



COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

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CWDA

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Governor to Abused Children: Sorry, We Can't Help You *Governor Vetoes Child Welfare Services Funding, Cuts IHSS Deeper*

SACRAMENTO – In signing the 2009-10 budget package today, the Governor used his blue pencil to veto \$80 million in General Fund from the county-run Child Welfare Services program, which responds to reports of abuse and neglect across the state. He also cut more deeply into the In-Home Supportive Services program than was previously agreed.

“Governor Schwarzenegger today sent a clear message to the abused and neglected children of California: Please take a number,” said Frank Mecca, Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. “When children die from abuse, the newspapers often ask what more could have been done to save them. The Governor just wrote the next headline with his blue pencil.”

When lost federal matching funds are included, the total child welfare cut grows to \$124 million. This represents 755 lost county child welfare workers across the state. These workers could have investigated 143,000 reports of abuse or neglect, or worked to reunify 20,400 foster children with their families.

“More abused children will be left unprotected as a result of this cut, and more children will languish in long-term foster care,” said Cathi Grams, CWDA President and Director of Butte County's Department of Employment and Social Services. “These cuts will result in fewer children being reunified with their families, traumatizing these children and, perversely, costing the state more for expensive foster care placements.”

The cut is especially shocking after the Governor's own admission, after a smaller 2004 veto of Child Welfare Services funding, that cuts to these services leave children unprotected. At that time, the total expected cut was only \$27.4 million – nearly \$100 million less than the current amount. “Simply put, failure to restore the [funding] has the potential to jeopardize the health and safety of California's most vulnerable children,” Schwarzenegger wrote in his signing message to SB 1612 (Speier, Statutes of 2004), a bill that restored the funding cuts. In his signing message the Governor also acknowledged that the cuts “could have the unintended consequence of severe reductions in services to vulnerable children and their families.”

Five years later, county officials pointed to that signing message in deriding the Governor's latest veto.

"The Governor's own statement from 2004 shows that he knows exactly what he's doing to children with this veto. He's leaving them in harm's way to suffer injury and even death," said Patricia S. Ploehn, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. "Los Angeles County and the whole state have made great improvements in achieving positive outcomes for children in foster care. With one stroke of his pen, the Governor is knowingly turning back the clock in a disastrous way for the children and families we serve."

In 2007, county social workers investigated 492,764 reports of abuse and neglect, substantiating more than 100,000 of the reports and bringing nearly 33,000 children into foster care.

In the In-Home Supportive Services program (IHSS), the Governor vetoed an additional \$28.9 million General Fund, which effectively eliminates exceptions to the elimination of domestic and related services for those with a functional index score of less than 4.0. Previously, recipients with feeding tubes and ventilators, or who require protective supervision due to dementia or other potentially self-injurious behavior, would have been exempted from this service cut.

"Eliminating services for these particularly vulnerable IHSS recipients will result in greater risk of injury, more hospitalizations, and more nursing-home admissions," said Will Lightbourne, CWDA Vice President of Services and Director of the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency. "This will cost the state far more than it saves, not to mention the human consequences of eliminating these services."

CWDA is a non-profit association representing the human service directors from each of California's 58 counties. The Association's mission is to promote a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities and protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect.

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