



FACT SHEET

Governor's Cut to Child Welfare Services Jeopardizes Safety of State's 80,000 Abused and Neglected Children

A broad-based coalition of organizations and individuals committed to protecting California's abused and neglected children.

WHO: Governor Schwarzenegger cut \$120 million (\$80 million of which is State General Funds) from Child Welfare Services in his 2010-11 budget. The Governor first made this reduction as a line-item veto in 2009 and has sustained the cut in his proposed budget, released in January.

WHAT: A statewide coalition of over 150 public agencies, child-serving organizations, current and former foster youth, social workers, caregivers and advocates are calling on the Legislature to reject this cut and restore the funding in the 2010-11 budget.

WHY: The Governor's cut dramatically reduces services across multiple programs, which together, form the backbone of California's child welfare system. The cut translates into a mere 0.4% savings in the entire state budget, but this seemingly small cut is already yielding devastating consequences for vulnerable children and their families and ultimately shifts the financial burden of caring for them to other state programs:

- **It slashes the last remnants of State protections for our most vulnerable children:** Statewide, the veto slashes funding for nearly 400 child welfare workers tasked with the critical job of keeping children safe. As a result, counties have been unable to adequately staff child abuse hotlines, investigate allegations of child abuse, assist families to safely prevent the removal of children, and work with families to safely reunify children or find permanent, loving homes for children who cannot be reunified.
- **It adds costs to future California budgets:** Abused and neglected children who do not receive help often become adults who struggle with obesity, alcoholism, depression, and poor health outcomes. According to Prevent Child Abuse America, child abuse costs taxpayers an estimated \$104 billion annually in the form of greater demand on services.
- **It abandons those who "age out" of foster care:** The \$120 million reduction eliminated stipends for youth who have "aged out" of the foster care system, which helped defray some of the costs to attend college, obtain housing and seek employment. Financial aid for foster youth attending college was also severely reduced. Former foster youth will likely become homeless because of cuts to transitional housing programs.
- **It subverts the will of the Legislature:** Last Spring, both the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees determined that cuts to Child Welfare Services would put the safety of California children at risk. Nevertheless, Governor Schwarzenegger ignored this concern and unilaterally cutting the Child Welfare Services budget.
- **It jeopardizes millions in federal funds and leads to steep federal penalties:** The \$80 million reduction to Child Welfare Services costs the State \$40 million in federal matching funds. Additionally, failure to responsibly execute these activities puts California at risk for fiscal penalties for non-compliance with the federally-mandated Child and Family Services Review.

California can and must do better for its abused and neglected children. Please sustain the progress California has made and protect vulnerable children's lives by calling on the Legislature to reject Governor Schwarzenegger's \$120 million (\$80 million State General Funds) reduction to Child Welfare Services and to hold the line against further cuts to this vital safety net program for abused and neglected children.

For more information, including how to get involved, please contact Diana Boyer of the County Welfare Directors Association at dboyer@cwda.org or at (916) 443-1749.