



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Groundbreaking Summit Convenes State and Local Leaders  
to Discuss Mental Health Needs of Foster Children**

**LOS ANGELES** – The Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (CLC) will sponsor a Foster Youth Mental Health Summit -- "Making Reform Real: Improving Mental Health Services for Foster Children" - - from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on *Friday, May 19, 2006* at The California Endowment's Center for Healthy Communities, 1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

This Summit, supported by a generous grant from The California Endowment, will bring together a select group of over 150 government, judicial, and community members dedicated to improving the delivery of mental health services to foster youth. Summit attendees will spend the day working together to develop recommendations and action plans aimed at enhancing and expanding Los Angeles' efforts to better meet the needs of children in our foster care system.

"It is heartbreaking to think that children who have been abused and neglected and who most need our support end up with an uncertain future and struggling to find stable ground due to our collective failure to meet their mental health needs," stated Darrell Steinberg, former member of the California State Assembly and a keynote lunch speaker at the Summit. "With funds now available due to the passage of Proposition 63, we need to plan carefully so we can help foster children get back on track."

Already traumatized children often endure lifelong problems due to the system's breakdown in attending to their mental health needs. One former foster youth observed, "I was never asked what I was really feeling. They just told me that I needed to see their counselor, take this medication and I'd feel better."

"Appropriate mental health assessment, prompt treatment, and continuity of care are essential for abused and neglected youth," said CLC Executive Director Miriam Krinsky. "Far too often, however, the mental health needs of foster youth are overlooked, and the delivery of services is hampered by service voids or delays. These failures cause further disruption in the lives of the vulnerable children all of us are charged with nurturing and protecting."

These comments echo recommendations from the nonpartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, whose roadmap for reform of the nation's foster care system includes a call for greater collaboration among organizations who serve foster youth, better information and tracking of cases, and an enhanced role by the court in ensuring safety, permanence and well-being for foster children.

Following the Foster Youth Mental Health Summit, the Children's Law Center will generate a report based on its recommendations. That report is expected to be broadly disseminated among leaders in the child welfare and mental health systems.

Director of the CLC Foster Youth Mental Health Initiative, Garrison Smith, stated: “The Summit will create dialogue among those professionals responsible for ensuring the emotional well being of children in foster care. From this gathering, we hope and expect that real momentum for change will result.”

*For more information about the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles and the Foster Youth Mental Health Initiative, visit [www.clcla.org](http://www.clcla.org).*

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