



Message From the Chair

I am pleased to enclose four briefings in the new series Sharing Information About Children in Foster Care. I know I don't have to tell you that the juvenile courts, child welfare agencies, and other local and state partner agencies grapple with issues of confidentiality every day as they try to make the best decisions for the children in their care. Children in foster care are one of this state's most vulnerable populations and often experience further interruption of their lives when their health and education records are not made available to child welfare agencies or the juvenile court. These briefs provide basic legal guidance about what information must be and may be shared and provides a starting point for discussions about how information can best be shared while still maintaining confidentiality.

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) wrote these policy papers on the challenge and promise of confidentiality law and policy in the areas of health care, education, mental health, and substance abuse. The briefings have been vetted and improved by many reviewers representing a broad range of organizations and agencies with expertise in the subject areas. I extend many thanks to those of you who took the time to contribute your on-the-ground experience in reviewing the papers. I would especially like to thank Kimberly Belshé, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency and my cochair on the California Child Welfare Council, and John Wagner, Director of the California Department of Social Services and chair of the council's Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee for their leadership in addressing this important topic.

I am also grateful for the work of Rebecca Gudeman, Senior Attorney with the National Center for Youth Law and a nationally recognized expert in adolescent health. Her knowledge of this area is unsurpassed, and we were fortunate to have her work with us.

These briefings further the recommendations of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care and the California Child Welfare Council on overcoming barriers to information sharing. We hope that they inspire greater collaboration among the juvenile courts and their child welfare partners and pave the way for sharing critical data while preserving and protecting the confidentiality that is so important for children in the foster care system.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carlos R. Moreno".

Carlos R. Moreno
Associate Justice, Supreme Court of California
Chair, California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care
Cochair, California Child Welfare Council