



Child Welfare Policy Roundtable County Child Welfare System

Friday, January 11, 2019
 Presentation Overview

About the County Welfare Directors Association:

- We are a non-profit representing the human services directors from each of the 58 California counties.
- Our 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.

OVERVIEW

- In California, the 58 counties deliver services on behalf of the State. We are one of only 9 states that are state-supervised and county-administered (others include NY and PA, for example).

The population served by child welfare is broader than the in-care foster care population:

| Statistic | Number |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Youth in Foster Care | 59,487 |
| Youth in Child Welfare Services | 86,554 |
| Probation Foster Youth | 4,004 |

Counties are diverse. Our county-administered system allows for some flexibility of services, relationship building and unique partnerships at the local level to deliver services.

| Area | Smallest | Largest |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|
| Geography (Sq. Miles) | 49 | 20,062 |
| Child Population | 218 | 2.8 M |
| Foster Youth | 1 | 21,167 |
| Youth in CWS | 6 | 35,960 |
| CWS Staff | < 5 | > 8,000 |



Legislation

California Child Welfare (CW) Statutory References:

- Welfare and Institutions Code 16500 et seq. Establishes county child welfare model.
- Penal Code 11165 et seq. Codifies child maltreatment definitions.
- WIC 300 et seq. Defines child welfare processes.
- WIC 600 et seq. Probation Foster Care.
- Health and Safety Code 1500 et seq. Governing foster care licensing

Major Child Welfare Services Components:

- Emergency Response (ER): Counties typically respond within 24 hours, though counties do so anywhere from 2 hours to 10 days depending on circumstance. We can investigate for up to 30 days. There were calls on nearly 500,000 children who were possibly abused or neglected, and county staff responded to calls on 370,000 of those children. Some 43,000 children had cases opened.
- Family Maintenance (FM): Court or Voluntary. In some situations we have determined that child welfare services are needed, but those services can be offered at home. These services are offered from 6 to 12 months.
- Family Reunification (FR): Court or Voluntary. In some other situations, child welfare services have to be provided to a child while they are in temporary foster care. These services can be offered from 6 to 18 months.
- Permanency Planning (PP): When it has been determined that the child/youth will not be safe to be returned home, child welfare works to identify a permanency option for the child that includes legal guardianship or adoption.

Refer to Figure 2 of the Child Welfare Primer attempts to summarize the complexity of the child welfare process. <http://www.phi.org/resources/?resource=understanding-the-child-welfare-system-in-california-a-primer-for-service-providers-and-policymakers-2nd-edition>

Placement: County Child Welfare is entrusted with the care and custody of foster children by the Juvenile Courts. This also requires child welfare to ensure we have foster caregivers who can safely, and lovingly, care for foster youth while they are in care, and for some, to provide permanency for those youth through legal guardianship and adoption. This requires counties to identify, recruit and/or secure placements for foster children and youth. These include:

1. Relatives are the first priority by federal and state law for placement and often foster children have the best outcomes when placed with relative caregivers.
2. Second priority, by statute, are other family-based placements. This includes non-related extended family members, county-recruited resource families and resource families recruited through Foster Family Agencies.
3. Congregate Care is the placement of last resort (Group Homes, STRTPs).
4. Other options for care and placement include Transitional Housing and Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs) for Non-Minor Dependents (age 18-21).

Services:

Social workers (SWs) provide case management services and have a number of responsibilities:

- They are charged with identifying the safety issues for a child and ensuring the child is safe from harm.
- They must work with the family to identify the services the families need to enable the safe return of the child or youth back to them. SWs must work with other partner agencies including Behavioral Health, Probation, Regional Centers, Schools, SELPASs, Substance Abuse providers and others, to leverage those services.
- They must find and secure out-of-home placement for foster youth when deemed necessary, and work with foster caregivers to support them.
- They must support reunification efforts including thoughtful and numerous visitations with the biological family and siblings and must concurrently work to identify a permanent family for a child should reunification efforts not come to fruition.
- They support older youth in care (referred to as non-minor dependents, age 18-21) in their transition to adulthood.

Court Role: All the work CW staff do is under the direction of the juvenile court, informed by children's attorneys, parents' attorneys, county counsel and others to identify needs and deliver services.

Changing Practice: More recently, the CW system has embarked on improving our delivery of services through the Core Practice Model. The model promotes greater partnership with children, youth, families and other child- and family-serving organizations to improve outcomes. One example of this work is in our teaming approaches, including Child and Family Teaming, which is also an integral component of CCR.

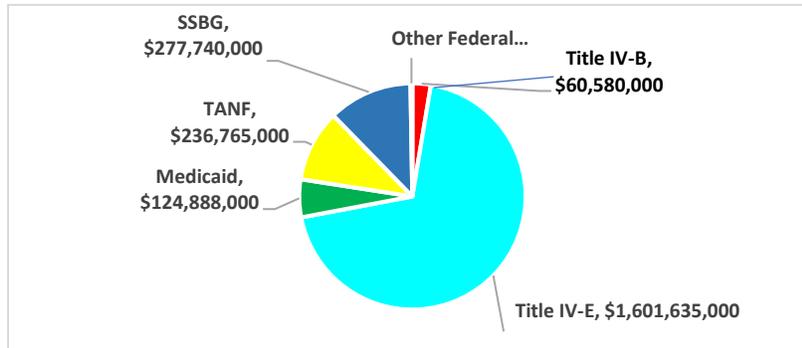
Challenges: Number of positive changes in Child Welfare in the last decade have also challenged the child welfare workforce to meet new demands. For example:

- AB 12 Expansion of Foster Care to Age 21
- Education/School Stability and Maintaining School of Origin
- Continuum of Care Reform: Resource Family Approval, Child and Family Teams, Level of Care Rate Assessments.
- Katie A Lawsuit Settlement and implementation of intensive, home-based services with County Behavioral Health systems.
- Services to Commercially-Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEC)



Funding:

California's Child Welfare System is supported by a mix of federal, state and local funding. Of the \$4.1 billion that CA receives in federal funding, most (69%) comes from Title IV-E Funding.¹



Title IV-E Funding:

- Funding is for youth **IN-CARE**. Only children or youth who are at **imminent** risk of being placed in foster care or are **currently in** foster care are currently supported by Title IV-E funds.
- If the safety or risk of a child does not meet the requirement, counties can offer some voluntary services. Currently, there is very limited Title IV-B funding that counties use for some prevention-type services.

State and County Funding for Child Welfare and Foster Care in CA has changed over the years:

- Prior to 2011, the State and Counties shared the non-federal costs of the CWS and Foster Care program. Generally, foster care payments were split 40% state/60% county, and other child welfare costs were split 60% state/40% county. This is referred to as 1991 Realignment.
- With 2011 Realignment, the state-portion of costs of the program were subsumed by the counties along with a dedicated funding source (sales tax increase and portion of Vehicle License Fees).
 - Both 1991 and 2011 Realignment come with some protections, and risks, for counties.
 - Generally, since 2011 Realignment, revenues have grown. Some funding is mandated to offset annual costs-of-living adjustments for foster care. Any new state mandates after 2011 that result in a cost to counties in CWS must be funded by the State. New federal mandates that result in cost are funded 50% state/50% county.
 - For additional information on Realignment, see recent report:
<https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3886>

¹ https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/State-Variation-in-Child-Welfare-Agency-use-of-federal-funding-sources_ChildTrends_June2018.pdf



Continuous Quality Improvement

SB 636 (Steinberg, Statutes of 2001) established the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act to promote improvements in child and youth outcomes for safety, permanency and well-being. There are several components, including:

- County Self Assessment including stakeholder engagement, case reviews, and review of outcome data.
- County System Improvement Plan is developed based on the self-assessment, as the county's 5-year plan to improve outcomes. These plans are reviewed and approved by local County Boards of Supervisors and CDSS.

In addition, the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is the federal mechanism for oversight of the State's child welfare system. The PIP is a 3-year plan for improvement or else federal penalties are imposed.

- California is currently in process of implementing its PIP; failure to complete the required activities may result in \$17.2 million federal penalty. For additional information visit: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Child-Welfare-Program-Improvement/Federal-Child-and-Family-Services-Review>

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