

**FRAMINGHAM, MA CHINS FORUM PARTICIPANT INPUT**  
**JUNE 20, 2006 – PLYMOUTH CHURCH**

Co-sponsored by the Children's League of MA  
Sen. Karen Spilka and Wayside

Below are participant's responses to three basic questions regarding the present CHINS system:

**WHAT WORKS?**

- Makes kids accountable
- Links families to resources
- Parents feel supported
- Creates collaboration with providers, state agencies etc. to support families
- Opportunity to Educate Families
- Helps to separate some kids from others (i.e.: stubborn child from more vicious)
- Younger kids are more influenced by system.
- Empowers parents

**WHAT FRUSTRATING ABOUT THE PRESENT SYSTEM?**

- Lack of consistency across courts and agencies
- Unable to follow through on some "threats"
- Gives parents a way out.
- PO's have very high caseloads so don't have time to gather services
- Parents become the "Bad Guy", judged etc.
- Poor communication between institutions
- Truancies sometimes causes exactly the opposite
- Perception of DSS
- Requires crisis before anything can be done
- State agencies don't have enough staff to really respond to the needs
- Court -not a family focused process – Parents and kids sitting there all day and may have to come back (work and school time lost)
- Parents not valued. Some parents have lost jobs because of going to court dates too many times.
- CHINS often makes families powerless
- Sometimes parents don't want to be empowered
- Some parents believe court will make things better because they can't
- CHINS has become a threatening device for families – not an opportunity to get services
- Not enough early prevention.
- System Broken. Not really a system at all.

## **WHAT WOULD BE YOUR VISION FOR A REFORMED CHINS?**

- More early intervention/prevention programs
- DSS liaison to courts
- Early Assessment
- Team approach between family and service providers etc.
- More DMH involvement early on
- Educate Families, Agencies and Courts about what resources there really are.
- One point of entry – Family Assessment Centers – Service centered – not punishing
- Educate schools re: early ID
- Interagency collaboration
- Team approach to child and family
- Services and Funding being protected by Law (Firewall around funding)
- Community Networks of those interested in working with these types of kids – It Takes A Village to Raise A Child –
- Use lead agency for community development
- More DSS attorneys
- Mechanism for involving/engaging other partners, especially those cynical about these kids
- Bigger pool of services. Waiting time 3-6 month for services
- More parent support/mentoring etc.
- FINS
- Court runs on schedule –respecting family's time.
- No out of home placements for truants
- Better coordination/collaboration for services
- Front line staff paid better so more professional and better trained
- Triage situation before court – Have a Service Plan in place for Kid and Family
- Free up DSS Court liaisons to actually do diversion work
- Think alternatively for kid's success. Not all kids DSS – think of a variety of asset building services/programs in local community that can be of real service to kids and fund them.