



Children's Committee Hybrid Meeting Summary

Date: May 26, 2022 | Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**MHSOAC
1812 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95811**

****DRAFT****

Committee Members:

Staff:

Other Attendees:

Mara Madrigal-Weiss, Chair Mayra Alvarez, Vice Chair David Gordon Ken Berrick*	Toby Ewing Maureen Reilly	Laurel Benhamida Joann Guerilus Stacie Hiramoto Kristen Law Steve McNally Ruth Tiscareno Sharon R. Yates
Other Commissioner Present: Rayshell Chambers		

*Participation via Zoom

Committee Member absent: Commissioner Emeritus Lynne Ashbeck

Call to Order

Commissioner Mara Madrigal-Weiss, Commission and Committee Chair, called the first meeting of the Children's Committee to order at approximately 2:00 p.m., welcomed everyone, and reviewed the meeting agenda. The purpose of today's meeting was to develop a clear goal and work plan for the Committee.

Maureen Reilly, Acting Chief Counsel, called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

General Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto, Executive Director, Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), stated she was delighted that Commissioners Emeritus Ashbeck and Berrick are members of this Committee.

Agenda Item 1: Discussion: Committee Purpose and Desired Outcomes

Presenters:

- Ken Berrick, Commissioner Emeritus
- Toby Ewing, Executive Director

Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated Commissioner Emeritus Lynne Ashbeck initiated a Children's Committee and outlined two goals:

1. Enhancing the integration of the Commission's work on children's mental health.
2. Supporting the Governor's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative.

Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission's current portfolio includes several initiatives relating to the needs of children and youth, including:

- The Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA), which includes \$270 million in grant funding to partnerships in 55 counties to enhance school-based mental health programs.
- The allcove youth drop-in investments the Commission has made with counties and other local partners to bring an evidence-based practice to the United States.
- The Senate Bill (SB) 82 investments. The next round of funding is to include early child education and development.
- The Commission's Early Psychosis work, which targets transition-age youth (TAY) and young adults.
- The Commission's work to elevate youth voice, including youth innovation investments.

Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated Commissioner Emeritus Ken Berrick will facilitate a discussion on the role of this newly-formed Children's Committee, the opportunities it represents, and ways it can be effective.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated California is at the edge of a new day for children's mental health. He noted that the problem is huge and the need is enormous. The reaction of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to help provide additional support and leadership to the mental health system needs to evolve because there is now a tremendous amount of energy, support, funding, and vision around a broader view of children's services.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated, when he and Commissioner Emeritus Lynne Ashbeck talked about a vision of creating a Children's Committee, it was about how to link the work of the MHSA, the Commission, and affiliated support networks around children's services with the Governor's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. One of the criticisms heard about the Governor's Initiative was that it was too much at once. Each of the components in the rapid change being seen is necessary to support the other components. They must be done concurrently for success.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick provided an overview of current activities across the state and initiatives in the Commission's portfolio relating to the needs of children and youth, such as new ways to support TAY, a statewide urgent response system for foster youth, mobile response, and implementation of 988. These responses need to be linked to a broader network of care that is not linked to child welfare or juvenile justice.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated the Governor's Initiative has provisions for the possibility of these things being developed. He stated the hope that this Committee, the Commission, providers, and the community can help develop a way to integrate a single

support system that has never been seen before. The purpose of this discussion is to consider how to ensure that all of these incredible efforts are linked together and supported, particularly that the Commission's efforts are linked with the Governor's Initiative and the counties across the state.

Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked Executive Director Ewing to provide a more comprehensive list of what is in the Commission's current portfolio and new opportunities.

Executive Director Ewing reviewed the Commission Work Supporting Children and Youth document, which was included in the meeting materials, in order to facilitate the Committee's conversation about how the Commission might move forward with existing internal work and potential new areas of opportunity. He stated the Commission provides incentive grants, translates information through a communication strategy that draws attention to issues, marshals approximately \$5 million in advocacy work annually that is supported with the grants, does policy projects, has research and evaluation capacity, leverages and shapes innovation in partnership with counties, and does convenings and community engagement.

Executive Director Ewing noted that an immediate opportunity is with the Triage Grants. The Commission will be asking this Committee in the next few months how to best use this annual \$20 million to strengthen the ways in which California responds to crisis. This work could focus on the needs of children and youth.

Executive Director Ewing suggested pairing Commissioner Emeritus Berrick's comments with what the Commission is trying to accomplish using current tools to be effective in achieving goals. He asked Committee Members to identify goals for the Committee and strategies to measure progress against those goals so staff can then draft a work plan using tools in the Commission's portfolio.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated there are initiatives that are coming up both in schools and in the intersection between child welfare, juvenile justice, and schools. He asked for recommendations on how this Committee can facilitate discussions on dissemination of best practices and models of integration using what hopefully will be a well-organized technical assistance model.

Discussion

Commissioner Gordon stated the challenge is to ensure that all services are accessible and sustainable. He stated the need for things like mobile response and external technical assistance to be reliably available, just like the school is reliably available to open every day. Regardless of what it is called, the suite of services that as associated with the schools needs to be dependable now and into the future. That is the big challenge to overcome.

Executive Director Ewing stated \$2 million in start-up funding was provided to a series of community partners to launch the allcove youth drop-in model, an evidence-based practice out of Australia that has been replicated in multiple countries, each of which has a single-payer financing system for health services that enables them to replicate and scale the practice across these countries. In California, there is not a single health care system and services are designed around payment systems rather than designing payment systems to support services.

Executive Director Ewing stated community partners, including counties, non-profit organizations, UC Irvine, and health care districts where the funding was provided are concerned about their capacity to sustain the program. A fiscal sustainability conversation is being launched with them to identify pathways to finance this evidence-based model under the argument that, if the financing is not there and it is not easy to finance, it will not scale. Allcove could be a model of how to think about policies that surround the Governor's Initiative and sustainable financing is a piece of that.

Executive Director Ewing stated one of the questions on the allcove site is to first be clear about the programs to finance for consistency in service delivery as it moves to scale. The Commission is putting a small amount of funding into allcove. That might be an area where the Committee could create attention around the issue of sustainable financing.

Vice Chair Alvarez asked about approaching the allcove model from the perspective of the components that comprise the model – not necessarily allcove itself, but what it embodies, which is a safe place and holistic services for young people. The context in which the allcove model has been successful in other countries is so different from what is available in California or the United States as a whole. It is important to consider the elements of the allcove model to make available to young people in schools, early learning centers, community clinics, etc.

Vice Chair Alvarez suggested co-creating goals with communities most impacted.

Commission Emeritus Berrick agreed with looking at models for sustainability and the component parts of the initiatives, along with the work of the Commission to come up with ways that funding can be used to morph into more sustainable initiatives. He suggested reviewing the spreadsheet of funding models that Placer County is responsible to report on, which was put together by Michael Lombardo of the Placer County Office of Education. This is a different kind of sustainability than what Commission Gordon and Executive Director Ewing discussed in that it must be sustainable in a way that incentivizes taking this lead. He asked that this be one of the Committee's roles – to look at current sustainable models and barriers to them so that, in three years, those who have taken the lead will be leading the way to a more sustainable integrated system.

Executive Director Ewing suggested one of the next steps of this Committee could be to do listening sessions and targeted engagement with young people to identify tensions and opportunities and with the business community and others to understand the community and political environment.

Public Comment

Joann Guerilus, Children's Partnership, spoke in support of the Commission's new Children's Committee and stated the Children's Partnership recognizes the important opportunity to strengthen the Commission's commitment to prevention, early intervention, and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and wellbeing that are focused on children and youth in California. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified a preexisting mental health crisis among youth of color, placing a spotlight on the importance of collectively acting now.

Joann Guerilus stated the Children's Partnership urged the Commission and the Children's Committee to redouble efforts to identify opportunities to partner with local communities and youth to cocreate the conditions necessary for children and youth to heal, cultivate hope, and achieve positive health and wellbeing. It is imperative to address systemic barriers and to develop innovative strategies that leave space for healing outside of and in tandem with the traditional mental health system. The speaker stated the need to be expansive in thinking about supports that strengthen youth mental health inclusive of community-based strategies that mobilize, organize, and build power among marginalized youth.

Stacie Hiramoto echoed the comments of the previous speaker. She asked about the API Anti-Bullying project. She stated concern about the lack of discussion on the focus of reducing disparities or serving racial and ethnic communities. She urged, when speaking of evidence-based practices, to also talk about community-defined evidence practices (CDEPs). Reducing disparities and reaching youth of color requires the use of CDEPs. She thanked the Children's Partnership for mentioning involving families and communities in focus groups.

Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked for suggestions on what the Children's Committee can address.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated the fundamental goal of current efforts is to eliminate disparities and create equity. However, when efforts are created that are not sustainable, this puts the individuals responsible for implementing those efforts in precarious positions. Incentives are created that are difficult, particularly for counties with fewer resources.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated his two highest goals are:

- To ensure services are reliable, accessible, and sustainable in a truly integrated support system, as Commissioner Gordon suggested.
- To make that sustainable integration available, not only to high-equity counties but to counties that do not have the confidence to create funding supports, by disseminating models that show how to link systems together.

Commissioner Emeritus Berrick stated these goals can be achieved by evaluating the most successful models and initiatives, asking how MHSA funding and learning can best support these efforts, and developing clear strategies for sustainability.

Commissioner Gordon agreed. He stated, if there is a watchword for what the Commission is trying to do, it would be "prevention," so that it is always asking what could have been done to avoid current problems. That will force the Commission to push backward into the system and into the 0-5 space.

Vice Chair Alvarez agreed. She suggested also considering the spectrum of childhood – the critical 0-5 years where 90 percent of brain development occurs, K-6, middle school, and high school – and thinking about the unique approaches to meeting young people where they are at those times, taking into account the environments in which they are raised and ways to support those environments. One of the top recommendations from the report put out by the Children's Partnership yesterday was how to support peer support services among young people for wellness outside of western medicine. Similarly, for many youth of

color, the involvement in youth advocacy and community organizing is a direct correlation with positive mental health. This is not defined in any mental health textbook but it is critical to youth wellbeing.

Vice Chair Alvarez suggested identifying those programs where what mental health looks like for young people can be redefined. She stated the need to be mindful, along with creating new programs, that updating existing programs to better meet needs and to become more equity-centered, youth-centered, and gender-affirming is an important method to meet mental health needs.

Vice Chair Alvarez stated children, particularly young ones, are dependent on adults to take care of them. When it comes to mental health, there is still a huge stigma and many barriers. She stated the need to consider how to equip the adults in children's lives to recognize symptoms and to know where to go for support. It is also important to help individuals learn how to navigate the system and to make it more accessible to young people.

Commissioner Chambers stated, as someone who attempted suicide at the age of 14, this resonated with her. As she considered what she would tell her 14-year-old self, what she could have done, or what teachers could have done, one thing that stood out was the stigma around mental health and access to services, particularly for someone coming from a community of color. She stated she has family members who, at 20 years old, do not know how to navigate the system, and who have been discharged from psychiatric care with no community supports and no peer supports. The peer support model is something that is not new that can be integrated. She stated, if someone who looked like her told her that they were also having suicidal thoughts, she would probably have ended up seeking care rather than ending up on a 5150.

Commissioner Chambers agreed with focusing on the goals of prevention, stigma, early education, and system navigation. Those things are critical to ensure that youth have access to services.

Chair Madrigal-Weiss agreed with fellow Commissioners and stated this is what students are saying: youth respond better to people who look like them and who understand where they are coming from. Peers empower youth, because they are the next generation to address stigma, to get into the profession, and to normalize discussing these things, asking questions, and seeking support.

Public Comment

Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked members of the community to provide feedback on what they want this Committee to accomplish in the next one or two years.

Ruth Tiscareno, parent advocate and peer, and past Member of the Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC), stated one of the most important voices that is needed is the parent voice. The speaker, as a parent peer, helps parents to navigate the system. Peers are important but parent peers are often forgotten. The speaker suggested having a parent at the school level who can help the school and parents navigate the system. The speaker expressed appreciation that Commissioners are discussing prevention and early

intervention for ages 0-5. Bullying has gotten worse. Schools need to be empowered with training and education and part of that piece is the parent advocate.

Ruth Tiscareno suggested integrating mental health and wellbeing with physical health and wellbeing as a focus for high school student councils. Including parents in school councils and giving them support and information on mental health will help to reduce stigma.

Sharon R. Yates, family member and Member of the CFLC, shared the story of her daughter who had her first break at age 14. She stated there were no wraparound services after the crisis residential program. She stated she did not understand why her daughter did not have services or how to navigate the system. She suggested that this Committee look at running programs in alternative locations, such as partnering with the YMCA or YWCA and their afterschool programs.

Sharon R. Yates stated unlinking the law enforcement piece from mental health is important. She stated she participated in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) walk last week and walked with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, which partners with the Department of Mental Health; while discussing the reality of how it is working, they agreed that law enforcement should be unlinked from mental health. This needs to be a focus area but how to do that will be a challenge.

Sharon R. Yates stated Governor's CARE Court bill is a good idea, but, instead of the term "CARE Court," it should be "CARE Planning," where individuals would receive assistance in planning their future lives. She suggested putting in breaks, stop lights, or flashes as a place to include training for children on the importance of better social media practices so they are not tempted to stray.

Kristen Law, Marin County Office of Education (MCOE), thanked the Committee for lifting up the importance of prevention and moving upstream. She stated MCOE is partnering with Behavioral Health to launch a Student Wellness Ambassador Program modeled after the Promotores or A Trusted Messenger Models. She agreed with focusing on a peer approach. Young people have shared with her that this is a critical need. She suggested creating templates and guides to assist others in getting a student wellness ambassador program off the ground that is different from a peer resource or peer counselor. Peer support training for young people with lived experience, such as empathy and sensitivity training and understanding a trauma-informed approach, would also be helpful. These kinds of things could assist individuals trying to launch this kind of work on school campuses.

Laurel Benhamida, Ph.D., Muslim American Society – Social Services Foundation and REMHDCO Steering Committee, stated the Muslim TAY advocacy group presented in front of the Commission previously and asked for student wellness centers in schools in the Sacramento County area. She asked about challenges in setting those up and the number of students coming into Sacramento County schools whose native languages are Dari, Pashto, and Ukrainian this year. She stated she continues to speak about the need to look at the threshold language issue because immigrants need help when they first arrive, not years later.

Commissioner Gordon stated many individuals in the community, including all school districts that are impacted, are working hard on these questions. He stated he will talk with Dr. Benhamida offline about the specifics.

Steve McNally, family member and Member, Orange County Behavioral Health Advisory Board, stated it is less about knowing what to do; rather, it is about being unable to get it implemented. Collaboration and cooperation cannot be legislated. He suggested including individuals with real implementation experience on this Committee. He asked the Committee to think about implementation and urgency. Sometimes the point is missed that it is okay to be honest and direct, and it is okay to get results sooner rather than later. So much of legislation is about funding things that already exist and writing plans that are not implemented. He stated figuring out how to leverage money to get results as soon as possible is more important than spending it on research that is never evaluated.

Next Steps

Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked staff to work with Commissioner Emeritus Berrick to collect information, to synthesize it, and to return to this Committee with a proposal based on everything heard today.

Adjournment

Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the next Children's Committee meeting is yet to be determined. She thanked everyone for their participation and asked everyone to send additional ideas about what they would like to see come of this Committee to staff. She adjourned the meeting at 3:39 p.m.