

The Education Liaison Model

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April 2004

This project was supported by funds from the Stuart Foundation

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Executive Summary

The Education Liaison Model is a comprehensive interagency program to support social workers in obtaining appropriate educational services for children in the foster care system. It is a research-based program that is designed to support the goals of the California Child Welfare Redesign as well as AB 490 and:

- places education liaisons in the offices of County Departments of Children and Family Services;
- provides ongoing training and support to social workers in identifying educational barriers to learning and fashioning effective solutions; and
- provides training and technical assistance to the education liaisons so they have expertise to resolve a wide-range of complex educational problems brought to them by social workers.

Evaluation data document the effectiveness of the Education Liaison Model for both social workers and the children on their caseloads. The model has been effective in:

- increasing the level of knowledge of social workers about educational procedures and programs for supporting the educational needs of foster youth;
- increasing the social workers' level of participation in the educational process of children on their caseloads;
- increasing the social workers documentation of up-to-date education information included in the children's case files; and
- improving math and reading achievement test scores of children served by the education liaisons.

Introduction

In 1998, Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS) in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) piloted a program to improve educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care. The key component of the interagency program was the placement of education liaisons from LACOE in the offices of DCFS. The education liaisons worked collaboratively with social workers from DCFS to:

- identify and overcome educational hurdles which impeded the school progress of foster youth, and
- provide training to social workers on identifying (a) educational barriers to learning and (b) educational resources available in the school and community

A unique aspect of the program was the ongoing training and technical assistance that the education liaisons received from MHAS, a nonprofit law office.

We would like to invite your county to consider adopting the Education Liaison Model. It not only supports the objectives of the California Child Welfare Redesign but also the duties imposed by recent legislation which protects educational rights of foster youth (i.e., AB 490).

The Education Liaison Model is flexible and can be adapted to suit your county's needs. Specifically, the model addresses the following Redesign objectives:

Objective Two:

Act Early to PRESERVE and Strengthen Families: Early Intervention/New Intake Structure

Education liaisons from the local education agency participate on intake assessment teams. They review the child's records and conduct screening assessments to identify appropriate educational services and programs including early intervention needs.

Objectives Three and Four:

Broaden Efforts to RESTORE Family Capacity and Strengthen Alternatives to
REBUILD Permanent Families for Children

Education liaisons work with family members to advocate for appropriate educational services and placements in the school. Family members receive training around educational issues and school resources.

Objective Five:

Systematically PREPARE Youth for Success in Adulthood

Ongoing case management by the education liaison results in support for educational needs and placement in school programs leading to high school graduation and college preparation.

Objective Seven:

STRENGTHEN Interagency Partnerships at the State and Local Levels

The establishment of an Inter-agency task force and a multi-disciplinary assessment team that addresses educational issues result in greater collaboration, less duplication, and fewer gaps in services needed to overcome barriers to educational success

Objective Eight:

EXPAND and RESTRUCTURE Child Welfare Financing

Maximizing the use of child welfare, Medicaid and education dollars provides for the expansion of existing services and development of new services and supports for addressing educational needs of foster youth

Objective Nine:

ACHIEVE Better Outcomes through Accountability

Education liaisons monitor the educational programs and outcomes of children in foster care and ensure that school districts are accountable for the educational needs of foster youth.

The Education Liaison Model not only provides concrete strategies to achieve the goals of the Redesign, it is also critical in ensuring proper implementation of AB 490. In addition, it assures that other important educational needs and protections of foster youth, not specifically covered by AB 490, receive appropriate attention. These include, for example, special education, discipline (i.e., suspension, expulsion) and access to special programs (e.g., magnet, gifted, adult and continuation schools).

This “how to” manual contains detailed descriptions of all aspects of the model as well as evaluative evidence and other supporting documents for your review. The responsibilities of each of the participating agencies are outlined as well as training and troubleshooting strategies. We also provide possible strategies for funding the education liaisons.

The evaluation report documents the overall effectiveness of the model for supporting education needs of children in foster care. Follow-up research revealed that after 18 months of implementation, having an education liaison accessible as a resource for the social workers had positive effects for the workers and the foster youth receiving

the services of the education liaison. Social workers in the pilot offices demonstrated significant increases in both knowledge and level of involvement in the educational process and in their documentation of up-to-date information concerning schooling in the case files. A random sample of foster youth served by the education liaison showed improvements in math and reading test scores while the test performance of comparable youth in the control office followed a typical downward trajectory for youth in foster care over time.

We now have an opportunity to work with your county to introduce the Education Liaison Model to those agencies involved in the care of foster children and youth. If you choose to adopt the model, we will be available to provide ongoing technical assistance to help incorporate components of the model in ways which will support the Child Welfare Services Redesign efforts in your county

Education Liaison Model

Overview

The Education Liaison Model

In 1998, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services launched an “Education Initiative” to ensure that agency social workers focused more attention on the educational needs and schooling of foster children on their caseloads. The main goal of the Education Initiative was to provide technical assistance and training to social workers to help them become more aware of educational problems and needs that children might be experiencing. The project targeted all children served by the agency who were experiencing problems in school or in obtaining appropriate school services.

Project Description

The Education Initiative Project was a collaborative effort between the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS), a small nonprofit law office that represents foster children and other low income people with disabilities. The first 18 months of the Education Initiative was considered a pilot project, with two offices of DCFS receiving training and services and two DCFS offices in geographically comparable neighborhoods serving as control offices and receiving no training or services. After the first 18 months, the project was expanded to all eight regions of DCFS, which included two or three offices in each region. Each region served approximately 8,000 foster youth.

The major component of the project was the placement of education liaisons in DCFS offices to help social workers address the numerous, and often complex, educational problems of the children on their caseloads. An interagency contract was

drawn up that allowed LACOE to provide education liaisons to DCFS. The education liaisons had worked previously as high school counselors, vice principals, special education teachers and attendance counselors. Most held pupil personnel credentials, and some also had special education credentials. The position was advertised within LACOE and after an intensive interview process conducted by a team of DCFS, LACOE and MHAS representatives, individuals were selected because of their knowledge of laws and regulations affecting California schools, their knowledge of educational resources and services and their awareness of issues faced by youth in foster care.

To support the education liaisons' role as advocate and problem solver, LACOE provided initial and ongoing training about (a) educational resources and services available in the public schools and community and (b) procedural information about LACOE's organization and how problems were resolved within LACOE. In addition, the law office staff provided in-depth training to the education liaisons as well as to the social workers in the offices and units served by the project on a variety of relevant educational and legal issues.

Project Procedures

Each education liaison was assigned to a region of the child welfare agency and alternated days between the offices within the region. The education liaisons worked alongside social workers so that as school problems were identified for individual cases, the liaisons worked to secure from the child's school district appropriate and effective education programs and services. When social workers identified an educational problem for a child on their caseload that they were unable to solve themselves, they made referrals to the respective education liaison assigned to their region. Problems included,

among others, inability to obtain a child's school records, refusal by a school district to enroll a child in school, inappropriate denial of special education eligibility, failure to provide required special education services; inappropriate school placement, and inappropriate suspension or expulsion of a child.

Upon receipt of the referral, the education liaison analyzed and discussed the youth's schooling situation with the social worker to determine an appropriate course of action. The education liaison then read the case file (e.g., including bi-annual reports to the courts on school performance) and requested recent school records (e.g., attendance, achievement, transcripts, Individualized Education Plan). For some referrals, the education liaison was able to provide one time or intermittent counsel to the social worker on how to proceed with the case; in other instances, direct intervention by the education liaison was required to ensure that the needs of the foster youth were appropriately addressed. This often involved contacting a resource person at the school of attendance, soliciting information from or providing information to the caregiver and social worker, attending an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Student Study Team (SST) meeting at the school, and/or investigating alternative school options.

The education liaisons maintained a contact log documenting all cases referred to them by the social workers. The entries included the child's name, who referred the case to the education liaison, and the nature of the referral. As the education liaisons worked to resolve the presenting problem, they entered into the log each subsequent contact and action required to secure appropriate programs and services for the referred youth. An education liaison typically served as many as 250 cases over the course of one year. Most of the cases required short-term involvement; about a third of the cases were more

labor intensive. After the first year of the project, analysis of the logs revealed that 50% of the cases were resolved by the education liaisons with one or two inquiries/actions; 33% were resolved with 3 to 10 inquiries/actions, and 17% involved problems so complex that they required over 10 inquiries/actions to resolve and sometimes necessitated referral of the case to the law office for more intensive intervention

A LACOE administrator served as field supervisor of the education liaisons. The supervisor, liaisons and DCFS project coordinator met weekly to review contact logs and individual cases. The LACOE supervisor was also brought into a case when the education liaison was unable to make progress with a referral, for example, when special education services were not being delivered in accordance with timelines and as specified on the IEP. The LACOE supervisor contacted relevant district personnel beginning with the person closest to the case: the district special education director first, the assistant superintendent of student services next, and lastly, the district superintendent. After all avenues were exhausted and no attempt had been made to remedy the problem after two weeks, the case was referred to the law office for legal intervention.

Law Office Intervention

When cases were referred to MHAS, a case conference was arranged and a staff member attended with the education liaison to move the case along. In addition to the education liaison and the law office staff member, case conferences typically included the child's social worker, and, sometimes the child, the child's caregiver, and any other relevant parties. Law office staff also attended special education meetings (i.e., individualized education program meetings) with the education liaisons when the backing of the law office seemed necessary to resolve the issues in the case. In a few cases, when

the reason why the child was not receiving appropriate school services involved a violation of federal or state special education law, MHAS staff filed a noncompliance complaint with the state or federal government. And in one or two cases, when there was a disagreement between the child's caregiver and the school district about a child's special education eligibility, evaluation, placement, or services, or other aspect of special education law, and the caregiver's position clearly seemed to be correct, the law office represented the child in a special education mediation (the first step in the State special education administrative hearing procedures).

Other Responsibilities of the Education Liaison and Training

Another task of the education liaison was to participate on multi-disciplinary teams, such as initial assessment teams, system of care teams, and/or family-to-family teams either at intake or during permanency planning, to provide educational expertise and identify what educational assessments and services were needed to secure appropriate placement for the foster youth being reviewed. The education liaison also provided more formal small or large group training to agency workers in their region offices on school issues that were of general concern and to newly hired social workers attending DCFS initial academy training.

In order to provide support to the education liaisons and to increase their knowledge about key elements of education law and policy relevant to their work (e.g., special education, suspension and expulsion), MHAS provided ongoing training and technical assistance. This was done in a variety of ways. There were monthly large group meetings with all the education liaisons. In addition to presentations on relevant laws and policies, these large group meetings also included discussions about common

problems with which they were all dealing. The education liaisons also met monthly in small groups with an attorney and education specialist from MHAS to discuss the individual cases on which they were working. Cases were presented along with strategies to resolve the problems. The education liaisons also had daily access to MHAS staff by telephone to consult about a case. Consequently, if, during the course of the day, an education liaison was unclear about the next steps to take on a case, he or she had the option of getting immediate information from the law office staff.

Multi-Agency Collaboration

As with any ongoing multi-agency partnership, there were problems that arose related to the relationship between the agencies, their specific responsibilities as well as their mode of operation. To resolve these problems a multi-agency oversight committee was created that met monthly. The oversight committee was comprised of representatives of each agency with knowledge of the day-to-day activities of the project and sufficient authority to make decisions in order to resolve problems. Included in the oversight committee were the project directors of each agency, the assistant project director of DCFS, and the LACOE supervisor of the education liaisons.

The initial oversight committee meetings were used to identify the concerns each agency had in relation to the other partner agencies that were felt to adversely impact the goals of the project. One concern that was raised had to do with the supervision of the education liaisons since they were LACOE employees but housed in the DCFS offices with DCFS social workers. Another related problem was which agency was responsible for providing the education liaisons with supplies and office equipment, since they were the employees of one agency working in the offices of another agency. The ongoing

training of the education liaisons also became a topic of some concern that required the involvement of the oversight committee. MHAS was the designated agency in the project to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to the education liaisons. However, the question arose as to which topics were appropriate for the law office to focus on and which might be more appropriate for LACOE or DCFS. One problem that affected all issues was the extent to which each agency's staff members felt able to trust the staff of other agencies.

The issue of trust primarily manifested itself in two ways. One was whether the agencies trusted each other's work and work ethic. One of the agencies was somewhat delinquent in meeting agreed upon deadlines and following through on project assignments. Another way the issue of trust became a problem was that one of the partner agencies was a law office whose staff were used to advocating on behalf of children in foster care. Consequently, the law office staff chose methods they believed were likely to bring about the results needed for the children involved. Sometimes, the methods were more adversarial than was typical of how the other agencies operated and with which they were comfortable.

The oversight committee members worked diligently over the course of the project on the issues of concern. They met regularly and once problems with the collaborative nature of the project were identified, worked to resolve these problems to ensure the projects overall goals were achieved. The oversight committee clarified which training and technical assistance topics were the purview of MHAS. These were the topics with which the law office was to provide formal training to the education liaisons and the topics about which the education liaisons were to contact MHAS when they had

questions. The oversight committee also drew up guidelines for referring the cases on which the education liaisons were working to legal intervention by MHAS or other advocacy agencies. The issue here was that the liaisons were unable to resolve the educational problems on some cases even with the intervention of the LACOE supervisor and technical assistance from MHAS. However, more intensive advocacy on these cases (e.g., appealing an IEP decision and using the state mediation process) had the likelihood of resolving the cases in a positive way for the child (see Appendices D and E, page 67).

Evaluation Data

An independent evaluator conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of the education liaison model. Overall, the evaluation data indicated that placing an education liaison in the child welfare office was an effective tool for supporting schooling needs of children in foster care. Data from three sources were collected, case files, caseworkers, and school records, and these revealed that having a liaison from LACOE accessible as a resource for DCFS social workers had positive effects for the workers and the foster youth receiving the services of the education liaison.

One goal of the project was to determine if over time there were changes in the level of social worker involvement in and knowledge of the schooling of children on their caseloads. Data were compared at two points in time, at the start of the project and 18 months into the project. Case files from random samples of foster youth in the pilot and control offices were examined to determine how current the educational records were including the collection of relevant forms and school documents detailing attendance, behavior and achievement. Specifically the files were read to see if there was an increase in how much attention workers paid to educational needs and whether they noted school

problems on forms they regularly completed for the case file. Analyses revealed that by 18 months into the project, there was a significant increase in the documentation of up-to-date information concerning schooling in the case files in the pilot offices compared to case files in the control offices.

Social workers were also asked to complete an extensive questionnaire that assessed their degree of knowledge about educational resources, school procedures and school regulations, and their practices and actions with respect to getting involved in the educational process. At the start of the project, caseworker scores revealed relatively low levels of awareness of the educational system and of personal involvement in the educational process. Eighteen months later, the caseworkers in the pilot offices showed significant increases in both knowledge and level of involvement.

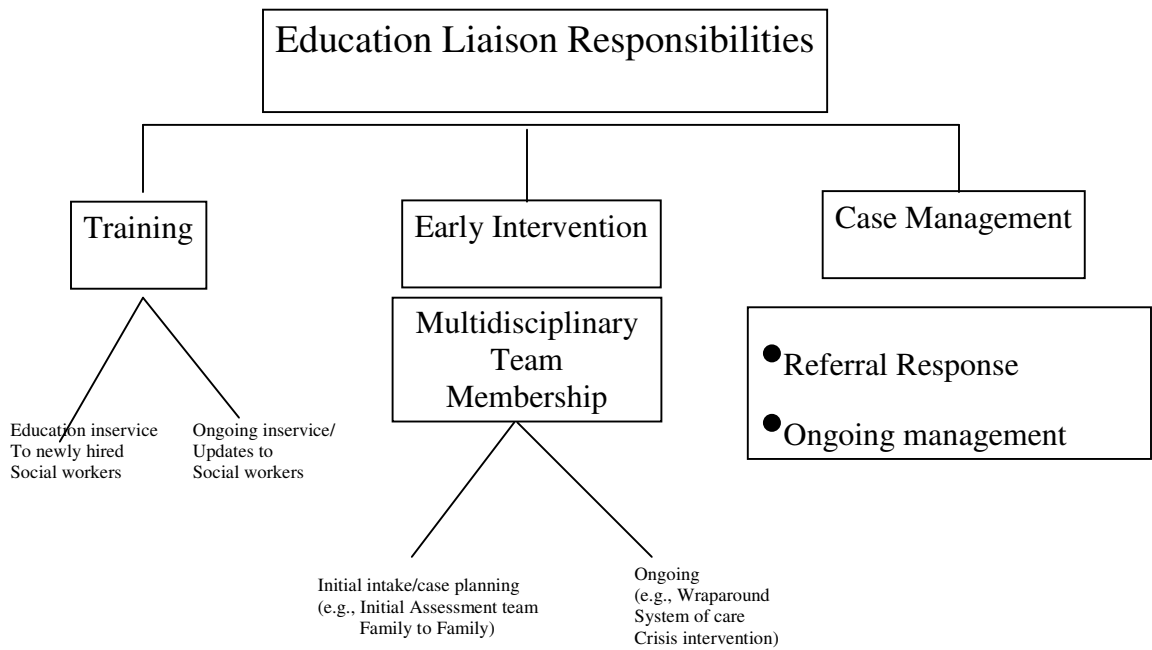
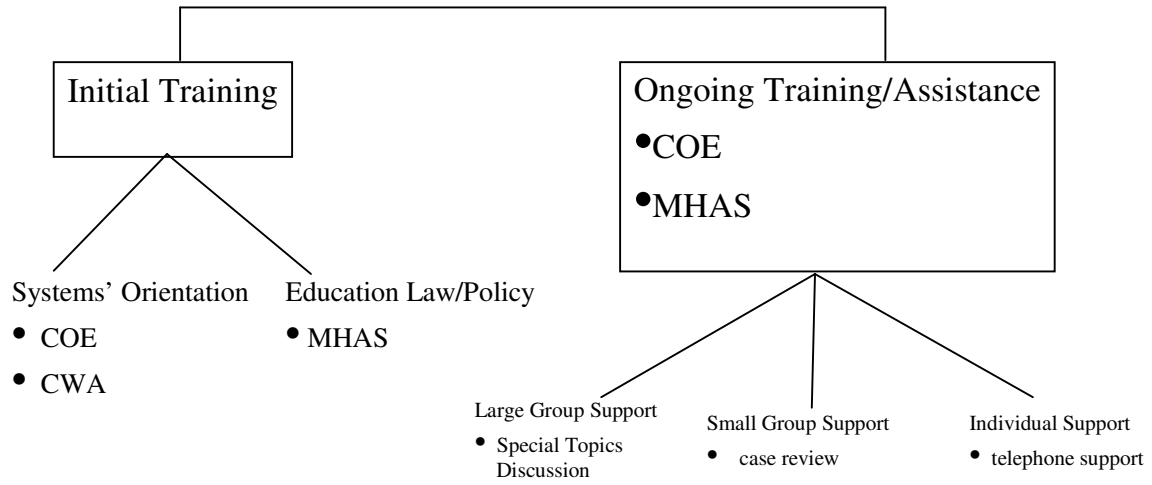
Another goal of the project was to improve school performance data of youth served by the education liaisons and to provide evidence that intervention by the education liaisons resulted in more appropriate educational services for foster youth. The school records of 120 foster youth were examined for the year prior to intervention by the education liaison and the year immediately following treatment. Sixty youth were randomly selected from the 160 cases that comprised the first year caseload of the education liaison assigned to the pilot DCFS office. These foster youth had been served by the education liaison for such problems as needing an assessment for special education, additional mental health services, a more or less restrictive classroom setting, tutoring, or enrollment in an alternative educational program. The other 60 foster youth were from the same or a comparable geographic DCFS office and none had received services from the education liaison or were on the education liaison's caseload. From

school records, the following information was identified for the 120 youth: grade point average, math and reading achievement test scores, daily attendance, special education status, and the number of schools attended during the two year period. The most striking finding were the significant differences in math and reading test scores between those who were served and those who were not served by the education liaison. In both math and reading, the control group had significantly higher scores on the pretest than the treatment group but no significant differences were found in math or reading test scores on the post test. In other words, while the control group out-performed the more troubled treatment group during the pretreatment year, during the post treatment year, the treatment group showed signs of improving in math and reading while the control group's test performance followed a typical downward trajectory for youth in foster care over time (see Appendices G, H and I, page 87).

Graphics of:

1. Training and Technical Assistance of Education Liaison
2. Education Liaison Responsibilities

Training and Technical Assistance of Education Liaisons



Responsibilities of Partner Agencies in
Supporting the Education Liaison Model

Responsibilities of Partner Agencies in Supporting the Education Liaison Model

Education liaison background:

- Educational liaisons who were successful in this position worked previously as high school counselors, vice principals, special education teachers, attendance counselors. The education liaisons held Pupil Personnel credentials and/or Educational Specialist credentials.
- The position was advertised within the County Office of Education and after an intensive interview process conducted by a team of representatives from LACOE, DCFS and MHAS, individuals were selected because of their knowledge of rules and regulations of California schools, knowledge of available educational resources and services, and sensitivity to and awareness of issues faced by youth in foster care.

The responsibilities of the education liaison, County Office of Education, Child Welfare Agency, and the Advocacy Law Office are described below.

Education Liaison Job Responsibilities:

- Each education liaison is assigned to a regional office of the child welfare agency.
- Social workers make referrals to the education liaison when confronted with an educational problem for a child that they are unable to resolve (see Appendix B, page 59). Problems can include among others, inability to obtain a child's school records, refusal by a school district to enroll a child in school, inappropriate denial of special education eligibility, failure to provide required special education services, inappropriate school placement, and inappropriate suspension or expulsion of a child.

- Education liaisons maintain a contact log documenting all cases referred to them by social workers (see Appendix C, page 63). Entries include the child's name, who referred the case to the education liaison, and the nature of the referral. As education liaisons work to resolve problems, they enter into the log each subsequent contact and action required to secure appropriate programs and services for the referred youth.
- Upon receipt of a referral, the education liaison analyzes and discusses the referral with the social worker to determine an appropriate course of action. The education liaison confers with the social worker about the youth's schooling situation, reads the case file (e.g., including bi-annual reports to the court on school performance) and requests recent school records (e.g., attendance, achievement, transcripts, IEP).
- Simple referrals are handled by the education liaison by providing one time or intermittent counsel to the social worker; more complex referrals require direct intervention by the education liaison to ensure that the needs of the foster youth are appropriately addressed. This may involve contacting a resource person at the school of attendance, soliciting information from or providing information to the caregiver and social worker, attending an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Student Study Team (SST) meeting at the school, and/or investigating alternative school options. It is expected that about half the cases will be resolved by the education liaisons with one or two inquiries/actions; a third will be resolved with 3 to 10 inquiries/actions, and the remaining cases will involve problems so complex that they required over 10 inquiries/actions to resolve and

may need to be referred to the advocacy law office (see Appendix I for more complete description of Role of Education Liaison as Advocate).

- Education liaisons participate on multi-disciplinary teams such as initial assessment teams, system of care teams, and/or family-to-family teams to provide educational expertise and point out what assessments and services are needed to secure appropriate placement for the foster youth being reviewed.
- Education liaisons provide formal group training to social workers in their region offices on school issues that are of general concern.
- Education liaisons provide training to newly hired social workers on education and school issues they are likely to encounter.

County Office of Education Involvement

- Develop contract with CWA to co-locate COE employees serving as education liaisons in CWA offices; CWA to provide office space including desk, telephone, computer and some clerical support; CWA to provide funds to COE for salaries and benefits of COE employees serving as education liaisons and COE administrator supervising education liaisons.
- Develop job description and advertise in COE Human Resource Division for education liaisons. Collaborate with representatives from CWA and advocacy law office in the screening of eligible applicants, conducting interviews, and selecting education liaisons.
- Conduct initial training of education liaisons in collaboration with CWA and law office staff to increase awareness of educational resources and services, rules and regulations of schools, and educational policy surrounding laws.

- Provide COE administrator to serve as field supervisor of education liaisons: supervisor meets weekly with education liaisons and CWA project coordinator to review contact logs and individual cases, liaisons with school district and CWA regional office administrators, contacts school and district administrators when education liaisons are unable to make progress resolving problematic cases.
- COE Supervisor and education liaisons provide training to social workers in regional offices as well as new hires in Academy about educational problems that foster youth encounter as well as school resources and regulations.

Child Welfare Agency Involvement

- Negotiate contract with COE to co-locate and support COE employees serving as education liaisons in CWA offices; CWA to provide office space including desk, telephone, computer and some clerical support; CWA to provide a CWA Project Coordinator to work with education liaisons and COE Supervisor; CWA to provide funds to COE to cover salaries and benefits of education liaisons and COE Supervisor to education liaisons.
- CWA to apply for federal funds to cover salaries and benefits of project workers (education liaisons, COE Supervisor, CWA Coordinator); overhead costs for cell phones, laptops, local mileage, supplies and clerical support; and law office staff participation for training and technical assistance (see Section 7: Funding Options).
- Participate in initial training of education liaisons to develop awareness of child protective system operations.

- Provide opportunities for social workers in region offices and new hires in Academy to receive training from COE Supervisor and education liaisons on educational policy and school resources and regulations.

Law Office Involvement:

- Provide initial training for the education liaisons on a variety of relevant educational policy and legal issues.
- Provide ongoing training to increase the education liaisons' knowledge about key elements of education law and policy relevant to their work (e.g., special education, suspension and expulsion). This is done in a variety of ways: (a) monthly large group meetings with all the education liaisons that include presentations on relevant laws and policies and discussions about common problems with which they were all dealing; (b) monthly meetings with small groups of education liaisons to discuss the individual cases on which they are working and strategies to resolve the problems.
- Provide weekly technical assistance with individual cases on which the education liaisons are working.
- Education liaisons have daily access to the law office staff by telephone. During the course of the day, if an education liaison is unclear about the next steps to take on a case, he or she has the option of getting immediate information from the law office staff.
- Provide in-depth training to agency workers in the offices and units served by the project on a variety of relevant educational policy and legal issues.

- When cases are referred to the advocacy law office, a staff member attends case conferences with the education liaison to move the case along. Law office staff also attend special education meetings (i.e., an individualized education program meeting) with the education liaison when the backing of the law office is necessary to resolve the issues in the case. In those cases, when the reason why the child is not receiving appropriate school services involves a violation of federal or state special education law, the law office staff files a noncompliance complaint with the state or federal government. For rare cases, when there is a disagreement between the child's caregiver and the school district about a child's special education eligibility, evaluation, placement, or services, or other aspect of special education law, and the caregiver's position clearly seems to be correct, the law office represents the child in special education mediation (the first stage of a special education administrative hearing).

Training Curricula for:

Initial Training of Education Liaisons

Training of Social Workers

Monthly Large Group Meetings with Education Liaisons

Case Reviews and Telephone Access

Training and Technical Assistance

Incorporating multiple training components into the Education Initiative liaison model greatly enhanced its effectiveness. The training components included:

- **Initial training of the Education Liaisons**
An intensive three-day training that covered the structure of the child welfare system, what constitutes abuse and neglect, and relevant aspects of education law and policy. Hypothetical cases were used so the education liaisons could apply the areas of the law that were covered. Training topics and hypothetical cases are included.
- **Training of Social Workers**
Ongoing training that covered a wide range of topics in education law and policy. The training curriculum is included.
- **Monthly Meetings with Education Liaisons**
Meeting with all the education liaisons that focused on ongoing law and policy topics relevant to their cases. Select agendas from the meetings are included.
- **Case Reviews and Telephone Access**
Individual and small group meetings with education liaisons to review their cases and provide analysis of issues and assistance on required next steps. Daily telephone access to technical assistance for the education liaisons to provide them immediate information with which to resolve the issues in their cases.

Initial Training of Education Liaisons

Module 1: (see attached case study of Joey, page 37)

Surrogate parent
Due process procedures
IEP process
AB3632 mental health services
Discipline procedures
Non-public schools
Evaluations
Transition services
Working with CSWs

Module 2:

Asking school for written policies
How and when to request a particular teacher or class
Problems that arise when child transfers from one school district to another

Module 3:

Magnet schools
Transportation problems when child is moved
Relationship of placement to education

Module 4:

Delays in assessment
Delays in holding IEP meeting
Delays in getting AB3632 mental health services
How violation of special education law can lead to removal from foster home

Module 5: (see attached case study of Annie, page 39)

Court ordering 60-day visit without educational planning
Holding exit IEP meeting with receiving school district
County Office of Education v. local school district
Confidentiality of school records
Enrollment in school

Module 6:

Inappropriate special education placement
SED eligibility but no problems
NPS placement because of group home placement
Section 504 and reasonable accommodation
Enrollment in school

Module 7:

Use of opportunity transfers
Special education eligibility
What to do when child is failing classes
Behavior intervention plans
Tutoring resources
Data gathering

Module 8:

Inappropriate NPS placement
No IEP review
What to do when child is behind in credits and wants to graduate on time

Module 9: (see attached case study of Matthew, page 39)

Role of assistive technology in special education
Section 504

JOEY

Joey is 14 years old and was placed with his paternal grandparents by DCFS. His grandparents are his legal guardians. His father, recently released from jail, is now living at the grandparents' house as well. He sees his mother on a daily basis. Joey currently is not attending school.

Joey did not attend kindergarten. He became eligible for special education as a student with a learning disability at the end of the first grade. His cognitive ability was estimated to be in the average range (standard score of 102). Joey was found to have a significant visual perceptual delay. Fine motor coordination was also delayed. His reading and spelling scores were pre-1st grade level. At the end of the first grade year, Joey's teacher reported that he was unable to match any sounds to the appropriate letters, recall two-letter words from one minute to the next, or match uppercase to lowercase letters. Except for math, he had made no academic progress. Joey also was extremely distractible, easily upset, and very disorganized in his personal habits and in his approach to tasks. He could be loud, disruptive, and aggressive with peers. Change was upsetting to him. He had 71 absences during the first grade, however, his poor attendance was not found to explain his poor academic progress.

Joey started the second grade in a special day class and continued to receive his special education services in special day classes through the seventh grade. Absences from school varied from a low of 34 days in the second grade to a high of 72 days in the fifth grade. In February of his seventh grade year, an IEP meeting was held and Joey was found no longer to meet the criteria for having a specific learning disability. Consequently, he was dismissed from special education services. The IEP states "Psychological processes appear intact. Impairments in academic areas result from poor attendance, low average cognitive ability and emotional/behavioral factors." Joey's parents never signed this IEP.

The decision to deny Joey special education eligibility was based on the school psychologist's report. The psychologist had given Joey a test of his cognitive ability, and his standard scores ranged from 80 to 92. On two achievement tests, Joey's standard scores were as follows: Decoding – 79 and 81, Reading Comprehension – 69, Math Calculation – 69 and 71, Math Application – 76, and Spelling – 70 and 74.

The psychological report also included observations and impressions of Joey during the testing session. The psychologist wrote: "He is hyper-fidgety, with his fingers and feet moving at the same time. His comments and demeanor suggest that Joey has an incredibly low opinion of himself. He is an essentially troubled, mistrusting, depressed, and oppositional child." The psychologist also stated: "Joey has a history of poor peer relationships. He will talk to anyone seated around him but does not appear to form meaningful relationships with peers and adults."

Shortly after the IEP meeting where Joey was denied special education eligibility, his parents took him out of school, knowing that he could not function in the regular

education program. The social worker brought this case to the attention of the education liaison in June of that year.

1. Who has the authority to sign Joey's IEPs, consent to assessments by the school, or initiate due process proceedings?
 - Surrogate parents
 - Foster parents rather than guardians
2. Was the school district correct in denying Joey special education eligibility? Why or why not?
 - Eligibility—LD, ED, OHI
 - Problems with assessment
 - No assessment of psychological processing
 - No assessment of the reason for the many absences
3. How would you go about getting Joey back in school?
 - Parents didn't sign IEP, therefore placement stays the same
 - Refer to Student Absence Review Board (SARB)
4. If you believe the school district was incorrect in denying Joey special education eligibility, what steps would you take to reinstate Joey's special education eligibility? What would you do if you were not successful?
 - Request IEP meeting to review eligibility and placement
 - NPS placement
 - Request information conference
 - Request due process hearing and mediation
5. If Joey again becomes eligible for special education services, what specific services would you recommend for him?
 - Referral for AB3632 services
 - Transition services

ANNIE

Annie is an 11- year old girl who was originally placed by DCFS in 1995 because her mother could not control her and was unable to get help for her. She lived in a series of foster homes but would have to leave because of her escalating behavior which included setting a couch on fire and attempting suicide. She eventually was placed at the local state hospital where she stayed for over one year. While at the state hospital she attended the on-grounds school which is operated by the County Office of Education. She had an IEP and was identified as emotionally disturbed. During the year she received A's and B's at the school and learned to control many of her assaultive and aggressive behaviors. Her mother attended family counseling regularly. At a treatment team meeting which the school did not attend, the hospital recommended that she be discharged to live with mother, and as a result the court ordered a 60-day visit to begin immediately.

1. What problems regarding education do you foresee occurring when Annie returns home to mother?
2. Was there anything that could have been done prior to discharge that would have facilitated Annie's enrollment in the local school district?

MATTHEW

Matthew is 13 years old and has lived with his grandmother since he was 3. He has been eligible for special education services as a learning disabled student for the past four years and currently attends a special day class at the local middle school. One of his biggest problems is his inability to transfer his thoughts to the written page. As a result he is very frustrated with school and sometimes refuses to go. The social worker has come to you and asked you if there is anything the school is obligated to do to help Matthew.

1. How would you respond to the social worker's question?
2. What would you advise the social worker to do?
3. If Matthew was not eligible for special education services, could the school be obligated to provide a computer?

Training Topics for Social Workers

The Role of the Social Worker as an Advocate for Education

How to Approach Schools for Information

How to navigate the educational system

Basic information on how schools are organized and operate

Records and Forms

Confidentiality and release of records

Cumulative records

Progress reports

Process for enrollment and clearance

Credits

Educational Interventions in General Education

Student Study/Success Team

Surrogate Parents

When is a surrogate parent necessary

What to do if there is a parent available

How to curtail a parent's right to make educational decisions

Who can be a surrogate parent

How is one appointed

What can they do; what can you do if you disagree

Substitute decision-making for children not in special education (A section of the Responsible Adult provision of the Welfare and Institution Code added here)

IEP Process

Referral and assessment process

Disability categories

IEP meeting

Role of social workers at IEP meetings

What to expect

Who attends an IEP meeting

How to prepare for an IEP meeting

What is a good IEP

Review examples of good and bad IEPs

Goals, objectives, benchmarks

Request for general education curriculum

Appeals Process

Due Process procedures

Compliance complaints

“504” Process and How it Differs from IDEA

Related Services

- AB3632 mental health services/DIS counseling
- CCS – OT/PT services
- Assistive Technology
- Language and speech services

Transition Services under IDEA

Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans

Discipline Procedures (includes suspension and expulsion)

- SARB/truancy laws
- Alternative Education

Title I Funding for Neglected and Delinquent Minors

Early Intervention Services (0-3 years)

Regional Center Services

Special Programs

- Magnet programs
- Continuation school
- Open enrollment

Monthly Large Group Meetings with Education Liaisons
Training/Technical Assistance Topics (Partial list)

- Disciplinary procedures
- Surrogate parents
- Expulsion
- Compensatory education
- Who chooses educational “methodology”?
- Inclusion
- High School Exit Exam
- Parentally placed private school students
- Characteristics of disabilities
 - Educational remediation for children with learning disabilities
 - Cerebral palsy
 - National Resource Council Report on Autism
 - Asperger disorder
 - What constitutes an emotional disturbance
- Home schooling
- IEP short term objectives
- Determining when a student requires para-educator support
- 504 Plans
- Making valid accommodations in standardized testing
- “It’s the person first – then the disability”
- *Chanda Smith* Consent Decree
- Charter schools and students with disabilities
- Determining if students receive educational benefit
- Adapting curriculum in the classroom
- Special Education Complaints
- Limiting parents’ rights to make educational decisions
- Summer camps for children with disabilities
- Nonpublic Schools
- Accessing school records
- Advocating for school credits
- Student Study/Success Teams
- Wraparound services

Types of Questions Received from Education Liaisons for Technical Assistance in Case Review Sessions or by Telephone

- A high school student living with a foster parent was receiving RSP (resource specialist program) pull out services for English, Math, and Science, but was feeling extremely overwhelmed at school, seemingly depressed, and was not able to stay on task. What services should the education liaison recommend for her at her upcoming IEP meeting?
- A 13-year old student living in a group home who had been identified as ED (having an emotional disturbance) and was in a special education class for students with emotional disturbance brought a 2-inch knife to school. The school wanted to expel him. The student already had been suspended for 13 days that year and there were no behavioral interventions in the student's IEP. Furthermore, the child's social worker had signed his IEP. Could the school district expel him? What should the education liaison do in the case?
- The foster parent of an elementary school student had requested that her foster child be assessed for special education, but the school district psychologist refused to initiate the assessment indicating that she was not supposed to assess children in foster care and there was no other psychologist available to do an assessment. What should the education liaison do?
- How can appropriate services be provided for a 1st grade gifted student capable of doing 3rd and 4th grade work, but who assaults others and throws chairs when upset. This student had been accepted into a day treatment program that was not geared for gifted students.
- A foster parent who takes in adolescent males frequently has trouble getting them enrolled in the local high school. The dean will not enroll the students in school until he questions them personally and decides that he will allow them to enroll. What should the education liaison do about the dean's pattern of behavior?
- A foster youth, identified as having an emotional disturbance by the school, was in jeopardy of being expelled for bringing a marker to school, cutting into a windowsill, and defacing a textbook. He previously had been suspended twice and was now out of school for 16 days since the incident, since the school district would not let him return. An IEP meeting was scheduled but had not yet been held. Since the number of days the youth was out of school had exceeded the legal mandate, the education liaison wanted to know whether there was anything that should be done immediately?
- A foster youth's former school refused to send the youth's records to his new school. The new school was unwilling to enroll him until the records were received. The education liaison wanted a copy of California law specifying that the previous school had a legal obligation to send the records to the new school.

Strategies for Ongoing Funding

Strategies for Ongoing Funding

Ongoing funding for the Educational Liaison Model is available through a variety of federal and state programs including foster care, Medicaid (EPSDT) and education. Maximizing these funding opportunities will allow for the development of new services and supports for addressing educational needs of foster youth. The following provide examples of some of these funding opportunities.

- **Child Welfare Dollars** – Most child welfare services are supported by a combination of federal and state funds that are commonly known as Title IV-E. However, a match by the county that includes no federal dollars is required to draw down these dollars. It is possible for a county to use its Foster Youth Services dollars (SB933), which are 100 percent state funds as the match.
- **Medicaid Dollars** – By partnering with the County Department of Mental Health it is possible to draw down Medicaid dollars (EPSDT) to support some activities of the Education Liaison.
- **Education Dollars** – Under Title I of the federal No Child Left Behind Act there are dollars, which can be used to supplement educational services. These funds are dedicated specifically to delinquent and neglected children and youth who are living in group homes.

