



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Director of Children and Family Services
Director of Mental Health

At its meeting held March 15, 2005, the Board took the following action:

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Supervisor Yaroslavsky made the following statement:

"Hollygrove Children and Family Services (Hollygrove) is a well-respected residential care facility, which has cared for emotionally disturbed children between the ages of 6 and 12 for the past 125 years. During the past decade Hollygrove has grown, expanded, and successfully adapted its services to meet the changing needs of children in Los Angeles County's child welfare system.

"The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is striving to reduce the amount of time that children spend in out-of-home care and to improve reunification and permanency timelines and services. In light of these goals, DCFS is relying less on group home care for young children in favor of returning children to their homes or relatives or placing them in more family-like settings. As a result, fewer children have been placed at agencies such as Hollygrove, threatening the ongoing viability of such agencies.

"Hollygrove is an example of the many group homes that have shown genuine commitment to partnering with the County to serve emotionally disturbed children. Such group homes represent a valuable pool of resources, talent, and expertise within the County. As DCFS improves the local child welfare program, new ways of utilizing resources such as Hollygrove must be found and care must be taken to ensure that such valuable partners are not lost. Hollygrove is working closely with DCFS and the Department of Mental Health to adapt its services to meet the goals of reunification and permanency for foster care children."

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Therefore, Supervisor Yaroslavsky made a motion that the Directors of Children and Family Services and Mental Health be instructed to:

1. Report back to the Board within seven days regarding:
 - Actions necessary to support and assist Hollygrove Children and Family Services' (Hollygrove) transition from residential care of young children to services that better meet the Department of Children and Family Services' goals of reunification and permanency; and
 - Actions necessary to successfully transition young children from Hollygrove's residential care back to their homes or to more family-like settings; and
2. Report back to the Board within 60 days on how the County can maintain and better utilize the resources of agencies, such as Hollygrove, when it decreases reliance on such agencies for residential placement of children.

Supervisor Knabe made the following statement:

"On Thursday, March 10, 2005, a forum was sponsored by the Association of Community Human Service Agencies, which discussed the future role of residential treatment group homes in the continuum of care for children in Los Angeles County. It was clear from this discussion that many treatment facilities are feeling the crunch of decreasing referral numbers. The forum participants, which included the Director of Children and Family Services, attributed this to the Department's increasing focus on reunification efforts, as well as the Department's practice to refer certain age groups to small foster homes rather than group homes.

"In addition to experiencing the fiscal impact of reduced referrals, the residential treatment facilities have been attempting to bring attention to the fact that the rate setting system set up by the State to fund these agencies has not been modified to account for the current costs of doing business since its creation in 1990.

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"It is my understanding that many changes to the rate setting system could be implemented which would provide needed financial relief to these facilities without an increase in cost. I was pleased to learn that the Department of Children and Family Services has recently begun to have discussions with the facilities about the rate structure, but I understand that the State itself needs to take a more active role in this important discussion, if true progress towards reforming the rate structure can be achieved.

"In addition, while I support Supervisor Yaroslavsky's motion, it is important to acknowledge the unique needs of all of our residential treatment facilities who came on board to address a critical need for Los Angeles County, and ensure that the Department continues to meaningfully engage these facilities in the County's continuum of care."

Therefore, Supervisor Knabe made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Burke, to amend Supervisor Yaroslavsky's motion to include the following additional actions:

1. Instruct the Director of Children and Family Services to:
 - Provide guidance to other residential treatment facilities that have experienced issues with decreases in referrals from the Department;
 - Engage the California Welfare Directors Association and the California Alliance for Children and Family Services to advocate for rate setting structure reform at the State level;
 - Provide a report to the Board within two weeks on the current rate setting system, as well as a status report to the Board within 60 days on the proposals made on modifying the rate setting structure for group homes, including potential legislative changes that would positively impact this situation; and
2. Instruct the Executive Officer of the Board to prepare a letter from the Board to the Director of the California Department of Social Services, to register Los Angeles County's concerns about the current rate setting system and its impact on provider agencies, and request that a comprehensive review be conducted.

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Supervisor Burke made the following statement:

"On March 10, 2005, the Association of Community Human Service Agencies sponsored 'Forum on Los Angeles County Child Welfare Paradigm Shift: The Role of Group Homes (Residential Treatment) in the Continuum of Care.' The event was a success in facilitating much needed dialogue between the various vested stakeholders. It was well attended by numerous children's advocates and providers and well represented by Los Angeles County Personnel, including, Dr. David Sanders, Director of Children and Family Services, representatives from the Department of Mental Health and the Probation Department, as well as, Board deputies from the five Los Angeles County District Offices. At this forum, many issues and concerns were raised and discussed, and while this forum served as a good exercise, it was clear that further discussion is necessary."

Therefore, Supervisor Burke made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Knabe, to amend Supervisor Yaroslavsky's motion to supplant his recommendation number 2 and instruct the Director of Children and Family Services to:

1. Establish a "Children's Group Home Workgroup," in accordance with the "Katie A." settlement, which will consist of representatives from, but not limited to: the Departments of Children and Family Services, Probation, Mental Health, and other relevant group home providers and consumers, to develop an array of implementation and transition strategies, including a proposed timeline for implementation, to service children with the goal of stability and permanency as defined in Supervisor Yaroslavsky's aforementioned recommendation number 1; and
2. Report back to the Board within 120 days with the recommendations and findings from the "Children's Group Home Workgroup."

Bruce Saltzer representing the Association of Community Human Services Agencies, addressed the Board.

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Supervisor Yaroslavsky suggested that Supervisor Knabe's 60-day and Supervisor Burke's 120-day report back requests be coordinated to come back in 90 days. Supervisors Knabe and Burke accepted Supervisor Yaroslavsky's suggestion.

After discussion, on motion of Supervisor Yaroslavsky, seconded by Supervisor Knabe, unanimously carried, the Board took the following actions:

1. Instructed the Directors of Children and Family Services and Mental Health to report back to the Board within seven days regarding:
 - Actions necessary to support and assist Hollygrove Children and Family Services' (Hollygrove) transition from residential care of young children to services that better meet the Department of Children and Family Services' goals of reunification and permanency;
 - Actions necessary to successfully transition young children from Hollygrove's residential care back to their homes or to more family-like settings;
2. Instructed the Director of Children and Family Services to:
 - Provide guidance to other residential treatment facilities that have experienced issues with decreases in referrals from the Department;
 - Engage the California Welfare Directors Association and the California Alliance for Children and Family Services to advocate for rate setting structure reform at the State level;
 - Provide a report to the Board within two weeks on the current rate setting system; and a status report in 90 days on the proposals made on modifying the rate setting structure for group homes, including potential legislative changes that would positively impact this situation; and

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- Establish a "Children's Group Home Workgroup," in accordance with the "Katie A." settlement, which will consist of representatives from, but not limited to: the Departments of Children and Family Services, Probation, Mental Health, and other relevant group home providers and consumers, to develop an array of implementation and transition strategies, including a proposed timeline for implementation, to service children with the goal of stability and permanency as defined in recommendation number 1; and report back to the Board within 90 days on recommendations and findings from the "Children's Group Home Workgroup"; and
3. Instructed the Executive Officer of the Board to prepare a letter from the Board to the Director of the California Department of Social Services, to register Los Angeles County's concerns about the current rate setting system and its impact on provider agencies, and request that a comprehensive review be conducted.

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