



# SOCIAL SERVICES CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

## SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

On July 28, 2009, the Governor signed the revised 2009-10 budget package which included \$80 million General Fund cut to CWS. When lost federal matching funds are included, the total cut grows to \$124 million. These cuts exacerbate historic under funding to an antiquated Child Welfare Services (CWS) budgeting and funding methodology that was established in the mid 1980's. Since that time, dramatic changes in child welfare policy and mandates have occurred, as well as demographic and societal changes, impacting the workload demands of the current system. The SB 2030 Workload Study established minimum and optimal caseload standards in 2000, and subsequent legislation required the development of a plan to implement the findings of this study. However, budget constraints have since prevented the State from allocating sufficient funding to implement the study's recommendations. Additional mandates since the workload study continue to tax social worker resources. CWS funding woes are exacerbated by the freezing of administrative funding at the 2001 level (See brief on "cost of doing business" or CODB). Thus, with increasing caseloads, decreased funding, and decreased staffing, the Department of Social Services' ability to meet federal and state mandates in serving children and families impacted by abuse and neglect is threatened. The existing staffing pattern contributes to a vicious cycle of an overburdened system that cannot adequately protect the children that we serve while pushing counties to improve State and Federal outcome measures for children as set forth in AB636 – California's Outcomes and Accountability System.



## PUBLIC BENEFIT/IMPACT

Reducing funding without eliminating any of the mandates that counties must meet passes the State's responsibility for providing services to the counties without providing adequate resources, policy direction or priorities on how to implement cuts. This places the burden on policy and service delivery on local child welfare agencies and county board of supervisors rather than on the State. For example, county departments must balance performing various functions with limited resources and consider such options as eliminating investigations for general neglect cases and triaging other abuse cases, increasing response times that exceed the immediate and 10-day required response, not seeing children on a monthly basis, or reducing Independent Living Program services for emancipating foster youth, all of which puts vulnerable children at risk. Further, absent services, absent proactive intervention, the cycle of child abuse expands to subsequent generations.

## COST TO THE GOVERNMENT

By passing State imposed program cuts to local agencies without providing relief from current requirements, the State is putting counties in the untenable position of deciding what not to do, and is ultimately abdicating its responsibility to abused and neglected children.

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**REQUESTED ACTION AND STRATEGY**

The County requests that its delegation seek to restore Child Welfare Services funding to pre-FY 08/09 status during the State FY 10/11 budget and explore the possibility of seeking options to relieve counties from mandates in FY 09/10 and FY 10/11 if funding is not restored.

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