

# Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council

*"Raising Educational Achievement for Foster and Probation Youth"*

Hall of Administration - Room 745, 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

## FACT SHEET

### THE CHALLENGE

Without basic skills and educational competence, foster care and probation youth have little chance of a successful adult life.

About three quarters of children in foster care currently **perform below grade level**, and over one-third have been **held back in school**. Almost 46% of foster youth **fail to complete high school**, compared with 16% of non-foster youth. Once they leave the foster care system, typically around the age of 18, over a third of foster youth become **homeless and/or victims of crime**, more than half are **unemployed**, and one in five will be **incarcerated** within two years.

The average **reading level** of probation youth in grades 9-12 is below grade 5. And approximately 25% are receiving **special education services** due to a learning disability or other qualifying disability.

### BACKGROUND

- In May 2003, the Children's Law Center, in collaboration with other groups, convened the first "Education Summit" of more than one hundred educators, child welfare experts, advocates and community leaders, to identify the key issues, challenges and possible reforms needed to improve education for the County's foster youth. A post-Summit report summarized more than 50 detailed recommendations.
- On January 27, 2004, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors supported the creation of an Education Coordinating Council (ECC), a collaborative body of leaders from key public and private entities responsible for oversight of the education needs of foster and probation youth. County Departments, with the assistance of the Children's Planning Council and affected stakeholders initiated preliminary steps to develop and support the ECC.
- In May 2004, a second Educational Summit, "Closing the Education Achievement Gap for Foster and Probation Youth", brought together key stakeholders and sponsors to identify ways to overcome the barriers that have resulted in an educational achievement gap for these youth. They also developed recommendations to guide the work of the ECC.
- On November 3, 2004, the Board of Supervisors authorized the creation of the ECC to raise the educational achievement of foster and probation youth, defined the Council's initial membership and support, its charge and the next steps required to convene the first meeting in January 2005.

### THE CONCEPT AND THE PROCESS

- An organizational meeting of key stakeholders and sponsors will be held in November 2004 to review a preliminary mission, operational structure, initial work focus and funding for the ECC.
- The first meeting of the ECC will be convened in January 2005. The Council's focus during the first year, as outlined by the Board of Supervisors, shall be to:

**1. Develop a "Blueprint" or plan that identifies educational outcomes for foster and probation youth as well as:**

- key indicators of progress towards achieving these outcomes,
- strategies for addressing obstacles that impede educational attainment, and
- implementation roles and responsibilities of policy makers, agencies, departments, schools and caregivers.

**2. Evaluate the initial structure of the ECC**

**3. Determine future funding needs and sources**

- The initial composition of the ECC shall include but not be limited to representatives from the following entities and groups:
  - Unified School Districts (Los Angeles, Lancaster, Pasadena, Pomona, Compton and Long Beach)
  - Los Angeles County Office of Education
  - Department of Children and Family Services
  - Probation Department
  - Juvenile Court
  - Public Defender
  - Children's Planning Council
  - County Commission for Children and Families
  - Los Angeles City Commission on Children, Youth and Their Families
  - Children's Law Center
  - First 5 LA Commission
  - Non-public Schools
  - Former Foster Youth
  - Relative Caregivers
  - Foster Parents

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Informational meetings are being held throughout the County to seek community feedback on the Blueprint and initial work activities.
- Short-term action Work Groups will be formed during the first year to address the most critical education challenges such as: special education placements, working with the courts, better use of Federal resources, sharing of educational information, non-public schools, school readiness, etc. Caregivers and community advocates will be invited to participate on these work groups.
- Throughout 2005, the ECC will evaluate its structure, future funding needs and opportunities.
- An interim consultant team has been put in place with funding from Casey Family Programs and County Departments to support the ECC in its initial year, under the umbrella of the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

**HOW TO CONTACT US**

If you wish to provide suggestions for the development of the ECC or be included in a mailing list to receive information about work activities in the future, please leave a message with your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address at 213/ 974-6837 or email the consultant team at: [swatson@cao.co.la.ca.us](mailto:swatson@cao.co.la.ca.us).

**Thank you for your interest!**