

Marin Children and Families Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2008

I. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Alicia Suski, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at First 5 Marin at 5:38 p.m.

Commissioners Present

Regina Archer
David Bonfilio
Aideen Gaidmore
Cio Hernandez
Charlene Reid
Frima Stewart
Alicia Suski

Commissioners Excused

Supervisor Steve Kinsey
John Leonard

Staff Present

Amy L. Reisch
Barbara Clifton-Zarate
Michelle Fadelli
Sunny Friedrich
Dana Pepp
Lynn Quinones

Consultant Present

Kathleen Tabor, Tabor Consulting

Representatives from the Community & Agencies

Peter B. Collins, Collins Media

II. MINUTES OF MEETING

Alicia Suski asked if there were changes, additions or corrections to the Commission minutes of December 5, 2007. ***Minutes were approved as submitted.***

III. COMMISSIONER COMMENT

Cio Hernandez began the discussion by acknowledging Alicia Suski's award from the Human Rights Commission for her work with the Medical-Legal Partnership. She and Paul Cohen, Executive Director of Legal Aid of Marin, will be honored on January 24th at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. Cio continued by announcing that First 5's Executive Director, Amy Reisch, has been nominated for a "Magnificent Women of Marin" award. Cio expressed her appreciation for working with "such an amazing woman". The award ceremony and brunch will be held on March 30th at the Mill Valley Community Center.

Aideen Gaidmore spoke about the article that ran in the Marin Independent Journal about child care in the county. She handed out a fact sheet about child care in Marin. Lack of infant care and lack of full time care is having the biggest impact on families.

Aideen also handed out Marin Child Care Council's annual report. It is the first one they have ever produced and it shows all the great work they have done. She also reminded everyone about the "Striving For Excellence Conference" on January 26th. Scholarships are available. Lastly, Aideen thanked the Commission for granting a Small Grant to MC3. The grant will fund a program to provide intensive training for Spanish-speaking family care providers, an educational opportunity that hasn't been available before.

Alicia Suski shared a story indicative of the "reach" of First 5's work: Tracy Hessel, a doctor at the Marin Community Clinic, brought in a resource guide that her children received at school. The resource guide was a First 5 hand out containing all kinds of information useful to parents. The Clinic has kept a copy on file and now also hands it out to parents. Dana explained that the resource guide is part of Canal School Readiness in collaboration with Canal Alliance, Head Start, and the School Readiness staff. Dana will forward the community calendars for all the School Readiness communities.

Charlene Reid announced a new state-funded program for supporting kinship caregivers. The program's purpose is to provide support as a prevention and early intervention tool. There is a planning lunch on January 23rd from 12:15 to 2 pm. Charlene handed out the Save-The-Date flyer.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/STAFF REPORT

See the Executive Director's report for full details. Amy Reisch added some items not in the report:

- Amy gave follow up information about the letter to the editor she wrote in response to the story about the Children Now Report that ran in the Marin Independent Journal. She received several responses from people around the county. Two of the more interesting were from Carlos Porrata, in which he cc'd Tom Peters, Supervisor Steve Kinsey, Lourdes Martinez, Don Jen and Ann Mathieson and from Ann Mathieson, copying the same people. Both are Marin Community Foundation Trustees.
- Amy distributed copies of the Op Ed piece Mary Jane Burke submitted in response to the governor's budget.
- January 23rd Mary Jane Burke is co-convening an annual meeting of city council members and mayors which is also attended by members of all of the school boards in the county. The focus this year will be on the importance of early education in closing the achievement gap. David Kirp will speak at the event. Amy will attend the meeting and introduce First 5 and hand out Save-the-Date cards to our Annual Breakfast event on April 25th.
- The Prop 63 Community Mental Health Prevention and Early Intervention Planning group has been meeting. The total available for Marin in this targeted funding is \$1 million.
- The Pediatrician's Training will be held on April 12th. The Save-the-Date flyer is being mailed to all pediatricians and family practitioners in Marin and Sonoma County.
- Barbara Clifton-Zarate invited all the Commissioners to attend and participate in the First 5 Marin Provider Summit to be held on February 6, from 8:30 to 3:30 at Marin Center Exhibition Hall. She will email the brochure containing

- workshop descriptions and presenter bios to the Commissioners. It is also available on First 5 Marin's web site. www.marincfc.org
- The First 5 Marin Annual Report to the Community for fiscal year 2006-2007 is at each Commissioner's place.
 - First 5 Marin's Annual Breakfast in April 25th.

Alicia Suski asked for clarification about the Small Grant awards. Amy explained that although \$100,000 was budgeted only \$84,380 was awarded for a variety of reasons, ranging from incomplete or incorrect applications to requests for funding for projects previously funded. The unspent funds in this cycle will be "carried over" to the next Small Grant Cycle budget in March 2008.

VI. COMMISSION DISCUSSION

First 5 Marin Commission Officer Election

David Bonfilio moved to elect Alicia Suski to Chair and Cio Hernandez to Vice-Chair.

Call for election of officers

M/S: Bonfilio/Reid

Ayes: 7, Archer, Bonfilio, Gaidmore, Hernandez, Reid, Suski, Stewart

Nays: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2, Kinsey, Leonard

Commissioner Archer on "Early Childhood Mental Health Concerns"

Regina Archer began her discussion by asking the Commissioners if they had any questions about the article about attachment they received in the December Commission Meeting packet. Discussion continued with her observation that Community Mental Health is seeing more 5-7 year olds. Although it is good that children are being identified earlier, it also reflects the fact that a greater number of younger children are experiencing serious emotional issues. In general, she believes that children and families are not receiving the support they need early on, before serious issues develop. Regina offered some possible solutions:

- Teach all children in schools "Emotional Intelligence". One of the effects of this curriculum is to allow children to talk about feelings and thereby reduce the stigma when a child experiences an emotional problem. The stigma associated with mental health concerns is often cultural and is then sometimes combined with distrust of the systems put in place to provide support.
- Start with Attachment. Infants come with a predisposition to certain emotions and a parent is also predisposed. Add the two together and that can be a vulnerable situation. Prediction of a vulnerable situation can be made during pregnancy.
- Everyone that has a baby should have a home visit.
- Provide more support to child care providers and centers. It is difficult to manage kids with more emotional needs. The providers can help support the parents to advocate in the system.

Discussion continued at length between about what is happening and why more kids are in the system. Is it because of earlier identification? Is it across all demographics? Is something working better? Unfortunately, the answer seems to be that schools are stressed and teachers are more unwilling or unable to support kids with different needs, thereby increasing referrals. Aideen added that this is precisely

why good communication between preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers is needed. Because when there is communication, the preschool can share with the kindergarten teacher the kids that have been identified and for whom adaptable management solutions may have been developed.

The danger of labeling or diagnosing young children was also discussed. Unfortunately, it is a catch-22 system in that often, "no diagnosis" means "no services". Amy added that until we begin to look at and fund or reimburse for intervention on a continuum, the system will stay the same and results will stay the same.

Regina summed up the discussion with some of things that ease distress for a child:

- music
- nature
- movement
- dance
- touch
- reflective listening
- play, sand play
- being held and silently giving them all your attention
- stories in which the child is the hero and has all the coping skills he/she needs
- mediation and yoga

Self soothing is really important. Brain distress in childhood can cause negative self soothing habits later in life, like nail biting or drug abuse.

There will always be mental illness, even with early intervention but if as a society we think about it as just another way in which people are different, we would go a long way to reducing the stigma associated with it.

Comcast Message for Public Education Advertisement

Amy and Michelle gave the Commissioners a quick overview of the process so far with the television ads they have been working on. The first message will be about children's health. Novato School Readiness will be helping with the filming. Production cost has been approved by the Commission previously.

Staff recommends the Commission: **Authorize staff to proceed with production of one informational spot to cable television related to children's healthcare.**

M/S: Bonfilio/Hernandez

Ayes: 7, Archer, Bonfilio, Gaidmore, Hernandez, Reid, Suski, Stewart

Nays: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2, Kinsey, Leonard

Bay Area First 5 Policy Framework

Amy explained how the 12 bay area First 5's came together to work on this policy. She also explained its purpose and possible uses. It does not substitute for any individual commission's policy. It is a guide for the development of advocacy efforts on behalf of the entire region. In the future, an "issues brief" will be provided for each major area covered in the policy framework. Discussion continued with the Commissioners commenting on the benefits this work gives the regions First 5's.

David Bonfilio moved to endorse the Bay Area First 5 Policy Framework.

M/S: Bonfilio/Reid

Ayes: 7, Archer, Bonfilio, Gaidmore, Hernandez, Reid, Suski, Stewart
Nays: 0
Abstain: 0
Absent: 2, Kinsey, Leonard

Shared Vision for All Marin's Kids: Update on Potential Members of Steering Committee

Amy explained the updated matrix given to the Commissioners. There are 38 slots with 37 names and 30 are confirmed. Dana King from KPIX has expressed interest in being honorary chair, pending approval by her superiors at KPIX. Once she confirms, a date will be set for the first meeting. Discussion continued briefly, the success of recruiting members from the community means that a lot is at stake and we must not let them down. The first meeting agenda, and materials for the meeting, will continue to be developed by Kathy Tabor, Amy, and the Commission members that are on the committee. Amy will send a copy of the invitation, a list of participants and a follow-up letter to Dr. Bob Ross, keeping him apprised of our progress in meeting his challenge.

VII. FINAL COMMENTS

Next Commission meeting is on **Wednesday, February 6, 2008.**

VIII. NEXT STEPS

IX. ADJOURN 6:59 p.m.

Next Meeting:
Wednesday, February 6, 2008
5:30PM – 7:30PM
1101 5th Ave., Suite 215, San Rafael