



California Commission on Aging
... a citizens voice within government



February 25, 2016

To: The Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

From: Frank J. Mecca
Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association

**RE: ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES: \$5 MILLION FOR
TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROGRAM**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), California Elder Justice Coalition and California Commission on Aging respectfully request your consideration and support of a budget item to increase statewide capacity in the Adult Protective Services (APS) program to protect and serve seniors and dependent adults who are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Specifically, we request your consideration to provide additional resources for a statewide training system for APS staff.

California's APS programs provide 24/7 emergency response to reports of abuse and neglect of elders and dependent adults. APS social workers deliver critical, often life-saving, services in a variety of abuse and neglect situations, including financial abuse. These social workers conduct in-person investigations on complex cases, often in coordination with local law enforcement, and leverage other system supports on behalf of victims including legal aid programs, the judiciary, long-term care services, and many others. APS social workers must be adept at helping victims and their families to navigate other systems such as conservatorships and to local aging programs for needed in-home services. Their efforts often enable elders and dependent adults to remain safely in their homes and communities, thus avoiding costly institutional placement into nursing homes.

APS social workers require specialized skill sets unlike those of other programs such as Child Protective Services (CPS), in which the state invests exponentially more resources. Adults are self-determining, meaning they have the ability to refuse services and make their own decisions. An APS social worker must be adept at helping victims understand what has happened in order to collaborate in the investigation and accept needed services. APS social workers must have the necessary skillset to advocate to protect the victim, and this can be a challenge when working with adults with disabilities who are dependent upon others for their care, and the growing population of seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, APS social workers must have the skills sets to address multiple, complex abuse and neglect cases, including the growing number of financial abuse cases. Financial abuse is the predominant form of abuse by others, comprising 30 percent of abuse investigations, and is often accompanied by mental/psychological abuse, physical abuse and neglect. Training for APS workers in identifying and intervening quickly in financial abuse cases is critical in protecting elders and dependent adults from a devastating and permanent financial loss which can be both extremely destructive and life-threatening. To protect abuse and neglect victims and strive to keep elders and dependent adults in the least restrictive, community-based setting, county APS often works with the county public guardian/conservator/administrators (PA/G/C), and given the significant overlap often between the APS and PA/G/C programs, additional training coordination and support between these programs is necessary.

The APS program was primarily a state-funded program until 2011, when the program was realigned and counties now have the 100 percent fiscal responsibility for the program. However, CDSS retained program oversight and regulatory and policy making responsibilities for the program. This included responsibility for funding and supporting the statewide training of APS workers in order to ensure consistency. Unfortunately, the statewide training program is underfunded and woefully inadequate to meet the current and future needs of APS programs. Currently, only \$88,000 (General Fund) is allocated to CDSS to support statewide training. This funding has not been increased for the past 11 years, despite the fact that APS reports statewide have risen by 90 percent between 2000-01 and 2014-15. As a point of comparison, APS and CWS workers protect equally vulnerable populations who suffer from abuse and neglect, yet APS workers receive less than 1 cent for every 1 dollar of state- and federally-funded training that is provided to CWS workers.

Nationally, the passage of the Elder Justice Act calls for the creation of a structure for administering national and state elder justice programs. California's over age 65 population is projected to grow significantly, increasing from 4.3 million in 2010 to 6.3 million by 2020 and will double to 8.6 million by 2030. The oldest demographic, those 85 and older, will grow by over 71 percent between 2010 and 2030.

High quality training for APS social workers is necessary to ensure consistent and competent services throughout the State, increased protection of both victims and workers, who often find themselves in very unsafe situations, and a reduced level of the risk of liability arising from poor or even dangerous actions taken by inadequately trained employees. For these reasons, we urge your support for \$5 million to build a strong training infrastructure.

cc: Jennifer Troia, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
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Theresa Pena, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
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