

Significant Issues Report —September 2004

Children's Network

Children's Network News

- The Children's Network was awarded a three-year, \$153,000 grant to implement a Constructing Connections program in Solano County. A statewide program supported by the Low Income Investment Fund, Constructing Connections is designed to build local capacity to finance and construct child care centers, improve Solano County's regulatory environment to better support child care facilities development, create and strengthen collaborations between the care and community development sectors, and improve the capacity of those collaborations to develop child care facilities. First 5 Solano has allocated \$130,000 in matching funds, and the Children's Network and Solano Family and Children's Services have identified matching funds. The Children's Network will provide the leadership, coordinating, funding development, marketing, and management role for the project.
- Nicole Bandy, Solano Parenting Partnership Coordinator, presented to the Family Law members of the Solano County Bar Association on September 1st. The presentation focused on parenting and family support resources available to families, judges and attorneys, specifically the Children's Network website's two searchable databases: the community directory of resources for families in Solano County, and the Solano Parenting Partnership's database of parenting classes and support. Both resources are available free of charge at www.childnet.org.

Child Abuse Prevention Council

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- ***The Interagency/Systems Review Committee***, comprised of representatives from the Child Abuse Prevention Council, Office of Education, Probation, Vacaville School District, Foster Parents Association, Independent Living Program, CASA, Special Education Local Planning Area and Children's Dependency Attorney Kathryn Stahnke's Office, has been meeting to discuss AB 490—Meeting the Educational Needs of Foster Children. A community training co-sponsored by CAPC and Solano County Office of Education Foster Youth Services is set for October 5th to present an overview of the legislation, provide a panel presentation on currently available local services, and to hold small group discussions to identify our strengths and challenges in implementing the legislation in Solano County. Ken Scarberry from the Solano County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Program, Alice Busierre from the Youth Law Center in San Francisco, Kristine Chang from Legal Services of Northern California, and Myeshia Grice of the California Youth Connection will be facilitating

the training. Heidi Wackerli, California Dept of Education Foster Youth Services Coordinator, will attend to present resources support available through the state. *For further information, contact Rosemary Kennedy at cnc@childnet.org.*

- ***The Children of Incarcerated Parents Sub-Committee***, in collaboration with Solano Community College, submitted a Family & Consumer Sciences Statewide Collaborative Grant application to the Community College Chancellor's Office on September 17th. The application proposed a project designed to bring communities, social services agencies, educators, caretakers, and the criminal justice system together to better meet the needs of children of incarcerated parents. The project will seek to address the impact of parental-child separation due to incarceration through therapeutic groups and literacy classes. The project goals will rely on a collaborative partnership between Solano Community College's Early Childhood Education Program, Youth & Family Services' jail-based Outreach Program, Solano County Sheriff's Department and Jails, Solano County Child Protective Services, and Bret McLaughlin, a doctorate student at the Wright Institute.

Preventing Child Care Fraud

In an effort to improve communication between agencies and the community to prevent child care fraud, and to address some of the Governor's concerns with this issue, Karl Phillips, Welfare Fraud Investigator for Solano County, provided a comprehensive overview of the current efforts being made by the Solano County Special Investigations Bureau (SIB) at the last general meeting of the Child Care Planning Council. Mr. Phillips noted that Solano Family & Children's Services (SFCS), the local resource, referral, and alternative payment program agency, has referred over 200 cases to the SIB. The most common fraudulent activities are overbilling by providers, or misrepresentation of actual number of children under provider's care.

Mr. Phillips reported that communication between SFCS and Solano County has greatly improved over the last few years. The County's Eligibility Resource Specialists have implemented a new procedure to notify the Child Care Worker at SFCS when a CalWORKs client has had a change in employment (number of hours employed, unemployed, etc.) This prevents SFCS from issuing payments to providers that may not match the parents' need for child care services.

The two separate funding streams under the CalWORKs child care stages (Department of Education and Department of Social Services) continue to pose the biggest challenge in terms of the County's ability to prosecute child care fraud.

The Council will continue to track and make recommendations on legislation regarding child care fraud to the Board of Supervisors, as well as provide a forum to identify additional improvements to this system. Senate Bill 1657, sponsored by Senator Jack Scott, was the most recent attempt to establish a child care fraud initiative, but has recently died in the legislative process. *For further information, contact Kim Johnson at ccc@childnet.org.*

Solano Children's Alliance

The Alliance has begun planning for the 2005-2007 funding cycle for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Children's Trust Fund and Community Based Family Resource and Support (CBFRS). Last month, Tamsen Stevenson, Children's Network Research Analyst, presented results from the Children's Report Card indicating current status of issues facing children and youth in Solano County. This month, staff from the Children's Network met with Moira Sullivan and other representatives from Health & Social Services to discuss the outline for the planning process, which includes conducting a needs assessment and forming a planning committee that will include representatives from Health & Social Services and members of the Alliance. The planning process is expected to take 2-3 months with a Request for Proposal to be developed by the end of the calendar year. The completed plan with recommendations for funding will be presented to the Board of Supervisors by May 2005. The planning process outline was presented at the September Alliance meeting, with feedback from members as to which local priorities for children and youth they would like to see presented at the October meeting. This is to include priorities outlined by the Board of Supervisors and County Departments serving youth and children, as well local councils and advisory boards working on children's issues.

New Family Resource Center at Sereno Village

This fall, Fighting Back Partnership will open a new Family Resource Center at Sereno Village, a 125-unit affordable housing apartment complex in Vallejo. The new center is made possible in part by a three-year, \$360,000 grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation. The new Family Resource Center will serve residents of Sereno Village and the Vallejo community as a whole, and is part of a larger effort to provide an array of services to families at this site, which is also home to a child development center and will be the location for adult-education classes provided by Solano Community College. *For further information, contact Jenny Ocón at cnfrc@childnet.org.*

The Solano Parenting Partnership Facilitates Training Program

On September 27th – 29th, the Parenting Partnership trained 29 providers from throughout Solano County to facilitate the Nurturing Parenting Program, a research-based program that teaches both parents and children to practice nurturing and empathy skills, as well as aids parents in understanding child development and engaging in appropriate discipline strategies. Debbie Welinske and Sue Galvez, two Solano County facilitators who participated in the Nurturing Program training of trainers offered through the Parenting Partnership & Fighting Back Partnership last August, co-led the training with nationally recognized consultant Sonya Lopez, LCSW. Once Welinske and Galvez become nationally recognized trainers themselves, they will work through the Parenting Partnership to lead two facilitator trainings per year for Solano County providers. The facilitator training was co-sponsored by the Vacaville Police Department Family Resource Center, and made possible by a grant from First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission. *For further information, contact Nicole Bandy at Nicole@childnet.org.*