the family experiencing this?” Certainly, creating this web of all the services is really critical, but even here in this conversation it has been all about services. We are communicating about services and resources and this is the part that we are struggling with; how do you get that? This is an absolutely necessary part of this conversation but there’s the next part that has to do with “who are we doing this for and what is their orientation for it?” Even at our meetings it is always like this. And at this conversation it is always like this. It is always first about service delivery. Coordinating services is great but there is another—there is the why. Why bother to coordinate it? And it’s about families in isolation and all of those kinds of things. So when you say there is a whole new way of working, we are there but we have to keep reminding ourselves all the time. I know this is supposed to be about successes, but I am listening to this conversation, including my part of it, and I’m thinking, it is all about services. \_\_\_\_\_ asked one question; “do you have any parents there?” We do have residents but no, that is not what it is about.

***Q. Do you think that in many ways we are moving away from a traditional service delivery model? What I am hearing is one of the challenges is that we ourselves are still half-way between an old model and a new model. As we are changing and evolving sometimes we are still thinking services delivery even as we are building networks to breakdown the old delivery. Does that make sense? So we are still growing in our own language and in our own way of thinking about it.***

- When we are having those meetings part of our success is, “I connected with somebody.” Or, I involved somebody else in what we are doing. It is not just getting someone hooked up with job training. I got two more agencies involved in what we are doing and they are on board. I think that is what is different in the way we are seeing success.
- And the other part to that is that when an agency believes in us, that we are truly out there helping families, that we are not just out there trying to snatch a child from a home. They will call on us. “I had this family come into my agency, can you help them with housing?” So, it is a success all the way around, it is a win-win.

***Q. So it is a changed perception?***

- Yes, I remember when I first started working with the faith community. They said “No, you are taking the kids out of the home.” The parents were going into the churches complaining about losing their children and never getting them back. Now churches are calling us. It is a big turn around.

***Q. OK, the key thing I heard from you at DCFS is that humility was the key to that and opening up to the community. OK I think we’ve got that. Anything else about communicating?***

- I think another thing aside from services is how the prevention initiative is empowering families, because it is about them being able to sustain themselves beyond just getting connected to housing, but what is the next step? I think with this initiative we’ve seen in the different SPAs, again the men’s support group, it formed on its own. Now these people are done. They graduated last week but they are still meeting every week. Now they are going to move it to the evening to accommodate their work schedule because now we have placed them in jobs. So it goes back to not just the services, but what is developing here and what is sustaining for our families? That’s what’s success. It is not about how many people we may have fed or how many people came out to our workshop, but what are they doing beyond us?

***Q. So, to summarize, communicating the successes and the outcomes for families. So not just sort of talking about it but using anecdotal information to say this is what happened to this family or group.***

- I'm sorry, I don't say very much but this issue is interesting. In Compton we focus on the schools because the parents in the school system don't see how empowered they are. By going to the school and using the children as a base the parents can demand school books that are needed in the schools. So we focus in such a way that the parents will be self-sufficient in terms of their needs for the education of their children. Simple as that. Right now they don't think there is any value for them in terms of educational resources. They don't care, they don't go to PTA. They think the school board is doing exactly what they want to do. But they are the ones that have the power base to determine who sits on the school boards so that their children can be properly educated. The testing scores that I have in my office are so shaming that it is incredible, and we can't do that kind of damage. So we are utilizing the school system as a base to empower the parents and the children at the same time so the networking is the community base.

***Q. So we've got schools and churches as organizing vehicles. Do you have one other thing?***

- Prevention also comes out of a symposium that we have had in SPA 5. For the past 2-3 years we have a permanency symposium where we have our faith-based community, we have our relative care givers, and other people from the community there. So you have a large number of non-professional people, if you will. What comes out of that is we have motivational speakers. One of the underlying messages is—institutions don't raise children, communities raise children. The other message that has come out is: this is one person talking to other people as a community “if we were to step up and do our job right in the beginning we wouldn't have half these children in DCFS today.” So, I think the community is giving itself a message in an unlikely place such as a permanency symposium.

## **SPA 7 and SPA 8 Communication of Prevention Concepts**

- What makes it a challenge is that we are service-oriented agencies so that makes it hard to explain the concept of empowering the community. A lot of the community organizing that people are used to is issue-based rather than relationship-based and asset-based.

***Q. So it has been delivery of services rather than let's organize a community and a set of families to work together.***

- And offer strengths and bringing out their gifts.

- I think \_\_\_\_\_ actually used the words—the gifts and talents and relationships—when we have been talking with partners, I didn't use the word prevention. I took a PowerPoint we had replicated from SPA 8 for SPA 7 that talked about the theory of change being with relationship-based work with residents, and that it is really about gifts and talents and residents working on projects that get what they want in neighborhoods. Then I showed the DVD that we had. I think that is part of the way we have been able to do it—not get stuck in the wording and not use primary, secondary, tertiary—but really talk about what we do in partnership with people.

***Q. I know services are important but I guess what you guys are saying...It's about relationships. We are trying to think about how the evaluation team will communicate why this is different and what is the essence of this thing called prevention as you guys are putting it into place.***

- I also think the term relationship is something that transfers to our workplace, our family, our group, so when people participate in a group where they have a voice and feel empowered and feel they have a choice and they are making a difference, it gives a whole new term to their relationship. Hopefully that translates to their family life. People who may have grown up in an abusive home, have abuse in their home now, who go to work and maybe are mistreated at work or don't feel like they have any power at work, for them to be part of a group where they are making a change and they have power, they are building that relationship. That teaches them a new model of a relationship. So that is how I feel it is prevention.

***Q. There is a real carry over effect, is what you are hoping for.***

- Yes
- I think one of the projects that we are starting is the oil painting project for Native Americans –men, women, children. They all have a gift and they have a talent whether it is graffiti or painting native art. Thinking about their positive input about how they want to contribute back to the community and the relationship is what builds upon this. And I think when we talk about the relationships, it is actually going into living rooms, having trust and talking one on one. They do face challenges because there is a barrier there—where they feel that they can't talk and speak up to Congress or go to meetings—but that is what we tell them. “You can do that, you can be part of this other—you can have your voices heard.”



- The other thing is real simple. If you want to do business in this way, you need to do it by example. If you are not doing it by example, I don't care how much money you get paid, you are not successful. That example needs to start with you. The reason why I mentioned this is because part of this process helped me to be a better husband, a better father, a better grandfather. Why? Because part of these teachings that I am receiving I start applying in me first so that way I can transfer to my family. If things work in my family, then they will actually work outside.
- For DCFS this has been a real learning experience. It has modified the manner in which we build programs and services for families. Taking it away from me looking at data and a script of services that I normally provide for families. It has allowed us to participate in the development of a creation of a program that is not only going to impact the outreach of services that each of these NACs can develop, but ultimately the information that I get from the NACs I can use to input into policy and practice change. It really is a difference for us because in asset based training I was training a different model than as institutional model where I dictate what type of service is going to be provided. Instead I go to a NAC and ask them, "What do you need? How can I be a resource to you in being able to fill that need?"
- 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. So I think it is real important when we talk about this initiative to talk about who owns it.

***Q. Someone on the evaluation team was just mentioning how the evaluation teams go out and talk to parents and do focus groups. We are going to have to be sensitive to—parents may talk about something that has really made a difference in their lives—they may not be able to tell you the name of the agency or the name of a fancy strategy—but what they tell the interviewer, we are going to have to interpret that as connected to this initiative. We are going to have to bring this back to you to say “this is what these parents are saying, what is accounting for that”***

- Because the parents may not know the program name but they know something made a difference in their lives and they can describe it. Some of the challenge we have is how do we start to tell those stories to policy makers and funders? Tell them this is different here is the connection—A led to B led to C and here are the parents telling you with their own voices. Like you were saying, for some families it is just \$50 extra cash earning per month

which can make a big difference in their lives. That is something we can struggle with a bit over the next 6-7 months and try to solve. I hear your point. It has got to be, if it is really successful in neighborhood or SPA, it has to be parents being able to say it made a difference in their lives.

***Q. Second facilitator/questioner - In 8 and 7 before we do focus groups we are going to talk to some parents first, before we design the questions so that we can deal with some of the issues that you are raising as to how do we need to talk about this, what do the questions need to look like so we can get feedback from folks as to- "if we ask this, does it make any sense to you?"***

- One thing I would say too in terms of the impact of NACs. The residents know better than anyone else. I had 3 or 4 really simple questions. I did 3 hours of interviews for our agency video and I was blown away. Everything in that video came from those interviews. I was so impressed by the connections they were making about the impacts in their lives. I just said, "what is your favorite thing about being in your group, how has it impacted you?" The kinds of connections they were making about how it has impacted them, their families and their communities all came from them. I think they know way better than we know the answers to these questions.

***Q. This is sort of a reality check. Did some of you in audience sort of wince when one of the women opened up in her NAC, but said that it is more difficult for her to open up in some of the parenting groups because she thought that some of that was being noted in a case planning kind of a way? And that may just be the reality; there may be no way around that. That is the advantage of a parenting class that helps provide skills and a NAC where people can let some defenses down and share with each other. Maybe it is going to take two different vehicles for some people because they need that—the skill building and a place where they can let their hair down without being monitored and say "I need to own this, I am really having difficulty with this aspect of my parenting." So were people wincing or smiling? I was in the back, I couldn't see. I saw at least one person nodding their heads.***

- I think that is one of the key things about this initiative it is all three things together; the social services, economic development, and community building. To a person, everyone in that group—parents in motion—they have said that their parenting classes and their drug classes have absolutely helped them to take ownership and responsibility of the things that have happened to them. This is different, it has brought something new to their lives, they have found a leader inside of themselves, they found a new aspect of themselves that they weren't in touch with before. They weren't saying that it is only that. I was specifically

asking about the difference. That woman in particular, her drug treatment class, she has been sober for a year—and that class has been incredibly important in that process for her. So it is all three.

***Q. So we don't need our communications experts telling the story, we need to get the right parents to tell the story.***

- And I think what \_\_\_\_ is saying is it becomes a continuum and in a continuum it doesn't really matter what stage you start in, but the continuum is what supports the whole process. Maybe that is part of the story we need to tell that it is truly a continuum. But it is a continuum that residents truly run.
- I think for people in the system this piece—this NAC piece—has not been available and I think that has been the key for these parents. The traditional social services have been available and they have actually been mandated to do those but this is the first time they have ever encountered this aspect. So if this aspect can grow and become available to everyone who is involved with the system as an option. I think that would be beneficial, not to take away anything that exists but to add this in as an additional option for them.
- In relation to that. There is clearly going to be a difference between somebody who has been mandated to take parenting or DV classes and someone who recognizes there are things going on in their lives, they want to make changes and they go and take the services. They are going to receive those services in a totally different way because they haven't identified their needs as being that.

***Q. So is the difference a matter of choice? I didn't quite catch that.***

- Yes it is the person identifying their own need as opposed to it being imposed.
- The other thing I would add is a redistribution of resources into the hands of residents. When I go to meet with residents that is what I say. I say, "Traditionally social service agencies have determined the needs and then developed and implemented the programs. What we want to do is have you guys assess what you care about and then give you resources to implement your own ideas about how to improve your community."

*Q. For those of us who have been around a long time, if you think about some of the best aspects of the early war on poverty issues where the feds ended up sending the dollars straight down to the neighborhoods. I was thinking about a project in Milwaukee where the dollars went right back into our neighborhood center. They didn't get filtered through and diluted by a whole series of bureaucracies. It sounds like that is one element of this.*

## V. How Can DCFS Offices Partner with the Community?

The question asked was: What have you learned about how DCFS offices can best partner with existing community-based networks?

### SPA 1 and SPA 4 Partnering

- Over the years at Grace Resource Center I have been involved with TDMs but part of our process now is that we are all beginning to do that. They are all beginning to involve us too. Last week, \_\_\_\_\_ and I went to a training and we bring to the table a lot of resources for what we do at Grace and for other groups we work with. Now having gone through the training (which was excellent), we are getting e-mails from \_\_\_\_\_ about every TDM that is coming up. She knows we can't go to all of them but we are going to get some other people trained. We have some high level volunteers we are going to get involved in the process and I think that will be very beneficial for both sides; because we can come up with some great solutions that have not been totally available until now.
- I think understanding where different cultures and groups come from with their thinking is important too.... We have a lot of people in this county who are looking at education more as an ideal not as something that is for them that they can use to help themselves. As we work together with the different agencies, we learn to communicate better, how to reach into those different areas and help people realize that kind of thinking will leave you out. We need to ask them, "What is the best way for us to communicate that school is for you specifically, not for somebody else's kids?" Learning how to communicate through some of those issues will be helped a lot by our agencies working together.

- One of the things that I learned over the last 10 years is that there are many, many Hispanic churches in Lancaster and assumptions are made that they are all from Mexico. They do not relate to one another. They go to the church of the pastor who came from where they came from. We had a bus providing medical services and if one person from one congregation showed up, the whole congregation would show up. But, people from the other congregations would not show up. They would not mingle. So we have to re-think our approach and instead go to each individual group to meet the needs of most of the people. In doing so, we earn their trust. On Wednesdays we do our entire grocery program in Spanish and it has been a wonderful experience because the different groups do come together for that moment and we can share important information with them.
- I think it is easy for agencies to get together, meet and learn about each other. It is not easy for the communities to get together. For example, if DCFS has a meeting the community members will not go. I had experiences during the riots and during the earthquake that demonstrate this. After the Northridge earthquake, a community from Guatemala that is indigenous moved into the street without food, without anything. FEMA and other agencies tried to help them but the community wouldn't communicate with them at all. When we went in to do our intervention we had to talk to the community leader and explain why we were there and what the other organizations wanted to offer. Then, the only way the services could be provided was through us. That was the only way. Also, when we talk about organizing and referrals the two don't match for me at all. When you do organizing you invite people to join you. When you refer, you mandate something to them. To me, referral is intervention. Organizing is inviting people. This distinction is important to me.
- This is my first year working directly with the DCFS office (I know CII has been partnering with them for a long time). What I have seen is that every program with DCFS funding has its own meeting, for example Family Preservation has its own community meeting. Family Support, Wrap Around and the new one, Full Service Partnerships, all have their own community meetings. When you talk to a DCFS worker and are trying to refer a family even I would be confused. What am I referring them too? Are they going to qualify? Are they going to get services within a week or two or is there a long waiting list? What are the expectations?

I think most of the time the [caseworkers] CSWs don't know what they have access to right away and what they don't. What has helped us with the prevention initiative is that we have made it a point for one of us to go to their general staff meeting each month with an update on the network and what each agency is doing. Over time the CSWs are learning who is part of the network. Instead of having the program managers go to the meetings, it

is better to have on the ground staff meet with the CSWs even once a month or quarterly so they can get to know who the person is that they are referring to. With the PIDP I was chosen as the one to receive referrals for our secondary and tertiary services, and it has made a difference because I have social workers who will call and want to know exactly what we offer through our collaborative and what else our agencies have to offer. We need to educate the agencies about how much the CSWs need support and that they need to know more about what services they can access for families in the community.

- We have monthly community partnership meetings that are held in the community with a rotating location. We have open houses on a monthly basis at our agency. Sometimes we will do this as often as twice a month.
- One of the agencies I worked for, Antelope Valley Child Abuse and Prevention Council, will invite me to their general staff meeting or to inform new staff about our services. At the same time DCFS is great about coming to our general meeting and reporting to the Child Abuse Council about changes. They do this quarterly.

## **SPA 2 and SPA 3 Partnering**

- I think from our perspective (the department), in our partnering 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 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).

I don't think we were comprehensively prepared enough to be able to actually implement it. I think the department has done a fabulous job in the last, specifically, 5 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. You might have a teacher who shares some concern or an at risk child, but in that you hear about older siblings and other community issues and from there, along with our SPA Council relationships, our Community Advisory Council, we develop and realize areas that we can develop together to use our resources to tackle issues.

One of the issues is youth conflict, violence in the family and those kinds of things. We have just launched this, this fall. It has taken a lot of work to get into LAUSD schools, a lot of bureaucracies. I think they are more bureaucratic than DCFS even. We have been able to actually out-station in Canoga Park [Broadus] and in Pacoima. Other areas of our department are interested in learning how we got through the bureaucracy in LAUSD because obviously it is the biggest.

We are excited! Even though this last month we were inundated with referrals-- because these are case carrying CSWs with the primary function of responding to referrals from the community—they are still out there hearing the issues and from that we are able to partner. There is a location, Casa Pacoima, where they do trainings and we are able to share and hear about other things they use around the county. Then maybe we can use some of those things and bring them, in that form, to our families. Usually it is the County coming out to the community saying “This is what we want to do for you” —for us it was the reverse. This came out of hearing what issues the community had and then us developing something we felt could help us be part of the whole growth network or the initiative that was going on already.

*Q. But, it is a fantastic beginning of unpacking some of these lessons. It is like you just said, it is listening, being in a place helps but also being willing to listen and see where the connecting points are. Then being stubborn, I guess, to continue struggling through the barriers because you can see it is going to be worth it in the end. The whole piece of dealing with LA Unified, the immediate answer to an immediate question is often “No, we can’t do that.” So then, being willing to consider “How could we do it? What are the ways that we can power through some of these difficulties?” There was so much else to what you said, I feel like we need to come back at some point and figure out all of those things...*

*What have we learned about relationships between the public and private sector agencies? How do we make those relationships sustainable for the long term? What are we learning about the potential in those relationships and how we build on those or are we?*

- I think one piece of it is we have started to become engaged in things that are outside of just the initiative. From being invited to have parent advocates from the prevention initiative sitting in on the Break Through Series on safety and risk so they become more knowledgeable and are able to pass more information on to the community. So having that consistent participation and the expectation that we will still be a part of that. Being invited to be a part of the dialogue as they work to address some of the challenges they have been facing and also having social worker supervisors and TDM facilitators come out and



be a part of our shared leadership and consistently participating. Those work groups can be sustained over time because they are driven by community members and parents. Being mutually engaged with one another because we have a shared interest and commitment is what can keep it going.

- To piggy back on that, I am the lead organizer for SPA 2. For our Council, we provide the space to bring the community and the services providers and everybody else to the table together. We build relationships with one another. As a service provider or agency you have the finger on the pulse of the community because, trust me, the community members who come to the table are going to let you know what is going on and how they feel about your services and what is going on in their own families that can inform you in your work.
- Like any other kind of relationship it takes time and it takes the investment and willingness to sit down and get to know each other. For our relationships that we have built with our DCFS offices, that is a big shift for our agency. I was sharing this up in Santa Clarita the other day that as a community-based organization we serve a lot of families that have come to the attention of DCFS. We have sort of been of the attitude that, just like the families, seeing DCFS as the enemy and that we need to be the advocates for the family. I don't mean that so intensely but just to paint a picture.

Building relationships over time with DCFS has had an influence and it certainly makes a difference in maintaining. Just like we will continue to go to those meetings beyond this and engaging with our DCFS partners I would say the DCFS partners continuing to come out, beyond the PIDP, to the community and finding those ways. It is just like a click of a change. Not how to do something that the community will come to, but how to go out to the community and find ways to connect with the community, engage with the community. It is a shift in the way of looking at it.

***Q. I am going to put \_\_\_\_ on the spot, or anybody from a DCFS Office that wants to talk. One of the things that I have been hearing as I have been talking to people in offices about the prevention initiative is that it is very new. It is very nascent and therefore there aren't a large number of workers (and the workers already have a lot to do) who get the opportunity to see the potential and the power in this. Because I know you have been thinking about it \_\_\_\_, how do you as a manager who can see the power of an individual worker seeing it in action, how do we leverage that so more people get the opportunity for the click?***

- Frankly, because of the limitations of the funding on the prevention initiative, it is a very limited number of slots for the actual program. I think to the credit of Friends of the

Family, they have tried to encourage staff to go ahead and refer because they have other resources that they can bring to bear. They aren't going to turn their backs on these families. So I think there is real value in letting workers know that we are not talking about this finite number of slots. A worker's first thought about a new referral source is, what is the referral form, how do I refer and get something done quickly? That maybe is not always the case.

But, what we are able to do through some of the networks that our agency (and I am sure other PIDP lead agencies) has done through the networks that we have started to cultivate, is to begin bringing people together. We are hopefully going to be able to identify opportunities for them to become part of our TDM process and I think the workers will start to develop some working relationships that I think that will be more meaningful than a dozen or two dozen cases referred and serviced.

I think there is much more that is going to come out of this and workers will gradually see that as it occurs. I think they will become more aware of it as they start to see these agencies participate more in our planning and making themselves more available to our families.

- I think I mentioned this at the earlier group. 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.

When we are talking to individual workers about a particular case, even if it is tertiary prevention, what I try to talk about with them is "What can we do to support this family as they transition out of the system to prevent them from coming back into the system? If you talk to people individually and connect it to a specific family or a specific situation, it is more concrete and they tend to get it a little more. It is trying to get that concept out there and at the same time having them relate to it in a different way.

- Something else that was mentioned this morning was the dramatic drop in the families or cases in out of home care, the reduction in the average length of stay in care, and all of this doesn't happen by accident. I think workers work very hard and that they recognize they can't do it alone. There have got to be these partnerships and resources in the community to assure that the families are not going to be left out there adrift, that there are supports available to them. It is all going to start to come together for workers and what is really

happening. What primary prevention can do is to keep some of these cases out of our case loads altogether whether for a short time or for a longer time.

## **SPA 5 and SPA 6 Partnering**

- This is really exciting what we are doing. If you know me, I don't really like to speak about it but it is true. This is near and dear to our hearts. What we have been doing with DCFS. We were always the kind of agency that thought everyone else was kind of down here underneath and that perception has really changed. What we have learned is that when we start a relationship we have to nurture it. We can't say "OK, we met at this big huge networking meeting and then that is it. You have to keep coming back. We are continually inviting our partners back. If one week someone comes and they don't the next week, that is fine, they will come back in a couple weeks and join forces later. You have to continually have that openness so they can come to the table. You can't just do it once and then let it go.
- Basically on what everybody else has been saying, you need consistent communication, point people, you need to have face to face with both community agencies and DCFS.

***Q. Do you have an example? Does anyone have a story that can give a little color to that idea of consistent communication?***

***Q. Second facilitator - Well maybe to sort of help, maybe an agency that wasn't necessarily as involved but now is more involved and what were some of the things that were involved with DCFS; any new partners with DCFS?***

- I guess we are, but we're really—end of tape
- The excitement, well we've lost LA Bridges, which was a group that we worked with, and the excitement was giving another resource for the families of these kids that were part of our program. So, that was an incentive in one sense. It is the resource, the excitement of collaborating with the faith-based in Los Angeles. Learning about Shields for Families, because they are so large, they have a lot of other programs that are different than ours. So that is the exciting thing about this and they are on the other side of town so that is a whole different....

***Q. So one of the things I think I heard you say is sort of learning what other agencies are doing...***

- You really have to be at the table, you have to collaborate, you have to attend the DCFS meetings to see what the trends are. You have to go to the community-based organizations to see. You have to be at the table because if you aren't you are not going to know what is going on and what the needs are. I belong to a collaborative, the school safety police program and the schools had a group of students come in, I didn't know it at the time but they have a men's program (a new program) where they are trying out only boys in the class. The Men's Up program came in and these kids are high risk youth and tertiary kids. They are learning to be gentlemen and they are learning to speak correctly and to treat their female counterparts and other people with respect and, as a result of being at that meeting, some of the collaborative were so taken that they offered (there was an LA classic coming up) and they wanted to send these kids to an LA classic. Some of these kids had never been to a football game in their life. We all started volunteering to share resources like Gatorade, buying 10 tickets and so forth. These men were so elated! This was a success because these kids went to a football game and they learned how to act at a football game and being out and socializing in a non-alcohol and non-drug setting. So, it was a social success.

***Q. When you talk about consistency and being involved and keeping at it. When you come to the table at a meeting and you invite your partners along with DCFS is there something unique that takes place that keeps you coming and keeps you involved instead of I'm just coming to hear some information. Are there some unique nuances that make you feel involved as opposed to just sitting there and not being involved? What takes place?***

- I think just from sitting in different meetings like we have the PIDP workgroup which is DCFS and the CBO's but I also attend the various community advisory groups which is DCFS and CBO's but then it is also the constituents and community who are there at the table. What keeps me engaged is that different issues come out, aside from what is on the agenda. We have sat at meetings in the community advisory council where a parent will say "I don't like how this is going" referring to their relationship with DCFS and trying to be reunified with their children. Then with all of us sitting together we say, "OK, we are all a team, it is not us against them, we are not the experts and we aren't going to tell the community what we are going to do." Rather, how are we as a collective going to assess the situation and improve our working relationship so that we can support thriving children and families?

Everyone has a voice, that is the way I can say it. Everyone has a voice, everyone from the person in the community to the case manager at the community-based organization to the CSW at DCFS.

Exactly. Because there is real work being done so that is what I definitely appreciate.

***Q. So you don't walk away asking "what's in it for me? Why was I here?"***

- ....What has impressed me is advertising the successes. I learned about the visitation center's opening by picking up my neighborhood newspaper. I think that is a good feeling when you are able to see what DCFS and its partners are able to do on the front page of the paper. Going to a conference on Saturday, an education conference, and seeing a success played out in a video regarding the prevention initiative. I think it is that transfer of learning and always celebrating those successes and getting that message out to the community really gives you sense of pride that we are doing something as partners. We are bragging about it and that is great for the community.

## **SPA 7 and SPA 8 Partnering**

- Being open to the possibility that there are answers out there that we may not have come up with. Be open to training, other opportunities of training and other modalities of training that you have never seen in an institution. Again the success of this is that DCFS has been able to participate in the ABCD training (Asset Based Community Development).
- Along with that is being humble enough to admit that we were wrong. We didn't know everything.
- Like with everything, we have alternative ways to see things. Part of what is missing through this culture is that for many years they have not been paying attention to the native old traditions the way we used to do business. Sooner or later we need to revisit those people who have that knowledge so that we can get the new knowledge that we are receiving with some of the wisdom that we have from our ancestors so that way we can build better things for our families.
- One thing too for us as a community-based organization is to have DCFS open up its doors and connect us to places inside the department that we can connect to. For example, when we started with this. I met with Art and Roberta who came to our collaborative meetings. We needed to do something with our relative caregivers but not in the traditional DCFS manner of providing education through support groups or providing access to this type of that type of class.

It is more like “let me connect you to meet with them.” So that we can figure out between us, what makes sense and then let’s take the next step of having our organizer meet with some relative caregiver to figure out what it is they want to do, and what gifts and talents they have that they would like to bring to the table to work as relative care givers in their community. It was a different way of connecting, as opposed to a service connection. It was a relationship connection

- Most families, every family maybe, doesn’t know the DCFS process.
- I want to go back to our faith based process. History says separation of church and state. Now DCFS is more open to having the faith based community come to the table and for us to use their gifts and talents for our families. I think one of the things that I have learned, since I can be stridently anti-institutions is ... the respect that I have for the DCFS partners—in building relationships with them.

## **VI. Upcoming Challenges and Strategies for Addressing Them**

The question asked was: What are the major challenges for the next 6 months for the initiative? How do you plan to address them?”

### **SPA 1 and SPA 4**

- Just speaking on behalf of DCFS, the major challenge for us is staffing, not just in terms of turnover and having to constantly re-educate and re-familiarize people with community resources and the initiatives and all the different programs that we are doing, but having man power to keep PIDP going and not having it just sort of be delegated to whoever may have extra time that week. For DCFS in some ways, it’s an unfunded mandate. The agencies have funding at least through June but for DCFS it is business as usual. What we would like to see is to have extra staff. We are going to get stuff off the ground and it would be nice to know that they are going to continue to be off the ground.
- I think one of the biggest challenges we have is the learning curve. We have to get smart fast. Because out where we are in SPA 1, we have guys who are driving 2 hours one-way

to work and 2 hours back. They don't eat meals at home so there are a lot of things there. When they come home they don't want to be thinking about going to a meeting and learning about anything or talking about anything, they just want to kick their feet up and watch sports or whatever. We have to get smart fast to figure out how to reach them and get them interested in what we are trying to do because this is really a community- wide effort and if the community doesn't get interested, then we're not going to be able to keep it going no matter how much funding or staffing we have because it has to have people there to keep that momentum going.

- I think part of my struggle is (and I don't know if this is true for everybody else) 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. 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 trust. We are really invested in this and we really want to make it work.

Part of the reason we have been successful at Grace is because we started slow and took many years to build up to who we are. We are funded mostly by donations and fund-raisers—to have to front the money until the checks come from the county, that's huge! Right now, I really need a couple checks next week because we are on the edge. We have never missed a payment. We don't miss payroll, it always seems to work out. If this stress could be lightened some, it is a huge complication for me personally. I feel responsible for my staff and our programs and all the things that we are doing. For the few people who haven't gotten on the positive of all this initiative stuff, there are going, “see, told ya”. I am saying “no, no it is all going to work out.” It's all good. So I am being as positive as I can be but that is a huge strain on our system.

- My part in 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.”



And that is really what I use; we spend 20 minutes doing whatever it is—art, literacy, or a project. It is interactive and fun enough that the kids want to come back. So they are my promotion. So that is how I make it work. I go through the kids. A lot of times, if I can get the Moms bought into it, that helps. I tell the Mom's, “mom's—look you get them out of the house and the kids out of the house, you can do whatever you want for 2 hours, you can take a bubble bath, you can do whatever.” That is my promotional gimmick and it works. When the guys start to come around and then when we meet and the guys are there, they really get into it and see the benefit of it. So they start to change—it isn't overnight, but it does happen. That's how I do it.

- I think the challenge (this isn't news) is that this is a 12-month initiative and a lot is expected of this initiative and the timing and planning of it maybe wasn't taken into consideration. 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 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 capture and convey the correct picture in just 6 months is a daunting task. But I know that us 3 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 but really it is going to take on a new picture for us and whatever we end up calling it, it is still going to be the work that we want to do together.

#### ***Q. Do others feel the same way?***

- For me as an organizer, I really wanted to see what is the end result you want to see in this very short period of time? Exactly how you are going to measure the end result is kind of confusing to me.
- I know that most of you are aware of the MHSA PEI funding that's slowly working its way out. I am sure lots of your agencies are looking at that as a possible way to access funding with the projects you are currently doing when that funding comes out. I don't know what the timetable is but that might be a real good way to approach sustainability for some of your projects.
- Still talking about sustainability, the challenge I think, especially with the groups we are organizing with, is making sure that the membership of whatever group we build feels self-sufficient. For example, we are in the process of ending a program we had funding for and it ends next month and so you notice the families/participants start to feel your instability and they say “what do we do?” what do we do?” and the constant message has to be “you have to see us (provider) as a temporary resource.”

“We are here to help you begin and start off your group and the process and to guide you and lead you to other resources that can help you. But, also look within your group; look at your own talents and how you can fundraise to support your agency.” A lot of our agencies started out small they looked at ways to continue. It is awesome to have non-governmental funding and not be restricted by the contract requirements. But making sure the community members see that and understand that is one of the biggest challenges. If you start off with the group, letting them know this what we are going to do with you, this is what we are ready to provide but let’s start talking about when we are gone, you have to be able to rely on each other.

I think that is ultimately the message of prevention. Making sure the community can see itself as relying on itself. Especially in SPA 4 where most of our population are immigrants, it doesn’t matter which cultural background they have, it is all an immigrant population. Making sure they start to see this as a place where they are putting in their roots. They have left roots behind somewhere but they are planting new ones here. Hopefully, they are going to stay for a long time.

- I was just thinking as DCFS that right now it is a mandate. What is it really going to look like in 6 months when there is no official funding for our CBOs, but yet there is no mandate from your superiors that you have to go to this meeting, you have to make this work, and you have to have this as one of your focuses. I am sure everyone takes a step back and asks “what was successful?” At least, I assume we will do this. For DCFS you have to do that 11 times over and really from a CBO point of view, what I am learning is that all of your initiatives seem somewhat similar but yet they are slightly different.

Where is the connection and disconnection and how can it be more manageable? I think the PIDP really tried to pull together the experts from all over—DCFS, CBO, Faith based. Now that we have the experts in the room, what is this really going to look like and how can we make this work? Given that we all are so multi-scattered with the initiatives of DCFS, Children’s Bureau (and all of the various programs and initiatives). Now what are we going to do with the lessons learned and moving forward?

#### ***Q. What solutions do you see?***

- I would really like to look at this and to really take not necessarily an evaluation, but a look at what was successful and what wasn’t and discover “Hey, you know what? This program is just like that Linkages program over there, can we combine them a little bit more?” Whether we call it something or not, I really don’t care. Part of it is truly understanding what every program is. So, I really feel a lot of them are one in the same and this is just

because I am a layman and I am new to this kind of work. They all seem so similar—if we could just narrow it down a little bit in order to really focus our efforts and build upon what we have now. For example, the new thing is the collaborative aspect of the community based organizations and the government offices with the focus of county. How do you really make that work?

***Q. Is there anything else you think we need to address?***

- Will there be enough information to evaluate? I see this as a challenge because it is only 12 months. SPA 4 just started implementing and other SPAs are probably in the same boat. Other SPAs are moving forward. I see this as a challenge and have heard it from many agencies. What are the performance measures going to be and who is going to decide on those?

**SPA 2 and SPA 3**

- The economy.
- The other thing about economic down turns is they also tend to force people together to combine resources because they know they have got to do more with less. I know it is almost a cliché in human services, but it is a reality. This is a good time to be working with these various community agencies to see how we can parlay what we each have available to us to be more efficient.

***Q. That is how we make those networks [come] alive...viable. And sustainable— not just for the next 12 months. How do we continue? Resources are probably part of it but it is also intention and passion.***

- And communication, which I think is a big part of it.

***Q. What should the people who care most the prevention initiative be focused on over the next few months as we move forward?***

- Unfortunately, I don't know if it can be done, but I would hope that statistics are being somehow 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 biggest challenge in this really little bit of time, the biggest thing we can do is build the strongest relationship we can. Once you become a friend, it is harder to just stop. You want to keep that up. I don't know though, without finances, friends go broke.
- I think we have a challenge in beginning to make the differentiation between what this project is demonstrating that is different than the kinds of purchase of service that has gone on, and ebbs and flows with funding and contracts or letter bids or whatever. People step up and provide this set of services or those services, all of which may be important, but what we have the opportunity to do is talk about the integration of kinds of approaches, strategies that are applicable to the whole range of populations.

Whether it is a direct referral of an open case from an office, a connection with a family where there is never a case opened out of a TDM (it is evaluated out), or a family that comes to the attention or the connection with one of the partner community-based agencies that is not known (and hopefully will never be known) to DCFS—that it is this different response, a different kind of approach that is applicable for all of those families. Even for our families that, as part of our plan, are receiving intensive case management services or are being shepherded in SPA 3 with the cultural brokers moving them and guiding them right out of the TDM. We have those examples going on.

But even those families are being connected or the goal would be to connect them to an identity-based or community-based or the like-based connections with one another that will hopefully sustain if there is even a pause in funding, and then be the bridge to get us to the next part of funding. Then there is the recognition that the funding is so important for the convening function, the facilitating function. One of the things that I have been impressed with that is whoever is talking is owning—we're building this network or we're convening these agencies—it doesn't really matter if it came from the PFF group, the PI group, the Advisory Council Group—that doesn't come without resources and won't be able to be sustained without funding. Those two things.... that may be a little fuzzy I'll have to think about it and write it down.

***Q. Anybody else? I just have to say one thing that is so obvious to me, from the County point of view. Contracts with community-based agencies are for a particular provision of a particular service. They are time-limited and they are very particular and specific. Basically, over time the way county government has come to think about those things is a procurement strategy. To me that has always made more sense when you are talking about paper or computers or something.***

- It is hard for any county department to move outside that frame because that frame is so well established. It is sort of part of all of our vocabularies. It is very difficult to stretch. As we know, it is very difficult to stretch to this first set of resources, specifically for this different purpose but used in a different way. So, to me, that is a big challenge. How to we start to think about, how do we start to talk about, these connections, these relationships? It is delicate because you can't do it without resources but it isn't just the resources we are purchasing. It isn't "Bring that truck over here and we'll unload 10 services." It is something that is even hard for us to think about a vocabulary for.

Is there anything else that someone didn't get a chance to say? Anything anybody wants to add for us to put into the hopper as we continue to think and build on the prevention initiative?

- I just have concerns that we have worked in Pomona for 5 years to get volunteers that will come to the meetings. We only have 4 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. 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.

## **SPA 5 and SPA 6**

- 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 and saw communicating, 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 on 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.

***Q. So, identifying that as a challenge do you have any ideas about how that can be addressed?***

- We initiated some conversation in August when we attended the lead agency meeting. Simultaneously, we are also doing a dog and pony show with DCFS, going around to all the sites and talking to their staff. How we can reach out to you at a local level is actually something that we really need to hear from you. LA County Office of Education Head Start is the largest Head Start, 24,000 children and families we serve, 26 different agencies. When I speak, I speak on behalf of all those different agencies and we'll have to work with those agencies to coordinate with you. So, maybe there needs to be a separate brainstorming session. I just got word that when you think of Head Start you don't think about early childhood care. We serve birth through 5 years old and we serve the parents and families. We are all about making families self-sufficient. So we just need to figure out a way that we can begin to brainstorm so we can impact the communities you are serving.
- In speaking about the projected next 6 months a challenge we are all seeing is capacity building and sustainability. This is across all of LA County, all 8 SPAs. This project has been extended until June which is wonderful, but I think a challenge we are all dealing with on the back end, aside from direct service, is capacity building. How are we going to sustain this?

***Q. So it sounds like you don't have a plan for it but that it needs to be planned for.***

- There is a lot of work in development with working with the Center for [the Study of] Social Policy. There is a lot of work in development. But as far as specific plans, no, everything is in development. Trying to look at ideas and different funding sources and maybe trying to pull on specific parts of the initiative that are working and seeing how we can sustain those. What I do appreciate about this initiative in SPA 6 is being able to link to free services so they can be sustained beyond the contract.

***Q. So part of what we need to do between now and June is to tell the story, right? So that then we can create space for continuation of this kind of work. So, I want us to think really specifically about the next 6 months. To the extent that we are successful over the next 6 months helps us leverage to your point. So thinking about just this period right now, what are you anticipating or what is already bubbling up that you didn't anticipate that are road blocks, pressure points, things that need to be re-tooled a little bit?***

- The big issue around sustainability is that it takes a while to get up and running. I know you don't like to think about it this way, but 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. We don't like to talk about it much but it is what it is. There are people doing this who won't be doing it.

***Q. Planning for termination.***

- I don't have a challenge, I just have a question to pose. We know the reality of funding but there is a lot of work going into this. Is it really the goal not to ramp up but to terminate? Or is the goal to have a plan if you have to terminate? But do you really want to keep it going? Is that it?

***Q. The purpose is....what makes this work? What are some of the best practices? Can it work with sustainability strategies that don't include new dollars but a reallocation of resources? What is working? This is a demonstration project to show, can it work? This is why it is being so heavily evaluated to identify some of the key components about the initiative. Not that it wouldn't go away.***

- You all were struggling to talk about how you communicate about this. I think tangibly what is \$5 million buying across this county. If it were taken away tomorrow, what would be different? Would something remain or would it all go away? Is it all in staff salaries? If it is then I am not sure we have made the impact that we are trying to make.

***Q. And also, to that point, I can imagine someone in the community saying "what is the value add of this initiative? What are we getting for this \$5 million"? To me that is a communication challenge.***

- There are some things that are going to take longer than 6 months. For example, we are trying to figure out training which means scheduling our residents at a certain time and figuring out from our other unit (our teenage program) to see how they are training and what times are convenient for them, because they go to school. So all this scheduling could be another month for what we are looking at. So now we are looking at 5 months left. That has to be looked at, I think.



***Q. Sounds like what \_\_\_\_\_ was talking about, you've just ramped up, now you have to terminate. How do you sustain? It goes back to sustainability and keeping the momentum going. It goes back to your point, is it tied to dollars? What does it look like? Is it just a collaborative model that doesn't have monetary implications? What does it look like? But starting with - Is it working (as a demonstration project)? Sounds like the main theme is sustainability and termination—and identifying and reaching out to other programs for example Head Start, but there are probably others too.***

- The other thing is that we know we are trying to measure what didn't happen—that is what we are trying to do. How do we document that abuse did not occur? People talked about having referrals from working in partnerships and getting people to start participating in activities. Are we documenting how those people came to us and identifying how that might be different from the way people came to us before? Are we tangibly collecting data about what is different about how people are getting linked to resources? The group that occurred as a result of the initiative—are we documenting that? There are stories and there is a way to document the impact.

***Q. How do you document prevention? You can document linkages and referrals. Was this family actually at risk or did we just help them get services? Was it true prevention?***

- In SPA 6 we are documenting every family that comes in, what they came in for, what services, what we linked them to and we do a follow-up. I think the evaluation team on this project is going to be to asking, “what does it look like? What exactly did we do across LA county?” We do have a formal documentation process for everything we are doing, but it does circle back to the question of how do you document prevention? We can document a family that may have come in as primary. We know we assisted this family, they didn't go into the system, or maybe the family exited sooner than they may have. But for the family that never came in contact with DCFS, how do you document that?
- Just like the school program on Wednesday nights, those families do not come to our attention. They go to their school and request services. To piggy-back on that, once you do your referrals and you follow-up, we would like to know what happened to that family? Did you connect them with those services? We are working on a system to track families without having to call them.

***Q. What have you individually learned the most about in the first 6 months of this project? What was your personal learning?***

- Relationship building is key with this initiative—it's key. Who do you know? Not working in a silo but opening up your network. How can we empower our families better?
- In our community there is incredible commitment to our families. Every agency has the same commitment we do—to improve lives for families.
- Part of the easier thing to do for the department and the community agencies is to get together. We have salaries and phones, and I think the real crucial thing that we both have to try and do is get the community involved, our families. That is the real crucial part and they are the ones who are going to tell us what they need. That is what I have learned that we need to spend more energy getting them to come to the table or be accessible so we can go out to them.

***Q. \_\_\_\_, I am going to put that as a challenge because that is what I hear it as. What I hear you saying is that we have done a good job with the first step which is getting ourselves together, which wasn't there before - success. Challenge—now how do we take it to the next level and really engage with families?***

- What I have seen is the empowerment of the families to speak up. They were not speaking up. Lately they are starting to speak up for what they deserve. Also communication among the agencies that we work with is very open and we have a good relationship in terms of communication output.
- At the personal level what I have learned - originally, I thought, this is going to be a really hard project for DCFS because it is such a change for you to think about being part of the community and not just doing what you do. I am a community guy. I was born in West LA, I work in West LA, I live in West LA but like everybody else, the challenge of falling back to think about services. I am not a representative of the community just because I am not DCFS, and so like everyone else at the table who represents programs and services and contracts, staying focused on prevention and the engagement of the people who are going to actually benefit from the program is really difficult and we have to keep focused on that.
- Faith-based partners have worked well with DCFS and DCFS has shown they're not bound by ideas of separation of church and state.

- DCFS has been open to what works for families—partnerships are personal and will last beyond funding. DCFS can get together more with partners to not just talk business, but develop relationships. DCFS can show that personal involvement is important.
- Recently DCFS has helped with TDMs and conferences in their effort to partner. One worker cannot know everything and DCFS needs the expertise of community based organizations. The engagement of community based organizations goes a long way towards relationship building.
- The fact that DCFS is behind PIDP lends them credit in the community. We have had to tell residents several times that PIDP really is DCFS at work.
- PIDP is giving DCFS a positive image. When we told clients about DCFS' involvement in PIDP they were suspect and they stated they wished DCFS functioned like this when they were a child and maybe they would not be involved in DCFS.

## SPA 7 and SPA 8

Transcription for this discussion group ended right before this question was discussed. Notes from one of the group facilitators are included below:

- DCFS has been inundated with requests to go out and talk about PIDP. The department must recognize that PIDP is desired by the community, and thus DCFS must continue to meet community needs and be responsive.
- The community organizing piece is very labor intensive. The short time frame and the integration of economic development are tricky because all the work should be done with one group. It is not desired to implement different strategies with different groups. None of the NACS should be shorted from all the aspects of PIDP.

***Q: From a sustainability aspect if Title IV-E money is available, how can it be redirected to PIDP beyond June? The NACS may be one of the most powerful components of PIDP.***

- The question is, is the core of the evaluation a model of social change? There is confusion regarding elements of the evaluation and how to make a coherent argument regarding the theory of change using resident data.

- PIDP must be shown as replicable, SPA 8 has been able to accomplish with years of effort, and now SPA 7 has made an excellent beginning. The ability to replicate some of the key aspects of the PIDP networks and other innovations in a new SPA area shows institutional and community change.
- PIDP is like an analogy—a person lies in bed and while there decides to start exercising, so the person starts exercising and is soon jogging, and later the jogging turns into running the Los Angeles marathon.
- Inclusion of POE reforms with PIDP is challenging. Family Support and other agencies came on board in SPA 7 and POE works differently in SPA 7. POE focuses on tertiary, but PIDP also includes primary and secondary prevention.
- Funding for one year is disillusioning. People have been fired up and then what? Families are beginning to trust and we cannot become liars to families. The work must continue funding or no funding.

***Q: We must start thinking about the core aspects of the work and associated costs.***

- 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.
- Many of the birth parents would love to work with other DCFS families and help the DCFS families walk through the process of DCFS involvement. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has the Parent Partners program operating in parts of LA already.
  - The Belvedere office has the Parent Partners program with eight core members. In addition, a handbook was developed for parents and is presented during the DCFS orientation. The members are former DCFS “graduates” and work is being done on a protocol so that graduates can participate in TDM and can get compensated for their work.
  - The Santa Fe Springs office cannot keep copies of the parent handbook in stock because it is viewed as valuable and offering practical advice. The faith-based council has a DCFS graduate who started a parent support group at a church.

## **VI. Summary**

This report has summarized the key themes and observations of the participants who attended a special discussion session during first PIDP-POE learning session. (See the executive summary for a list of key observations and recommendations.) Future evaluation reports will focus on PIDP network formation and initial results, as documented through interviews, surveys, and focus groups.



# Appendix A

## The Los Angeles PIDP Learning Session

### Introduction and Discussion Questions

Thank you for investing the time this afternoon to share what you are learning as the PIDP initiative is being implemented in your SPA community. Each group is being asked to focus on the questions listed below so that each community might share insights with another community.

These discussions are so important that they are being transcribed by a research firm in Seattle and the notes will be reviewed to identify key themes, innovations, challenges and recommendations for moving forward. No one's comments will be identified by name and the tapes will be destroyed after Dr. Peter Pecora from Casey Family Programs has them transcribed.

A draft of the discussion summary will be shared with each participant for your review before finalization so that you can have an opportunity to make corrections or add additional insights. Then the summary will be shared widely to help inform the work moving forward. We greatly appreciate your participation in today's discussion.

- 1. What are your early successes?**
- 2. What have you learned about the best ways of communicating 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?**
- 4. What are the major challenges for the next 6 months for the initiative? How do you plan to address them?"**



# 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)