

**BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**  
**Minutes of the September 21, 2007, Meeting**  
**San Francisco, California**

Justice Carlos R. Moreno, chair, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. on Friday, September 21, 2007, at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in San Francisco, California.

**Commission Members Present:** Hon. Carlos R. Moreno (chair), Hon. Richard C. Blake, Mr. Lawrence B. Bolton, Mr. Curtis L. Child, Ms. Miryam J. Choca, Mr. Michael S. Cunningham, Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, Hon. Leonard P. Edwards (Ret.), Ms. Deborah Escobedo, Mr. Robert E. Friend, Hon. Richard D. Huffman, Hon. Susan D. Huguenor, Ms. Miriam Krinsky, Ms. Amy Lemley, Mr. Will Lightbourne, Hon. Michael Nash, Ms. Diane Nunn, Mr. John O'Toole, Mr. Ken Patterson, Mr. Jonathan Pearson, Ms. Linda Penner, Mr. Anthony Pico, Mr. Alan Slater, Mr. Joseph L. Spaeth, Hon. Dean T. Stout, and Ms. Jacqueline Wong.

**Commission Members Not Present:** Mr. Michael D. Antonovich, Ms. Mary L. Ault, Hon. Karen Bass, Mr. Joseph W. Cotchett, Mr. Raul A. Escatel, Hon. Terry B. Friedman, Ms. Teri Kook, Hon. Bill Maze, Ms. Donna C. Myrow, Mr. David Neilsen, Mr. Derek Peake, Ms. Patricia S. Ploehn, Ms. Maria D. Robles, Mr. Gary C. Seiser, and Hon. Darrell Steinberg.

**Commission and Administrative Office of the Courts Staff:** Mr. Christopher Wu (lead), Ms. Donna Clay-Conti, Ms.Carolynn R. Bernabe, Ms. Charlene Depner, Mr. Cyrus Ip, Ms. Megan Lafrenz, Mr. David Meyers, Mr. Lee D. Morhar, Mr. Michael Roosevelt, Ms. Chantal Sampogna, Ms. Sonya Tafoya, Ms. Renee Wessels (consultant), Ms. Jennifer Walter, Mr. Don Will, and Ms. Leah Wilson.

**Others Present:** Ms. Sharon Bell, Ms. Kathryn Dresslar, Ms. Joanne Edgar, Ms. Nolice Edwards, Hon. Carolyn Kirkwood, Hon. David M. Krashna, Hon. James R. Lambden, Ms. Jessica LePak, Dr. Barbara Needell, Hon. Trina Thompson Stanley, Ms. Sarah Takahama, Hon. Wadie Thomas, Jr., and Mr. John A. Wagner.

**Item 1            Welcome and Remarks From the Chair**  
*Justice Carlos R. Moreno, Chair*

Justice Carlos R. Moreno welcomed commissioners and participants to the seventh meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. He gave brief opening remarks and an introduction about the day's agenda.

**Item 2**            **Child Welfare: Ethnic and Racial Disproportionality and Disparity**  
*Dr. Barbara Needell, Center for Social Services Research, University of California at Berkeley*

Dr. Barbara Needell presented data on the racial and ethnic demographics of children in the foster care system in California. Dr. Needell's data focused on examining the difference between disproportionality and disparity. These data show an overrepresentation of African American and Native American children in the state's child welfare system when compared to their proportion of the state's population. She also encouraged the commissioners to visit her Web site (<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/>) for more detailed information on the data that was presented.

**Item 3**            **Demographics in Dependency Court**  
*Hon. Wadie Thomas, Jr., Nebraska*

Judge Wadie Thomas, Jr. began his presentation by talking about the Adoption and Safe Families Act and its goals of looking for suitable relative placement for children. He spoke about the shift in mentality in the work of the Voluntary Unit of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Agency. The primary focus is on a safety plan, which begins with asking why a particular child cannot be left in the home. This plan is also modeled around working with a parent or caregiver who is willing to carry out the necessary actions in the child's case plan. He also pointed out that a large problem drawing more children into the system is confusion between poverty and neglect. Judge Thomas reiterated the importance of reviewing the safety plan and making a current assessment of whether the child can safely remain in the home. The idea behind this initiative is to prevent court filings if there do not need to be any.

**Item 4**            **Addressing Unintended Bias**  
*Mr. Michael Roosevelt, AOC Staff*

Mr. Michael Roosevelt provided an interactive group activity on assumptions—how we form them and how they can affect our understanding of people and information.

**Item 5**            **Introduction of the Afternoon Group Discussion**  
*Hon. David M. Krashna and Hon. Trina Thompson Stanley,  
Superior Court of Alameda County*

Judge Trina Thompson Stanley shared her experience of being placed in foster care. She talked about education and its importance in her own emancipation from the foster care system. She suggested that children's failure in foster care is the failure of the institution to see that their education is taken care of and that there is no accountability. She would like to see a recommendation that all foster children carry both education and health-care

passports with them from the beginning to the end. She would like bench officers to meet the kids and take the time to get to know them on a personal level.

Judge David M. Krashna talked about his experience of placed being in an orphanage with his siblings. He would like to see a recommendation that all children from the same family unit be placed together. If that is not possible, then the policy should be that the judge should state the reasons and that provisions be made so there is regular communication and the whereabouts of all siblings are known.

#### **Item 6            Group Discussion and Report Back**

The commission broke into its respective groups to discuss the following five areas: court oversight, conduct of hearings, federal resources and policy, information gathering, accountability and collaboration, and support for relative caregivers. The groups discussed their recommendations and next steps. Each group reported back with discussion topics.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.