

Our Children, Our Families Council

Summary of the Unaccompanied Alien Children Behavioral Health Treatment Providers Group

(Last Updated June 15, 2015)

Goals of the Effort

The Unaccompanied Alien Children Behavioral Health Treatment Providers Group (henceforth TPG) is a group of representatives from various treatment providers committed to streamlining treatment systems for unaccompanied immigrant children in San Francisco. The TPG both connects individuals recommended from the San Francisco Unified School District to the appropriate services, and they also serve as an advocacy body at the city-wide level for improved treatment procedures for this group.

Focal Population of the Effort

The TPG is committed to serving immigrant children who migrated to the country alone as minors and who ultimately settled in San Francisco. A large influx of roughly 60,000 such children migrated to the United States from Central America in 2014, and roughly 500 of these children are believed to have settled in San Francisco, according to Barbara Garcia, Director of Health at the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

Impact

The TPG has connected several unaccompanied immigrant children to important services. The Mayor's Office, the Department of Public Health, and the San Francisco Unified School District have all agreed connecting these vulnerable children to services is a priority, and according to those partners, the pathways to connect these children to services have already improved. SFUSD now contacts members of the TPG directly to ensure individual children are connected to the treatment they need.

Challenges

There is no funding tied to the TPG, so members are all volunteers with full-time jobs and other responsibilities. With funding, the TPG believes it could have a greater impact in serving their target population.

Origins of the Effort

In 2014, the United States experience a massive influx in unaccompanied immigrant children crossing into the United States alone. Over 68,000 children were detained along the U.S.-Mexico the border that year. Many of those detained children were sent to stay with distant relatives already living in the states, and others were sent to cities that agreed to take in some of the children as refugees. Because San Francisco was expected to receive roughly 500 of these children, largely from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, Mayor Ed Lee and Barbara Garcia, Director of Health at the Department of Public Health, issued a public announcement in September of 2014 declaring that these children would be connected to the necessary services upon arrival. The San Francisco Health Commission issued Resolution 14-13, which affirmed the Department of Public Health's commitment to offering services to these children. Shortly thereafter the Department of Public Health encouraged the formation of the TPG to provide services and develop a coordinated system of care to deal with these unaccompanied minors.

Leading the Effort

The TPG is led by two co-chairs, Max Rocha and Roban San Miguel. Max Rocha is the Deputy Director of the Department of Public Health's Community Behavioral Health Services, Children, Youth, and Families System of Care. Roban San Miguel serves as the Director of the Mission Family Health Center within the Department of Public Health. Both have co-chaired since the TPG began in the fall of 2014.

Members of the Effort

The TPG has on its roster roughly 15 members, each of whom represents one of the TPG's partner organizations in this effort. Partner organizations include:

The Department of Public Health, Behavioral Health Services
The Department of Public Health, Children, Youth & Families System of Care
The Department of Public Health, Family Health Center
The Department of Public Health, Refugee Health Clinic
The San Francisco Unified School District
The Human Services Agency
Instituto Familiar de la Raza
Central American Resource Center (CARACEN)
Huckleberry Youth Program
Larkin Street Youth Clinic

Structure of the Effort

The TPG meets monthly, and the co-chairs run the meeting and determine the agenda. When members identify a potential improvement in services, they work to make the necessary changes as required. Max Rocha identified San Francisco Unified School District participation as a key factor in the TPG's success. The district not only provides the most important data, but they also know the students who need to be connected to services. Members from the district have identified over 200 unaccompanied immigrant children in need of behavioral health treatment, and TPG members deploy services accordingly.

The Role of Data

The TPG does not maintain a database to formally track its own outcomes in serving unaccompanied immigrant children, but it does rely heavily on data from SFUSD to determine which students might be in need of services. The TPG also takes into account data from its partner organizations, including the Department of Public Health, the Human Services Agency, and CBOs, when trying to brainstorm ways to improve service pathways at monthly meetings.

Related Documents

- Health Commission Resolution No. 14-13, Supporting the Availability of Health Care Services to Meet the Needs of Unaccompanied Immigrant Central American Youth, from Sept. 2, 2014
<<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/files/hc/HCAgen/HCAgen2014/September%202/HC%20Resolution%20-%20Unaccompanied%20Immigrant%20Youth.pdf>>
- News Release from the Mayor and Barbara Garcia, DPH, that encouraged the creation of the TPG
<<http://missionlocal.org/2014/09/health-department-reaffirms-that-it-will-treat-undocumented-children/>>