



Alert!

Spring Conference to Focus on Impact of Child Welfare Services Redesign

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... CMHACY... now positioned to advance a... system of care that broadens efforts to restore and strengthen families.

Not since EPSDT was fully implemented a decade ago has there been a systemic change affecting children's services as profoundly as California's Child Welfare Services (CWS) Redesign now underway.

The Redesign is a response to the stark reality that one out of every five children in foster care in the United States lives in California, while only one of every nine children nationally is in California.

Reporting on three years of planning, a broad stakeholders group representing all aspects of the child welfare and foster care system issued a final report last September. Their conclusion: California must fundamentally

change its practice of child welfare.

This conclusion parallels the results of a federal audit of California's child welfare system and the Redesign will serve as the state's "program improvement plan" that spells out how California will change what it does to meet the federal outcome requirements contained in the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Essentially, the Redesign moves CWS away from an adversarial/investigative approach that often results in child removals from family, schools and neighborhoods, toward an approach that engages local communities and neighborhoods in ways that keep children in their schools and neighborhoods even when removal is necessary.

This means that CPS becomes part of the neighborhood and community and that they all share responsibility for helping families stay together. Other changes seek to meet specific federal objectives subsumed under the broad goals of child safety, permanence, and child and family well-being.

Clearly, this tectonic shift requires that County departments that share responsibility for children and families work together in new and creative ways.

Ten counties have been selected by CDSS to be "early implementer" counties who will put into practice all aspects of the Redesign. Early implementer counties—Los Angeles, Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus, San Mateo, and a consortium of

four small rural far northern counties: Humboldt, Glen, Tehama and Trinity—have already received private foundation backing to the tune of \$10 million. This money comes from foundations committed to supporting serious system change.

Most folks involved in the CWS multi-year Redesign are convinced that this is not simply an agency reshuffle, but a fundamental overhaul of children's services. The new Children's Coalition launched at last year's CMHACY conference is now positioned to advance a more proactive and equitable system of care that broadens efforts to restore and strengthen families.

For more information go to the California Department of Social Services website.

THE 2004 CMHACY CONFERENCE TO HAVE THE LATEST ON:

- AB 3632 FUNDING
- CHILDREN'S SOC
- EPSDT OVERHAUL
- AB 490 IMPLEMENTATION
- FEDERAL CHANGES IN TITLE IV-E, MEDICAID, IDEA
- MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

CMHACY—a state-wide voice for children's mental health—is a diverse association of citizens dedicated to advancing a comprehensive mental health system for children that:

- promotes prevention and early intervention
- provides child-centered, family-focused services within a culturally relevant context
- emphasizes community-based co-location of multiple services
- serves children in the environment least restrictive to their needs
- includes a full continuum of care
- requires interagency collaboration/cooperation
- advocates for state-wide policy/service standards
- is cost effective, fully funded and accountable

Editor: S. Elson, Ph.D.

Mental Health Services Act Qualifies for November Ballot

If the Mental Health Services Act of 2004 passes in November it will create a dedicated funding stream to support mentally ill children and adults. At a time of severe budget cuts, this initiative could literally "save" and even expand California's mental health system.

The initiative proposes to impose a 1% tax on all personal income over \$1 million and will raise over \$600 million annually. This is huge!

The Mental Health Services Act tar-

gets children not covered by insurance, particularly those with untreated mental disorders placing them at risk of severe mental illness, removal from home, suicide or violent behavior.

Additionally, the initiative will assure that parents need not relinquish custody of a child in order to make the child eligible for medically necessary services.

For more information and to learn how you can help the initiative pass visit www.campaignformentalhealth.org.

save the date

*May 5 — May 7, 2004
(pre-conference May 4th)*

CMHACY CONFERENCE 2004

"Focus: Impact of Child Welfare Services Redesign"

**Asilomar Conference Center
Pacific Grove**

CMHACY Conference Hotline: 707-795-4261

Registration forms available at website: www.CMHACY.org



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