



**KIDS Network Director's Report**  
**September 2, 2015**

*KIDS Network is a countywide umbrella organization formed to strategically determine priorities for children, youth and families in the areas of human services, health, education and juvenile justice. The Network supports the work of the Child Abuse Prevention Council and the Santa Barbara Grants Consortium.*

July and August are usually slower months for KIDS Network. I attended meetings of the Perinatal Wellness Coalition and the First 5 Advisory Board as well as the ADMHS Children's System of Care and the Network of Family Resource Centers. The Perinatal Wellness Coalition is led by Sandra Copley and was formerly called the Maternal Child Mental Health and Substance Use Coalition. Along with the new name, the group developed a mission statement to anchor their work in the community: *The Perinatal Wellness Coalition promotes community collaboration to support families from preconception through early childhood. The Coalition focuses on increased access to perinatal services for mental health and substance use through education, prevention, screening and advocacy.* First 5's Advisory Board heard a status update on 211 from Community Action Commission and also received updates from First 5 staff on recently awarded grants, early care and education activities and the progress they are making in building community relationships through their new communication strategies. The Children's System of Care continues to explore a new model for integrated care that will include ADMHS, Child Welfare, Probation, schools and community-based providers. The Network of FRC's hosted a representative from Child Support Services, who is interested in developing community partnerships to help them expand their scope beyond enforcement to adopt a more family-centered approach.

In July, we hosted Mary De Souza, our regional liaison from the Office of Child Abuse Prevention, for two days of site visits. She visited St. Vincent's Family Strengthening Program, CALM, Storyteller, Guadalupe Family Service Center and Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center. She also attended our regularly scheduled Child Abuse Prevention Council meeting, where we discussed the Partnership for Strengthening Families and participated in an abbreviated Parent Café that was facilitated by one of our parent leaders, Cecilia Herrera Rios. In Mary's words, *"It was truly an enjoyable couple of days in Santa Barbara County. I got to see so much of the county and it was wonderful to see all of the collaborative work you are doing and to meet many of the people involved!"*

After a week of vacation, I participated in the Orientation of the newly formed Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force. The Task Force has been appointed by the Board of Supervisors to do an in-depth review of the Child Welfare system in order to make recommendations on how to better serve children. The presentation outlined the structure, purpose and goals of the KIDS Network and the Child Abuse Prevention Council; gave a brief overview of protective factors and highlighted the role of KIDS Network/CAPC partners in promoting family strengthening and child safety.

In August, I met with Marcelo Lopez, a consultant for the South Coast Task Force on Youth Gangs, to discuss my work with the Service Providers Group. I shared the process we went through to get to the newly crafted statement of purpose and priority goals. Marcelo's conversations with key stakeholders will guide the recalibration and strategic planning process of the Task Force.

On August 11<sup>th</sup> I participated in a county-wide meeting with leaders from THRIVE Santa Barbara. The site directors are exploring a new governance model with the help of the Santa Barbara Foundation and two nationally known consultants from Custom Evaluation Services. The consultants validated all of the work that THRIVE has accomplished since its inception and applauded the leadership at each THRIVE site for their dedication and commitment to the vision of creating consistent pathways to better outcomes for children and families. During the meeting the consultants guided discussions about systems and system design, theories of change and the concept of translational leadership. The group is hopeful that their partnership with KIDS Network will be an asset as they cultivate leadership and use the data they have collected to innovate, sustain, scale and spread the successes of the THRIVE communities.

The Education Affinity Group of Santa Barbara's Social Venture Partners is exploring project ideas for supporting Early Childhood Education. They have identified three interest areas: happy families (home visitation, risk screening and parent education); access to affordable quality childcare; and education and orientation for the community. They are in the process of meeting with key leaders from the field and asked me to give an overview of the KIDS Network, local strategies for strengthening families and suggestions for how they might engage with this topic area. They were very interested in the intersections between various networks within our community and especially impressed by the services offered through the Family Resource Centers. I shared the preliminary work of the Grants Consortium in designing a Parent Connections resource hub that would connect parents and providers to regional resources for parent education and support. The Social Venture Partners have a unique form of philanthropy that includes not only financial support but also donations of time and talent.

*Submitted August 28, 2015 by Barbara Finch*