

LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

FOCUS GROUP

3/29/2004

A focus group comprised of homeless coordinators and liaisons of the Los Angeles County Office of Education served as a focus group to provide recommendations to Bring LA Home – 10 year plan to end homelessness. This report is intended to serve as recommendations which will be submitted to be considered for the draft plan.

The following is a summary:

Location: 11627 Brookshire Ave., Downey, CA

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Date: March 29, 2004

Subject	Comments
Academic Counseling	Rec: Provide extra academic counseling throughout school districts in LA County beginning at 7 th grade by providing the following: counseling off campus, after hours, guidance for college applications.
Accountability	Rec: Reorganize accountability structure within the Department of Mental Health for case workers providing services to foster children. Rec: Shelters providing housing and services to families must have programs and guidelines in place to keep children in school.
Affordable Housing	Rec: More affordable housing in LA County. Rec: Convert closed military bases to be used as housing and services.
Community Incentives	Rec: Provide communities incentives to site and build more transitional housing to youth. Rec: Increase number of housing programs for families with young children.
Credit Amnesty	Rec: Create a “credit amnesty” for low income individuals to facilitate getting into housing.
Cross Training Among Large Systems	Rec: Cross train case workers with DCFS and other large systems so they are aware of the multitude of services available.
Decentralize DCFS	Rec: Outpost DCFS offices to communities. This worked about 20 years ago – need to reinstate this concept.
Employment	Rec: Link training programs with <i>part-time</i> jobs so the youth population can continue to attend school and also work.
Enforce Existing Laws	Rec: Enforce the federal law that penalizes families who do not send their children to school. (look to San Bernardino County for a model that works).
Facility Standards	Rec: Create and enforce facility standards in hotels. Provide incentives to owners and enforce other current laws that encourage this.
Funding	Rec: Change funding guidelines to sustain good programs for longer grant periods. Many programs are funded for 2-3 years and are not renewed even they have good outcomes due to funding guidelines.

	Rec: Increase funding to emancipated foster youth.
Increased Collaborations	Rec: Mandate collaborations between large systems to increase the amount of funding that comes to LA County. Examples of collaborations can be between DCFS & various school districts, parks & recreation to work with after school programs. Rec: Coordinate with more faith based programs to provide after school programs.
Shelter/Facility Standards	Rec: Create shelter/facility standards. This is helpful in tracking active cases of TB, to begin treatment and create a healthy environment. Also include customer service training to employees of shelters to increase standards.
Social Services	Rec: Increase life skills and social skills programs and integrate into all school district curriculums in Los Angeles County – begin in Kindergarten. Rec: Provide life and social skills to young parents with very young children (e.g. Preschool aged children). Rec: Provide assistance to families without an address (e.g. Provide PO Box).
Systems Change	Rec: Increase cash assistance levels, increase minimum wage to living wage, increase job training and education services. Rec: Revisit qualification issues of certain programs, especially programs administered by DPSS. Rec: Increase the age limit to 24 years of age in order to keep funding. This is at the Federal and State levels.
Training	Rec: Similar to the Homeless Healthcare system, provide community education and training to all providers, UCLA and USC medical students, LA County employees and private hospitals on issues that affect the homeless population. Rec: Customer service training a must for all providers. There must be a change in behavior and attitude among service providers and large bureaucratic systems. Provide incentives to change behavior – provide a mechanism to change.
Transportation	Rec: Make more vans available throughout the County to pick up and drop off people seeking medical care at different clinics and hospitals. Provide it year round. Transportation is a big barrier to people seeking needed healthcare. Rec: School districts need to collaborate with MTA to provide increased transportation to older children. Rec: Install accessible machines throughout the county and school districts to purchase a bus pass. Rec: Change the MTA system to allow the maximum usage of the bus pass regardless of when it was purchased.
Undocumented Students	Rec: Provide more resources (legal, vocational, housing, etc.) and counseling to prepare students for life after graduation.