

**Department of Children and Family Services
Staff Focus Group
March 31, 2004**

Attending:

DCFS Staff

Paul Busscher
Bedrae Davis
Karen Compton-Moore
William Johnson
W. Von Harris

Tonye Lightfoot
Eduardo Oquendo
Rhelda Shabazz
Lorie Stephany
Roz Thornton

Bring L.A. Home Staff

Dan Flaming
Natalie Profant Komuro
Jose Quinonez
Leepi Shimkhada

Following a review Bring L.A. Home, the following issues were discussed:

REVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Transitional Housing Placement Program (THHP)¹

For youth age 17-18 entering their senior year of high school, the program leases apartments for the youth using redirected foster care funding. The program costs \$2000/month per youth. Program results, graduates go to college, find employment, some go to the Transitional Housing Program (THP). 70 – 80 kids are currently in the program, the capacity is 250 with more staff and agencies. Universe of population is 600-800 youth.

- Not getting program support; need managerial leadership. If we had more staff and more presentations, we could accomplish more.
- Recruitment of youth has hit a bottleneck.
- Need more participating agencies (currently have 7 licensed FFA agencies)
- **Earlier identification** of emancipating youth for THHP

¹ The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) is in the Bureau of Specialized Programs.

The authority for the Transitional Housing Program is Assembly Bill 1198 (Chapter 799, Statutes of 1993). AB 1198 requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop the Transitional Housing Placement Pilot Program in three counties.

In Los Angeles County, the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) is an innovative program which will further the goals of the federal Independent Living Program (ILP), serve as a bridge to ensure foster youth are properly trained and have affordable housing arrangements to integrate into the community when emancipated from the foster care system.

The goals of THPP are to:

- ensure the welfare, safety and stability of the youth served,
- provide an intensified independent living program to ensure youth receive training and skills for emancipation;
- provide appropriate and affordable housing prior to emancipation from the foster care system, and
- ensure that youth successfully integrate into the community when emancipated.

Transitional Housing Program

For ages 18-21. 244 capacity, currently 207 in program. 13 teen moms with children age 6 –24 months. HUD funded program (Supportive Housing Program – SHP). The program ends at age 21 because ILP resources, which are used for the grant's cash match end at age 21.

- The Weingart Foundation used to match the SHP funding, now DCFS uses ILP for cash match. However, DCFS needs to raise \$1.3 million per year to meet the cash match requirement for all 10 SHP contracts that provides housing for a maximum of 244 youth including supportive services.
- Program not at capacity because appropriate housing units are difficult to find in SPA 6.
- Caseloads for social workers is 26-30 youth.
- Issue of finding affordable housing upon leaving the program. What's at the end of the continuum?

THP Special Needs Population

- 6 beds total (need more beds)
- 30% of emancipating youth are special needs (Axis I diagnosis)
- Early intervention with services and resources will improve the program. Prevent utilization of THP before emancipation.

Runaway Adolescent Program

Does outreach, but the program was not discussed at this meeting.

Independent Living Program (ILP)

158 beds, most special needs.

Family Preservation

Among the services provided, make sure the family doesn't lose welfare when the kids are removed

- MOU with City/County Housing Authority (lost City funding, but still has county)
- 200 families on waiting list for Section 8
- Less than 1% of caseload are homeless families
- 30% of out of home placement comes from SPA 6.
- Beginning partnership with substance abuse and domestic violence programs
- \$30 million program 23 million contracted out to Community Family Preservation Networks to contract out (federal, state & county sources)
- Serve 5,000 families per year; 1,900 point in time
- Average age of children in program is 6-7 years.
Community Development Coordinators in place to support social workers and maximize utilization.

Recommendations:

- Increase number FP of analysts.
- Staff person needed to access DPSS funds.
- Designate person at DPSS who has a performance goal to get childcare funding out the door.

- Conversion of childcare dollars to housing dollars. DPSS should have flexibility in converting dollars.
- Approximately half of all DCFS families have a housing problem.
- Preservation is designed to prevent placement and is cost effective - \$800/mo. to prevent placement. Placement costs upwards of \$6,000 (per month).
- Push for President Bush's approval of Los Angeles County's Title IV – E waiver.

Data Questions

How many senior high kids are in the system?

[The FY2002-03 Fact sheet indicates 4,793 children age 16-17 served by DCFS; 1,756 age 18 years and older]