



**Los Angeles County Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice  
Systems Integration Initiative**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Child protection and well-being are no longer viewed as the responsibility of one or two public entities, but rather as a shared responsibility of many agencies, individuals, and institutions (formal and informal) in a community. Similarly, responsibility for guidance and accountability for delinquent youth requires the engagement of many supportive entities. Achievement of desired outcomes for children and youth being served by child welfare and juvenile justice agencies requires concerted effort and communication among many organizations and individuals, and the active engagement and support of their families. Success is more likely when all invest in the common goal and fully carry out their part in meeting it. Expectations should be high, accompanied by the appropriate supports and teamwork to bring about success.

In recent years we have come to understand the undeniable link between child maltreatment and juvenile delinquency. Many youth are served by both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems simultaneously, and many graduate from one to the other. Many also receive or are in need of mental health services. However, in most jurisdictions we are short on the services and supports children/youth and their families need to change the course. To make matters worse, many times services are provided by each of these systems in isolation from the other, without sharing of information and concerted effort in support of their success.

Child welfare and juvenile justice agencies and their community partners are increasingly measuring their achievement in meeting clearly identified outcomes (such as child safety, well-being, community safety, successful transition to adulthood), tracking progress over time, and sharing information with the community as to successes and concerns. These measures are an important part of accountability to the communities the agencies serve, and form the basis for continuous quality improvement efforts.

**BACKGROUND**

In Los Angeles, California a broad group of community entities concerned about success for children and youth have come together in support of a more integrated response to dependent children and youthful offenders who may be subject to the jurisdiction of both the dependency and delinquency courts. Initially convened by Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash to begin a dialogue on crossover children, they now form an enthusiastic coalition intent on examining their client populations, communication and teamwork, and outcomes. This broad based coalition has demonstrated through its many fine examples of cross-system coordination that there is already a good measure of success and energy upon which to build this initiative.

The Los Angeles community has achieved considerable success in the coordination of efforts to address dual jurisdiction children. Protocols were developed that have been in use for a

number of years, and some successful efforts of other jurisdictions have been replicated and enhanced (e.g. Project Confirm West) to address the unique needs of Los Angeles children. Now the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 129 relating to dual jurisdiction has created greater impetus to see how that these efforts can be improved and a court model developed for children to transition between dependency and delinquency courts. Los Angeles has undertaken a study to identify what models exist in other jurisdictions to determine what approaches might be the most effective to implement AB 129. It has also, through the assistance of California State University – Los Angeles undertaken data collection efforts to more carefully identify the characteristics and movement of the children between the two court systems.

Judge Michael Nash and his collaborative partners requested the assistance of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to first, assist with the development of a court model to address the dual jurisdiction population, and second, to assist in examining common service populations, services, teamwork, and outcomes for these children and youth. The discussions to date indicate that there may be work to be done to develop for Los Angeles models in four arenas: 1) court and legal process model; 2) service delivery model; 3) funding model; and 4) information system model. Further, there appears to be interest in looking at defining populations for targeting beyond the dual jurisdiction children, considering those families where there is concurrent involvement of both the child welfare and juvenile justice agencies and other situations that call to question opportunities to prevent children from crossing over to delinquency jurisdiction.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Further engage collaborative partners to examine the issues and construct a plan for implementation of a court process that will improve outcomes for dual jurisdiction youth in Los Angeles County
- Promote increased cooperation, coordination, and integration at the administrative, service delivery, funding, and information sharing levels for the benefit of children and families within selected target populations of the welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Through a comprehensive, strategic planning process that embraces and values inclusion of youth, families, and a broad based representation of youth serving agencies and organizations, achieve and institutionalize greater multi-system coordination and integration to improve outcomes for selected target populations.

### **METHODOLOGY**

CWLA employs an interactive consultation process designed to engage community leaders in the tasks of analysis, design, planning and implementation. Our job as facilitators is to assist and support, not to supplant the authority, talents, work or actions of leaders within Los Angeles County. This project will be accomplished with the guidance, active involvement and support of two core groups:

- The **Los Angeles County Systems Integration Executive Committee** which would include leadership personnel from a broad based representation of youth serving agencies and organizations that would provide oversight, direction, and be responsible for decision making throughout the course of the initiative/project.

The Executive Committee will meet at regular intervals with the CWLA Consultants to develop and finalize the collaborative work plan, to determine the composition of the Stakeholder Committee, to discuss relevant expectations and parameters, and to set any other necessary directions for the joint work. The Executive Committee will review progress and project deliverables, and plan and organize the activities of the Stakeholder Committee. The Executive group will have final decision-making authority regarding the work of the collaboration and the CWLA project in support of it.

- A much larger group, the **Los Angeles County Systems Integration Stakeholder Committee**, (including the Executive Committee members) is a leadership group inclusive of the major agencies, governmental units and community entities who work in support of Los Angeles County children and youth who are served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Members are individuals with decision-making responsibility for their organizations, with authority to enter into agreements and commit resources. The Committee will provide a forum for learning, consensus-building, conflict resolution, and mutual accountability. The CWLA Consultants will assist in setting the agenda for the Stakeholder Committee, and will facilitate its work sessions.

It is expected that the Stakeholder Committee, with its Executive leadership, will form a permanent Systems Integration collaboration into the future. CWLA Consultants will facilitate monthly work sessions over the initial nine- to twelve-month period. Subcommittee work will be carried out by members, and other personnel as identified and designated by Stakeholder Committee members, between the monthly meetings. It is expected that participating agencies will provide staff support to the work of the Stakeholder Committee.

The CWLA Consultants will assist the Executive and Stakeholder Committees in moving through five phases of activity (documented in the *Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Coordination and Integration: A Framework for Improved Outcomes*, by Janet K. Wiig with John A. Tuell, CWLA Press 2004, and in *Promoting a Coordinated and Integrated Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System: An Action Strategy for Improved Outcomes*, by John A. Tuell, CWLA Press 2003) that CWLA believes is necessary to form a permanent collaboration and to meet the goals of the group, building on the activity that has already taken place in Los Angeles:

1. Mobilization and Planning, which may include:
  - Identifying and committing to strategic goals and objectives of the collaboration
  - Identifying and determining means of measuring collective client-oriented outcomes
  - Identifying and addressing sticking points which act as barriers to teamwork
  - Developing a governance structure

2. Data Collection and Analysis, which may include:
  - Identifying and sharing available baseline data
  - Determining county-wide data elements that may inform priorities and action steps of the collaboration; planning for gathering and study
  - Examining Los Angeles County information against applicable state and national data
  - Common client identification and study
  - Development of capacity for sharing of data between systems
3. Assessment and Inventory, which may include:
  - Inventory of resources and resource shortage across the continuum
  - Structural analysis of the youth-serving systems
  - Identification of key decision points and decision-makers
  - Examination of the legal, policy, and procedural mandates unique to each agency/organization in order to make recommendations for changes that will contribute to improved coordination of initial decision-making, case management, and service delivery.
  - Study of funding and funding structures
  - Identification of issues
  - Issue analysis
4. Action Strategy Development, which may include:
  - Identification of priorities for all program, service, and administrative components
  - Identification and development of tools to support action
  - Development of prioritized action agenda
  - Consensus involving all partners
  - Planning of action steps
  - Development of funding mechanisms necessary to support integrated approaches
5. Implementation, which may include:
  - Assignments of leadership responsibility
  - Agreement on timelines, phasing and milestones
  - Outcome evaluation with incremental measurement
  - Process evaluation toward further improving the collaboration

In addition, the partners in the initiative will jointly compile subcommittee reports to produce findings and recommendations for action strategies resulting in youth serving system coordination and integration and jointly produce an implementation strategy with benchmarks and timelines, no later than 120 days from the adoption of the final report.

## **SUMMARY**

CWLA will provide two senior consultants (John A. Tuell, Director of the Child Welfare-Juvenile Justice systems Integration Initiative, and Janet K. Wiig, CWLA Senior Consultant) to work together with Los Angeles County partners in examining and making improvements in services for dual jurisdiction children and youth in Los Angeles. The work is primarily

facilitative and consultative with on-site work that will involve two days each month for up to eight months. The agreement also includes preparation and follow-up, some of which is conducted off-site through conference calls, electronic communication, and dissemination of materials electronically.

CWLA will make available analytical services as agreed with the Los Angeles County partners, which may include legal, structural, budgetary or other analyses.