



November 4, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sharon G. Watson
Education Coordinating Council
(213) 974-6837

Miriam Aroni Krinsky
Children's Law Center
(323) 980-1712

Supervisors Act to Reverse Poor Educational Performance of Foster Youth
Education Coordinating Council Charged with Improving Outcomes

LOS ANGELES, CA – This Wednesday the Board of Supervisors formally approved creation of a Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council (ECC), a first-ever body to address the educational needs of abused and neglected youth. Formation of the ECC coordinates with the release this week of the 2004 Education Summit Report, which underscores the need to break down institutional walls that have prevented effective action in the past on behalf of our community's most vulnerable children. "The creation of the Education Coordinating Council is of vital importance to the future of our foster and probation youth. If we don't meet their needs today, they will not have a future", said Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.

The ECC was launched in response to detailed Education Summit recommendations, through which educators, child welfare experts, advocates, and community leaders sought to remove roadblocks that have resulted in a sizeable educational achievement gap for Los Angeles' youth at risk.

"Education provides a foundation for children to become productive adults," Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said. "With this new Education Coordinating Council, we will bring to the table all the different agencies dedicated to the care, education and well-being of children in the foster care and probation systems to ensure that these kids receive the highest quality education we can provide for them." Supervisors instructed the ECC to address the educational needs of foster and probation youth, identify obstacles that impede their achievement, propose concrete steps to reverse the achievement gap, and develop indicators that will measure the success of new programs.

Child advocates hailed the establishment of the ECC. "As a community, we have failed to equip many of our most vulnerable youth with the education they need for a stable and successful adulthood," observed Miriam Aroni Krinsky, Executive Director of the Children's Law Center, counsel for over 20,000 Los Angeles County foster youth. "Creation of the ECC is an important move toward helping foster and probation youth realize their potential and face their future with confidence."

The Education Summit Report calls for disparate organizations to be brought together through communication and collaboration; enhanced training on the unique problems faced by these children; the development of data systems and records access; and the need for stability and sensitivity to become the watchword as decisions are made with regard to youth in out-of-home care.

In response to recent action by the California legislature, several promising initiatives are already underway. LAUSD is implementing new protocols stemming from landmark legislation designed to lessen the disruption of multiple changes of schools as children move within the foster care and probation systems. Another state law to become effective on January 1, 2005, has the potential to increase access to higher education and training for foster care students by reducing informational

barriers. Finally, the legislature this year enacted new laws to enhance the accountability and oversight of nonpublic schools.

###