



Public Social Services

Safety of Adult Protective Services Workers - (State)

Issue: Access to California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) for Adult Protective Services (APS)

Action: Support legislation to provide explicit statutory authority for APS programs to request and receive from law enforcement criminal record checks through CLETS for the purposes of conducting elder and dependent adult abuse investigations.

Background: Unlike Child Welfare Workers, APS Workers in California do not have access to essential information that is available through CLETS. As a result, APS Workers conducting required unannounced home visits do not have information about the criminal backgrounds of alleged abusers or clients that are involved with an elder/dependent adult case. The lack of information about criminal activity creates a safety risk for APS Workers. Without this essential information, the worker is not able to accurately assess or prepare for a dangerous situation including requesting police stand-by assistance before entering the home.

Enhanced Penalties for Assaults and/or Battery on a Social Worker - (State)

Issue: Social worker safety

Action: Introduce legislation to add enhanced penalties for assault and/or battery on Child Protective Services or Adult Protective Services Social Workers.

Background: In 2009, West Virginia passed a bill increasing criminal penalties for crimes committed against government employees, enacted in memory of a social worker who was brutally raped and murdered while doing a home visit for an early intervention program.

Riverside County has records of 18 assaults, batteries and threats on Adult Services and Children's Services Social Workers for 2014-15. Our Social Workers were punched, had their hair pulled, been kicked repeatedly, received bloody noses and had families release their dogs on them. Assaults can be so traumatizing that the social worker resigns.

A social worker's activities can be similar to law enforcement activities. However, social workers are frequently placed in emotionally charged situations without a partner, adding to their increased vulnerability. Often making cold calls, they must knock on doors where they do not know what is awaiting them on the other side.

Studies have documented the occurrence of violence to social workers while they are in their workplaces. National prevalence rates for social workers' exposure to client violence indicate that between 65% and 86% of social workers have encountered violence by a client at some time during their career. A study conducted by the National Association of Social Workers found that 55% of 5,000 licensed social workers surveyed said they faced safety issues on the job.

Protecting Commercially Sexually Exploited Children - (State)

Issue: Reunification Services for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

Action: Support legislation to add parents and guardians to the list of persons who will not be provided reunification services if they consented or knew of the sexual exploitation of their child.

Background: Existing law does not explicitly provide for the exclusion of reunification services to a parent or guardian when they have knowingly engaged in or consented to the sexual exploitation of their child. State law should be changed to ensure that it provides clear protections for foster youth who have suffered from sexual exploitation.

Non Relative Successor Guardians for Foster Youth - (State)

Issue: Inability to provide a successor guardian for foster youth whose legal guardian is not a relative.

Action: Introduce legislation to allow a guardian who is not a relative of a foster youth to identify a proposed successor guardian with a formal plan (such as a Will or Trust) in place should the Legal Guardian or proposed Legal Guardian die or become incapacitated.

Background: With the passage of Public Law 113-183, the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, states were encouraged to name a successor guardian for relatives seeking legal guardianship to provide for the continuity of care and permanency for the foster youth. A child/youth placed into any permanent home should have the peace of mind knowing that his or her care has been planned out prior to the termination of his/her dependency case. This provision should apply for all legal guardianships (relative and non-relative).

Modernization of CalFresh Practices - (State)

Issue: Use of electronic and telephonic signatures for CalFresh applicants and recipients.

Action: Support legislation to develop a statewide telephonic and electronic signature system.

Background: Currently, in Riverside County, CalFresh applications may be taken and approved over the internet using the C-IV application. The creation of a statewide telephonic and electronic signature system would assist in the trend towards streamlined electronic applications and verifications in most social services programs, allowing for the efficient use of county resources.

Medicare Part B Support - (State and Federal)

Issue: Reinstate Medicare Part B payments.

Action: Support legislation to restore California's Medicare Part B payments to low income seniors and the disabled.

Background: During the depths of California's budget crisis, the California Legislature and the Governor adopted state law that ended Medi-Cal payments of the Medicare Part B premiums for some low income seniors and persons with disabilities eligible to Medi-Cal. With the improvement in California's financial condition, it is an appropriate time to revisit decisions to balance the budget that impacted vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities.

Foster Youth Sealed Records - (State)

Issue: Automatic Sealing of Youth's Records by the Courts

Action: Support legislation that would allow Child Welfare Services to view a foster youth's records when requested by the youth.

Background: Previously, when a child turned 18, a juvenile dependent could request their records be sealed. These records may contain criminal history and may also include the records of Child Welfare Service agencies, including their history of being a Foster Child. Previously, a Foster Child's Social worker would make the youth aware that the sealing of records can create a barrier to services and benefits that he or she would be entitled to including, but not limited to, reduced tuition and grants for higher education.

Current statute makes the sealing of a juvenile dependent's records automatic to other systems such as child welfare, not at the youth's request. These records are sealed to the youth and to Child Welfare Service agencies. Without the ability to view these sealed records, Child Welfare Services cannot provide the verifications needed to access benefits and services when requested by the youth.

24 Month CalWORKs Welfare to Work Time Clock - (State)

Issue: The State's Welfare to Work 24 Month time Clock is ineffective in practice and undermines the message and urgency of Self-Sufficiency.

Action: Support legislation to eliminate California's Welfare to Work 24-Month Time Clock and realign it with the states 48-month CalWORKs Time Clock.

Background: SB 1041, legislation chaptered in 2012, established a limited statewide 24-Month Time Clock for persons in receipt of Welfare to Work services. In practice, implementing instructions from the state have provided so many exemptions to the 24-month time clock that very few persons have been terminated (3 in Riverside County). Lack of true consequences has undermined the message and focus. Additionally, the process is administratively burdensome. By aligning States Welfare to Work program requirements with the states CalWORKs program requirements, counties will be better able to assist CalWORKs customers to engage in required activities that lead customers to self-sufficiency through employment.

Emergency Placement of Children - (State)

Issue: Barriers to family members to accept the emergency placement of children

Action: Support legislation to allow person living in 55 and older communities to accept emergency placement of children for a defined period of time

Background: Restrictions in communities for adults age 55 and older (55+) may prohibit the emergency placement of a child with a willing relative resulting in a foster care placement. There is no legal protection for caregiving grandparents living in 55+ communities. Grandparents living in a 55+ community who choose to accept emergency placement of a grandchild in their home may have to break their contract obligation and may face penalty, fines and/or eviction. Management at 55+ communities may feel they are legally bound to compel compliance with Home Owner Association (HOA) regulations to maintain statutory requirements for designation as a 55+ community.

Placing children with relatives has been proven to reduce trauma for children removed from their parents or separated from their parents due to their death or extended hospitalization. We want to afford every child the option to be cared for by a relative.

Mental Health Services for Foster Youth - (State)

Issue: Mental Health and Foster Care Services to children with serious emotional disturbances served through school systems.

Action: Support legislation that would require a Local Education Agency (LEA) to participate with Child Welfare Services in meetings to address the unique educational needs of children with Serious Emotional Disturbances (SED) and share in the cost of specialized education placements.

Background: Currently, when a child is identified with SED, and has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or has been assessed as likely to need an IEP, Child Welfare Services schedules a meeting with the LEA to review the specialized education placements the child will be receiving. The LEA's are not required to attend and frequently choose not to. This results in an incomplete assessment of the SED's child's education plan.

Aged and Disabled Federal Poverty Level Eligibility - (State and Federal)

Issue: Alignment of Income Eligibility for the Medi-Cal Aged and Disabled Federal Poverty Level program with Medi-Cal Health Care Reform.

Action: Support legislation that aligns current eligibility to the Aged and Disabled Federal Poverty Level program from the current 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 138% of the FPL as established by Health Care Reform.

Background: Currently, a person who is 19 to 64 is eligible to Health Care Reform Medi-Cal with incomes up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level. Upon turning 65, the person's eligibility is changed to 100% of the FPL. This sudden change results in a drastic and disproportionate share of cost increase to the elder (typically \$500 to \$600 a month). Aligning these two program income requirements will allow for income continuity between the two programs, resulting in fewer terminations and increased eligibility for the aged and disabled in receipt of Medi-Cal benefits.