

Significant Issues Report — June 2004

Children's Network News

- In May, the Children's Network of Solano County hosted their sixth annual conference: *Keeping Children Safe from the Start: Partnership in Action*. The conference presented three plenary speakers and a number of workshops designed to highlight successful partnerships in Solano County, and was held in conjunction with Solano CARES, who presented a forum on the second day of the conference.
- Prior to his plenary speech at the conference, Sid Gardner came to the Network for a site visit and a discussion with staff on how best to serve children and families on the local level. Mr. Gardner serves as President of Children & Family Futures, and has worked in the children and family policy field since 1965. His visit offered Network staff and some of our community partners the opportunity to highlight our work and to discuss current issues facing families (including poverty and how to implement Family Economic Success programs; the intersection of substance abuse and child abuse/neglect). The discussion helped us become more effective in our planning, data collection and analysis, policy development, collaboration and service delivery—especially in regards to the work of Family Resource Centers and local coordinating councils. Sid is currently working with several foundations that will allow him to work here, enabling us to further our planning in these areas. We hope that local policy makers and directors of service delivery systems will benefit from the opportunity to work with Sid in the coming months.
- At our May press conference, the Network presented *The 2003 Solano County Children's Budget*. Supervisor Barbara Kondylis, Director Kim Thomas and Senior Research Analyst Dr. Tam Stevenson presented the results. The Budget found that spending for services to prevent child abuse, child poverty, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime remains among the smallest county expenditures. The County has had to shoulder more than its share of the financial burden of children's services due to cuts in federal and state spending, and has done a laudable job. However, the Children's Network notes that these efforts may not be sustainable over the long term.
- At our June press conference, we unveiled *The 2003 Solano County Children's Report Card* with the help of Supervisor John Vasquez. The Report Card tracked more than 80 indicators of children's health, safety and well-being. Improvements in the rates of infant mortality, teen pregnancy and health care coverage are significant. At the same time, concerns rise sharply in these areas when race and ethnicity are factored in. *For more information about the 2003 Solano County Children's Budget and Report Card, contact Dr. Tam Stevenson at analyst@childnet.org.*

(more)

Presentation of *ChildNet Results Manager* at National Conference

One of the key roles that the Children's Network plays is in providing staff support to Solano's Family Resource Center Network. Our role is to convene meetings and trainings, facilitate resource development opportunities, monitor program implementation, and provide technical assistance. In our efforts to enhance Family Resource Center capacity, the Children's Network, through support from various funders, has developed a multi-use, outcomes-driven database that has drawn the interest of several agencies both in and outside of Solano County. In May, Children's Network staff presented this database, called *ChildNet Results Manager*, at Family Support America's national conference in Chicago. *ChildNet Results Manager* allows agencies to track client demographics, services provided, family and program outcomes, as well as compile data for specific funders and prepare billing reports for Medi-Cal related services.

Integrated Family Support Initiative

In June, the Solano First 5 Commission voted to renew funding for the Integrated Family Support Initiative (IFSI) for a fourth year. The Children's Network, Solano's eight Family Resource Centers and the Department of Health and Social Services will fall under one contract for \$814,625, and Child Haven will fall under another contract for \$743,722. This combined countywide effort will continue to serve isolated families in their homes and in their local communities—through coordinated service plans that address child development, family support and health needs—to ensure that Solano's young children are ready for school. The IFSI effort also includes another year of funding for coordination of the Solano Parenting Partnership and its related website featuring a searchable directory of parenting education classes and support groups in Solano County (which can be viewed at www.childnet.org/parenting). *For further information, contact Jenny Ocón at cnfrc@childnet.org.*

The Solano County Child Care Planning Council (CCPC) has been actively involved in informing the State Legislature and Administration about the local impacts of the proposed recommendations of the 2004-2005 State Budget involving child care and development services.

The CCPC has stressed the importance of continued child care funding, particularly for families in CalWORKs Stage 3. Families transition into Stage 3 after they have been in "stable" employment and are off cash assistance. The proposed Budget limits the amount of time that these families receive child care assistance. It also removes families from cash aid in Stages 1 and 2 and puts them onto the general child care waiting lists. There is no additional funding set aside to absorb these new families.

More than 800 children in Solano County could potentially lose care if their Stage 3 subsidies were eliminated. In many cases, the amount of the child care subsidy that local Stage 3 families receive exceeds the amount of income they earn in a month. Losing the subsidy would force parents to choose between leaving their jobs and leaving their children in care that could potentially be unsafe.

Clearly all of California's counties will have unmet child care needs should Stage 3 child care funding be lost. However, this cut will have a much greater impact on the families in

Solano County because we have very few subsidized child care centers (compared to the number of children needing child care), which causes us to rely heavily on Stage 3 funding. We believe, now more than ever, it is crucial to retain the state-subsidized child care funding earmarked for Solano County's children.

To date, both the Assembly and the Senate have rejected the State Budget proposal regarding Stage 3 child care funding. The Council will continue to stay abreast of the budget process and provide input to work toward improving the accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care and development services in Solano County. *For further information, contact Kim Johnson at ccc@childnet.org.*

Child Abuse
Prevention Council

The Interagency/Systems Review Sub-Committee is currently working on how to implement and set up protocols for AB 490 (Steinberg bill ENSURING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND STABILITY FOR FOSTER YOUTH AND HOMELESS YOUTH) here in Solano County. We are currently meeting with representatives from the Solano County Office of Education (Foster Youth Services Program), SELPA (Special Education Local Planning Area), School Districts, CPS, Probation, Foster Parents, and Kathryn Stahnke's office. We are planning a county-wide training this fall on AB 490 at the Solano County Office of Education.

The Children of Incarcerated Parents Sub-Committee is currently working with County Counsel, CPS, the Solano County Sheriff's Department and Youth & Family Services to create a Resource Directory for incarcerated parents and their families that identify services available within the jails and the community so that parents who are in reunification with their dependent children will have every opportunity to have access to the services they need. We also continue to work on visitation issues and services needed for children and caretakers.

Children's
Alliance

Representatives from the Poverty and Homeless Sub-Committee attended the Homelessness Housing Summit on June 9th in Suisun City sponsored by the Solano Provider's Network, and participated in discussions around issues related to youth and children who are homeless. We will explore the possibility of creating a youth resources page on the Children's Network website community directory to aid youth emancipating to adulthood to locate services available to them.

The Substance Abuse Sub-Committee is compiling information on what substance abuse resources are available for youth in Solano County. This information will be incorporated into the Community Directory resource database on the Children's Network website.

Representatives of the Children's Alliance and the Child Abuse Prevention Council have been participating this month in discussions at Health & Social Services, Child Welfare Services regarding AB 636 (CHILD WELFARE SELF-ASSESSMENT) and Child Welfare Services Re-Design including Differential Response. *For further information, contact Rosemary Kennedy at cnc@childnet.org.*