

Moving from **Mandated Reporting** to **Community Supporting**

Recommendations from the Inglewood

and Greater Los Angeles Community

MRCS Task Force | January 16, 2024



La Mikia Castillo

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La Mikia Castillo (*she / her / ella*) is Co-Founder & Principal of Castillo Consulting Partners, a firm that is dedicated to empowering diverse leaders to use their voices for change. La Mikia, whose work in the public, private and nonprofit sectors has spanned from education and economic justice, to public health, environmental justice, child welfare and juvenile justice, has over two decades of experience in leadership development, diversity, equity & inclusion, strategic planning, design thinking, grassroots community organizing, youth engagement, policy advocacy and systems change. A commitment to social justice, racial equity and social change permeates each aspect of her personal and professional life.

In her consulting work, La Mikia supports organizations with developing, implementing and assessing data-driven strategies, designs and facilitates leadership development trainings, and moderates difficult conversations around race, bias and equity. Her expertise lies in helping organizations effectively embed diversity, equity & inclusion into their leadership, policies, practices, and procedures.

La Mikia is Afro-Latina, was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, and resides in LA with her husband/partner, Daniel, their children, Justice and Legacy, and dog, Ginger. She holds Bachelor's Degrees in Ethnic Studies and Urban Studies & Planning from UC San Diego, dual Master's Degrees in Public Policy and Urban Planning, and Certificates in Public Management, Political Management and Real Estate from the University of Southern California, where she now serves as an adjunct faculty member in the Sol Price School of Public Policy. She also teaches Black and Latino Relations courses in the Pan-African Studies Department at Cal State University Los Angeles. Her personal life experiences and faith encourage her passion for seeking justice and promoting policy changes that will make it possible for all communities to thrive.

Dr. Laurel Bear



Dr. Laurel Bear was an educator in the Alhambra Unified School district for over 38 years. She has served in numerous positions, as Teacher, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Director of Special Education & Student Services and prior to retiring in 2018, as the Assistant Superintendent, Student/Employee Welfare. Dr. Bear has created, implemented and operated the Alhambra Unified School District's Gateway To Success Program. Gateway To Success was honored as a Nationally recognized school/community based mental health and safety program. Agreements with local colleges, universities and local agencies allowed Dr. Bear and her Gateway to Success team to serve as a training center for clinical interns and therapists, who deliver school-based mental health services. Over 2,000 students yearly received school-based mental health services because of this innovative and comprehensive program. Dr. Bear instituted and organized the collaboration of several critical partnerships in an effort to enhance school safety as well as school-based service delivery of Social Emotional Learning for ALL students. These collaborations included County and State organizations, local mental health agencies, police/sheriff departments, doctors, judges, prosecutors, non-profits, faith groups, hospitals and elected officials as well as many Universities. Dr. Bear's programs have been funded through the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, The US Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, and California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA).

Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Bear has received numerous professional awards and recognition for her focus on school safety and mental health. She is invited to speak around the country about school safety, student suicide prevention, social emotional learning programs, as well as mental health education.

How we got here...

ONE



Partnership Building

LACOE, Commission on Children and Families, Pritzker Foundation, Board of Supervisors, DCFS, DPSS, DMH, Casey Family Programs creates Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Champions

TWO



Exploration and Design

Just Advocates, with Safe & Sound, Dr. Laurel Bear, and Castillo Consulting Partners, LLC conduct listening sessions, sharing findings and recommendations

THREE



Implement with Community and Educators

Work with school leadership, community, and educators to implement recommendations from mandated reporters and community.

Project **Background & Goals**

In partnership with **Inglewood Unified School District** and **Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families**, this project set forth to:

- (1) **understand the experiences** that community members – particularly parents and students – and education-based mandated reporters/community supporters have had with mandated reporting and the impact of those experiences; and
- (2) learn what community members and education-based mandated reporters/community **supporters envision as an alternative**, with a focus on supporting families.

Executive Summary

7 Key Themes

1. Parents and mandated reporters/community supporters both believe the current mandated reporting process is **biased against families of color**.
2. Mandated reporting is **punitive** and does not result in supportive services to families.
3. Parents want school staff to develop **relationships** before filing reports. But, mandated reporters/community supporters are told **it is not their job** to investigate allegations.
4. Shared belief that filing reports **breaks trust** between families and school staff.
5. **Fear** and **lack of trust in the system** is felt on **both sides** of the mandated reporting process.
6. Mandated reporters/community supporters training must be updated to be **anti-racist**, focus on **support not surveillance**, offered **in-person**, and include connections to those with **lived experience**.
7. Parents and mandated reporters/community supporters want a list of **local community resources** that can be provided to offer support to families.

7 Joint Recommendations

1. **Transform Narrative.** Change our mindset towards a strength-based, community-supporting, family-focused and anti-racist framework. At a minimum, ensure that all relevant laws, policies, trainings, information guides, and other communications reflect compliance with AB 2085 and all other provisions of community supporting.
2. **Invest in Community Pathway.** Build awareness of and invest in a sustainable community pathway – specifically including faith-based and community-based organizations – to allow for mandated supporters to provide resources and support to families, rather than reporting families.
3. **Create Supports for Parent Survivors of Domestic Violence.** Review policies and develop supportive programming to partner with families experiencing domestic violence.
4. **Reform Liability.** Reform the liability and penalty provisions imposed on mandated reporters/community supporters to create a strength-based system that restores trust between mandated reporters/community supporters and the communities that they serve.
5. **Update Mandate and Reform Training.** Training must be anti-racist, anti-bias, trauma informed, and focused on support not surveillance. Additionally, training must be mandated, offered in-person, and include an opportunity for staff to analyze multiple case examples with experts both with lived and learned experiences.
6. **Build a Practice of Consultation.** Create systems to allow for mandated supporters to consult with colleagues and conduct an “equity-check” before making a report.
7. **Rethink Hotline.** Transform Hotline practices – both training and assessment – to ensure that mandated reporters/community supporters participate in establishing family strengthening.

7

Themes
from the **Listening Sessions**

Theme #1

Parents and mandated reporters/community supporters both believe the

current mandated reporting

process is **biased against families of color.**



“The system is racist. Period. All you have to do is look at who’s being taken away. If there were as many white children in foster care as there are Black and brown, this would be considered a crisis and it would have been fixed a long time ago.”

– Inglewood Listening Session Participant

ALL participants believed that there are many levels of “bias and cultural ignorance and/or influence” which impact the filing or even “lack of filing” regarding suspected child abuse cases.

– Educator Listening Session Participant



Theme #2

Mandated reporting is

punitive

and does not result in supportive
services to **families**.



“Mandated reporting is about policing, punishment and control. They say it’s to stop child abuse, but that’s a lie. Most of these kids are not being abused. If they wanted to help us, they would talk to us, not report us.”

– Inglewood Parent



“Most of us have no idea what happens after we make a report. And from what I can tell, my intent to help by reporting is actually leading to harm, which is the exact opposite of why I called to report in the first place.”

– Inglewood Mandated Reporter

One Inglewood community listening session focused on the harm caused by mandated reporters filing reports because of suspected domestic violence in the home:

“After a mandated report was made, instead of helping the abused mothers, DCFS determined that these mothers had ‘failed to protect’ their children and took their children away, despite the physical abuse not being against the children.”

– Castillo Consulting Partners

Theme #3

Parents want school staff to develop

Relationships before filing reports.

But, mandated reporters/community supporters

are told **it is not their job** to investigate allegations and that they are required by law to file reports as soon as they suspect neglect.

“If you’re interacting with my children, you should get to know me. Show an interest in my family before you have a concern. Build a relationship so we can establish trust.”

– Inglewood Parent





“I would rather help a family than report them. But if there is even a little suspicion that there is abuse or they need help and I don’t report them, my job is on the line. As mandated reporters, we are basically incentivized to report, report, report.”

– Inglewood Mandated Reporter

Theme #4

Shared belief that filing reports

breaks trust

between families and school staff, leading to **diminished working relationships** and an overall fear of government agencies and services.



“We need to work together. If there is a constant threat of this person having the power to take your child away, then the relationship is not authentic and I’m not going to come to them for support, no matter how desperate I might be.”

– Inglewood Parent



Following a report that was investigated and deemed unfounded:

“[The family] were so mad at me. I felt horrible and questioned whether or not I should ever make a report again because I don’t want to be wrong and put anyone else through that.”

– Inglewood Mandated Reporter

Several staff described how stressful it was when the student asked about “why a report was filed” and/or shared the “disruption caused because of a report filed.” Staff did not believe that reports that were filed were “appropriate.”

– Educator Listening Sessions



Theme #5

Fear and **lack of trust in the system**

is felt on **both sides of the mandated reporting** process. Mandated reporters/community supporters feel unsupported in the process and do not feel that their efforts are helping. Similarly, parents fear working with school staff because they don't trust that the system will help them.

Participants had difficulty recalling the specifics of the mandated child abuse training. They conveyed that their high priority concern was to “report, not to investigate,” along with their “fear of a fine, imprisonment and/or loss of their credential or employment, if they failed to report.”

– Educator Listening Sessions

“Participants described that they rarely share with their school colleagues whether or not they were involved in filing a suspected child abuse report... There was discussion centering on the “fear” to share information with anyone and the possible penalties, discipline and/or stigma that potentially could ensue if they were to discuss these matters.”

– Educator Listening Sessions



“Why would I go and ask for help when I’m struggling if it means that I might be questioned as a parent and have my kids taken away? I’d rather figure it out on my own than put my family through that.”

– Inglewood Parent

Theme #6

Mandated reporter training should be updated to be **anti-racist**, focus on **support** not surveillance, offered **in-person**, and include an opportunity for staff to discuss **real life case examples** with an expert and **interact with people** with lived experience—both families and mandated reporters/community supporters.

Over 50% of the mandated reporters interviewed during the listening sessions believed that the current mandated reporter training “evoked a level of fear.”

– Educator Listening Sessions



“Additionally, several participants expressed a need to receive additional guidance and/or assistance, by having IUSD provide a “support system,” an “expert” that the staff member would be able to contact in order to further consult with and/or provide family resources for circumstances as they pertain to suspected child abuse.”

– Educator Listening Sessions

Theme #7

Parents and mandated reporters/community supporters want a list of local **community resources** that can be provided to offer support to families, **not additional government interventions.**



“I don't trust the child welfare system. I don't trust LAPD. I don't trust the family court. They are interlocking systems that don't provide support.”

– Inglewood Parent

“The last thing we need is for churches and community organizations to become another arm of DCFS. We’ve already seen this happen with programs...and now we don’t feel like we can trust them.”

– Inglewood Listening Session



Seven Joint Recommendations

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Appendix

Partners

- Dr. Laurel Bear, PhD
- Castillo Consulting Partners
 - Team: Qui'Yona "Yahniie" Bridges, Megan Castillo, and Jayla Sheffield
 - Facilitators: Cannan Baxter, Jeffrey Hines, Gia Pendergraph and Emanie White-Heard
- Casey Family Programs
- Just Advocates
- Safe & Sound

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- Casey Family Programs
- Al Wooten Center
- Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches
- National Association of African-American Parents and Youth
- Reimagine Child Safety Coalition
- The Greater LA Education Foundation

Joint Methodology

- Between May and September 2023, multiple listening sessions were held with over 145 members of the Inglewood and Greater Los Angeles community to understand their experiences with mandated reporting.
- Community Listening Sessions
 - Lead: Castillo Consulting Group
 - Participants (97): Parents, students, and other community members with lived-experience in and with mandated reporting practices
- Educator Listening Sessions
 - Lead: Dr. Laurel Bear, PhD
 - Participants (49): Inglewood Unified School District administrators, certificated staff (teachers, psychologists, counsels), classified staff police department staff

Learn More

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