



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians

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February 29, 2016

To: The Honorable Tony Thurmond, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

**RE: CHILD WELFARE SERVICES – SERVICES TO
COMMERCIALY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) respectfully requests your support to provide \$19.7 million in additional General Fund to ensure child welfare agencies can meet its mandate of serving children who are commercially sexually exploited. Recent federal mandates have created an imperative for child welfare agencies to serve this population who has unique and extraordinary needs for service and supports, which cannot be met through the traditional child welfare program.

In 2014, the Legislature and Administration approved SB 855 which clarified that children who are commercially sexually exploited must be served as dependents under the child welfare system under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 300(b)(2). Until that time, these young victims found themselves bounced between law enforcement, probation and child welfare jurisdictions. SB 855 also established a Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Program whereby participating child welfare agencies are required to develop local protocols and multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) as a pre-requisite to receiving CSEC funding for services. In 2015-16, forty counties received a portion of the \$10.75 million General Fund made available to counties.¹ Eighteen counties received Tier I funding to support local protocol development, and twenty-two counties with established protocols received Tier II funding to implement those protocols through the provision of direct services to CSEC victims.

In the first year of implementation, county child welfare agencies served 418 CSEC youth between June 2015-September 2015 (4 months) and are expected to serve over 800 youth

¹ The Legislature and Administration approved \$14 million General Fund for the CSEC Program as an initial investment pending further information on the prevalence and service needs of CSEC victims. However, in 2015-16, \$3.25 million was re-directed to meet new federal mandates under P.L. 113-183 requiring all counties to develop protocols and procedures to address runaway foster youth and screening for CSEC. CWDA objected to this redirection.

in this fiscal year alone. However, the need is likely far greater, given the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation in California and the fact that counties are just beginning to identify CSEC youth, as social work staff and community partners are still in process of completing CSEC identification training and implementing local screening protocols.

New federal law creates an even greater imperative to support CSEC victims. Public Law 113-183 (signed September 29, 2014) results in new mandates for child welfare agencies. Specifically, the law requires child welfare agencies to develop “policies and procedures (including relevant training for case workers) for identifying, documenting in agency records, and determining appropriate services” for CSEC victims. This provision applies to “any child or youth over whom the State agency has responsibility for placement, care or supervision and who the State has reasonable cause to believe is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.” 42 U.S. Code § 671(a)(9)(C). The federal law creates an expectation that child welfare agencies will provide case management and secure other services and supports to meet unique needs of CSEC youth.

Experience thus far by child welfare agencies has demonstrated that CSEC victims need intensive services and support to protect them from further victimization and help them overcome severe physical and emotional abuse as victims. This requires close collaboration with other local agencies including behavioral health, public health, law enforcement, the courts, and other local nonprofit service providers. Social workers must carry lower caseloads and have specialty training to address the unique needs of this population.

We respectfully request the following to meet the new mandates of P.L. 113-183 and SB 855:

- **Funding for CSEC Services and Supports:** \$16.2 million General Fund is needed to bring Tier I counties up to Tier II level funding and to fully fund all Tier II counties based on their experience of the service needs for CSEC victims.
- **Social Worker Training:** \$3.5 million General Fund for on-going training of child welfare (including Probation) staff to identify, screen, and determine appropriate services for CSEC youth, with training provided through the existing social worker training academies.

Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Chris Woods, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal
Will Lightbourne, Department of Social Services
Robert Smith, Department of Social Services
John Boule, Office of System Integration
Michael Wilkening, Health and Human Services Agency
Matt Paulin, Department of Finance
Jay Kapoor, Department of Finance
Mark Newton, Legislative Analyst's Office
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Farrah McDaid-Ting, California State Association of Counties
County Caucus