

Significant Issues Report —October 2004

Children's Network News

- Over 200 child care providers attended the Solano CARES Forum 10 on October 16th at the Joseph Nelson Community Center in Suisun. The Forum, entitled "*Building a Toolbox of Advocacy Skills*," included keynote speakers Assembly member Lois Wolk, Solano County Board of Supervisor Duane Kromm, two interns from the California Association for the Education of Young Children Public Policy, and three members of the California Child Development Corps. Participants also met in small groups to develop advocacy strategies for topics such as universal preschool, tiered reimbursement, and kindergarten age of entrance. Results from small group discussions were presented to the Child Care Planning Council. Representatives from seven community agencies provided resource information, and each participant received a comprehensive packet of voter information as well as a variety of tip sheets addressing children's health, safety, and development issues.
- The Children's Network organized a children's activity area for The North Bay Stand Down, an event for homeless veterans and their families held on October 12th - 14th at the Dixon Fairgrounds. Our AmeriCorps Coordinator recruited 15 volunteers to assist with children's activities, and obtained a \$100 donation from Target in Fairfield for supplies. We look forward to working at future Stand Down events to ensure children's needs are met.
- The Children's Network and the S.H. Cowell Foundation co-hosted a "*Data, Outcomes and Evaluation Convening*" for Northern California family resource centers. The event took place at the Joseph Nelson Suisun Community Center on October 18, and showcased Children's Network's *ChildNet Results Manager* data system developed for Solano's Family Resource Center Network, as well as two other data systems. Approximately 50 people attended the event. FRCs from other counties expressed interest in using the *ChildNet Results Manager* to track their outcomes because of its comprehensive and user-friendly features.

CAPC Quarterly Meeting Report

The Child Abuse Prevention Council's October 18th meeting focused on the mental health needs of Solano county's children, especially those in foster care. Concerns include long waiting lists in all clinics for services, how budget cuts have adversely affected the county's Children's Mental Health programs, and the growing number of needs beyond mental health, such as parenting training, case management, trauma, and the high rate of developmental issues of foster children. Child Haven reports that 80% of foster children served have developmental issues; IFSI reported 70%, with the majority being children under two years of age.

Community Forum: AB490 Training

A community forum was held at the Solano County Office of Education on October 5th for training on AB490 (Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care.) Over 70 representatives from CPS, Probation, foster parents, Foster Family Agencies, County Counsel, private attorneys, and school districts met to learn about this new bill and consider the resources challenges, and planning process for implementing the program in Solano county.

Grant Awarded

The Community College Chancellor's Office awarded a \$5000 grant to Solano Community College Early Childhood Education Program to implement a project designed to address the impact on children of separation due to incarceration. The project is a collaboration of the Solano County Sheriff's Department, Child Welfare, Youth and Family Services' Jail-Based Outreach Program, and will be coordinated through CAPC's Children of Incarcerated Parents sub-committee. *For further information, contact Rosemary Kennedy at capc@childnet.org.*

Child Care
Planning Council

The 2004 Cal-SAFE County Service Coordination Plan Annual Review was conducted at the Child Care Planning Council's September meeting. Council staff invited past participants of the Cal-SAFE Countywide Consortium (also known as the Solano County Coalition for Pregnant and Parenting Students), and other required representatives to this meeting, which included a document review to determine what activities had been accomplished to serve teen parents in the community. Representatives will continue to meet at least once a year to review the current strategic plan, check progress made toward reaching its objectives, and share best practices information, as well as to identify additional resources for expectant and parenting students, including quality child care and development services for their children. Currently, 85 child care slots for teen parents at high school sites are filled, with 22 teens on waiting lists.

Children's Mental Health: Hot Topic For Child Care Providers

At the October Children's Alliance meeting, family child care providers and their staff expressed interest in receiving: additional support to assess the mental health needs of children in their care, current mental health services information, and assistance with helping parents understand their child's needs for additional services. The discussion included potential ways to leverage funding (\$100,000) that First 5 Solano previously allocated for Early Childhood Mental Health. The Planning Council and Child Abuse Prevention Council are also exploring the idea of bringing the Child Abuse Training and Technical Assistance (CATTA) center or another entity to co-sponsor local training. *For further information, contact Kim Johnson at ccc@childnet.org.*

Children's
Alliance

Panel Presentation at Solano Children's Alliance Meeting

In preparation for developing the three-year integrated plan for PSSF and Children's Trust Fund, the Children's Alliance October meeting featured a panel review of other organization's and committee's strategic plans and priorities as they pertain to Solano children and youth:

- Pam Silanpaa of Office of Child Support Services reported that her agency's current priority is to bring in more child support collections. \$36 million were collected last year.
- Jacque McLaughlin reported on Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Advisory Board priorities, including making health coverage available to pregnant women with the goal set for coverage eligibility as early as the first trimester, as well as pre-pregnancy education to ensure healthy pregnancies. Chris Linville of First 5 reported that her committee is currently investing in prenatal care initiatives and has set as a priority to ensure that all children have health care coverage and accessible health services. Sonja New of Children's Mental Health presented the following goals: to reduce out-of-home placements and hospitalization, to reduce impairments and to stabilize families.
- Kim Johnson of the Children's Network reviewed the Child Care Planning Councils goals, and Chris Linville of First 5 reported that their Early Childhood Learning & Development priorities include ensuring quality child care and improving Kindergarten readiness.

- Linda Liles of Child Welfare presented long- and short-term priorities under AB636 (Outcomes and Accountability) and the Child Welfare Services Redesign plan, which include seeing children in a more timely fashion, increasing the number of children seeing their families, decreasing the number of children in foster care, acquiring more substance abuse treatment services, acquiring more resources to allow get-togethers for children and their families, and increasing the number of children adopted within 24 months.
- Walt Irwin of Probation reported their need for substance abuse prevention programs for children, and redesigning the adult services program to better fit children's needs.
- Carolyn Thomas-Wold of the Office of Family Violence Prevention stated their main goal is family violence reduction, with a continued effort toward projects such as the "Its Not Cool to Be Cruel" Campaign, AB2010 (Domestic Violence), and Safely Surrendered Babies.

Family Resource Center Network Highlights Accomplishments

The Family Resource Center Network reported to the Solano Children's Alliance on their accomplishments for the current three-year funding cycle from 2002-present:

- Coordinated 40 trainings on a range of topics to 20 AmeriCorps members
- Parent advisory boards: 50 parents are involved in shaping FRC programs and services.
- Coordinated PG&E advocacy efforts: over 200 families were assisted in paying PG&E last year; over \$20,000 in non-federal funds will leverage additional Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) funds to Solano County; 155 parents wrote letters to elected officials for more funding for energy assistance.
- Coordinated focus groups on Child Welfare Services Redesign reaching 158 people; shared key findings with the Department and others.
- Assisted FRCs in drawing over \$30,000 in Targeted Case Management funds as a result of Medi-Cal billing, supported by the *ChildNet Results Manager* database.
- 86% of FRC staff surveyed said the FRC Network helps them to collaborate with others; 79% said it is an effective vehicle to advocate for children and families.

The FRC Network is comprised of eight FRCs and serves an average of 4,600 families a year; 43% of parents served were Hispanic, 29% were Caucasian, and 18% were African American. Of the children served, 38% were 0-5 years old and 62% were 6-18 years old. Of the families served, 71% were low-income and 48% were married. The most common services requested were for family functioning, mental health and basic needs. In 2003-04, 85% of 431 parents surveyed stated the resources they received through the Family Resource Centers were very appropriate. *For a copy of the full written report, contact Jenny Ocon at cnjrc@childnet.org.*

Solano Parenting Partnership

After presenting to the Solano County Bar Association in September, the Family Resource Centers have seen an increase in the number of referrals from the courts. The online directory of parent education classes has been an important tool that FRCs and other agencies are using to connect families with classes that fit their needs. Class offerings are continually updated, and can be viewed at the online directory at www.childnet.org/parenting.

With support from the Solano Parenting Partnership (funded by First 5 Solano), two local trainers, Sue Galvez and Deborah Welinske of Youth and Family Services, have earned the status of Nationally Recognized Trainer/Consultants for the research-based Nurturing Parenting Program. In return for the Parenting Partnership's support of the recognition process, Nationally Recognized Trainer/Consultants Galvez and Welinske will offer up to two Nurturing Program facilitator trainings per year to Solano county providers through the Solano Parenting Partnership. *For further information, contact Nicole Bandy at Nicole@childnet.org.*