

AUGUST 2010 E-NEWSLETTER

From the Director

As Sacramento slogs through another long, hot summer of budget stalemate, the health and human services community anxiously waits to see how the most vulnerable will fare when the final deal goes down.

The Governor's proposals suggested an apocalyptic scenario in which large sections of the safety net would be torn down, and children, families, seniors, and the disabled would be left to fend for themselves. Fortunately, the Legislature has chosen to look for more rationale solutions, a considerable challenge given the level of political polarization which exists in our state. The Budget Conference Committee's proposal rejects most of the Governor's more extreme reductions, including either the elimination of CalWORKS or a 15.7% reduction in grants, substantial reductions in Child Care, and substantial reductions to IHSS.

In addition, the Conference Committee's plan also calls for the restoration of the Governor's \$80 million veto reduction to Child Welfare Services. Clearly, children fare much better under the Conference Committee's proposal than the Governor's.

The Conference Committee also calls for a \$250 million reduction to IHSS, but between \$150 - \$200 million of this would be achieved through establishment of a "provider fee" for IHSS providers. This provider fee however, would be eligible for federal reimbursement, and the additional revenue would be used to hold IHSS provider wages harmless. The rest of the reduction would have to be made up through service cuts, but the Conference Committee directs the Administration to do this in consultation with stakeholders. The Conference Committee also recognizes that over the long run, the best plan for managing IHSS costs is by taking advantage of the new opportunities made available through Health

Care Reform and calls for the establishment of a stakeholder group to explore these options.

As the debates and negotiations drag on, I would urge that we look at the impact of all decisions through the lens of how they would impact the most vulnerable. One of Hubert Humphrey's most memorable quotes is that the "...moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped". I'm wondering how well California would stand up to this test? Given the compromises that will have to be made in order to reach any budget agreement, and given the Governor's demonstrated willingness to use his blue pencil veto authority to make additional reductions in human services, I remain anxious over what the final outcome will mean for the most vulnerable.

It was discouraging to see that the bill to establish a task force that would craft a plan to increase the economic security of Californians by 50% by 2020, SB 1084, died in committee. It is one thing to say we don't have enough financial resources to reduce poverty, but do we also lack the imagination, commitment and compassion to reduce poverty? If state government is unwilling to take on this project, perhaps it can be undertaken with community based resources and private sector assistance. Is there any project that could be more urgent than this? More on this later.

Joe Valentine, EHSD Director

Community Services Bureau Hosts Life-Long Learning Symposium

The Community Services Bureau (CSB) will be hosting a Life-Long Learning Symposium on September 8th, 2010, for its staff and partners and invites the early childhood community to

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participate in this exciting event.

This all-day event will be held at the Hilltop Community Church, 3118 Shane Drive in Richmond, and will feature Dr. Lilian Katz, a leader in the field of Early Childhood Education.

The development of child care staff as life-long learners is critical to realizing program goals and objectives. That is why CSB is extending an invitation to this opportunity to all Early Childhood programs in the county.

If you would like more information about this event, you can e-mail Vanessa Jackson by [clicking here](#) or calling her at 925-313-1551.

Independent Living Skills Program on You Tube

The Contra Costa Independent Living Skills Program (ILSP) is a nationally recognized program, of which we are very proud.

ILSP has now gone You Tube! Take a few minutes and view it by [clicking here](#). In addition to talking about the work of ILSP, it provides some testimonies from previous foster you who participated in the program. It will put a smile on your face.

Protect Our Children Protect Our Future

There is still time to get those postcards in if you haven't sent them yet. With the state budget still unresolved, we have time to reach and exceed the goal of 5,000 postcards on the Governor's desk.

You can access an online version of the postcard by [clicking here](#). It only takes a few moments to fill out the postcard, and you will help us make sure that \$80 million is not cut from this year's budget (which is what happened last year.)

Thank You Letter

Staff recently received a thank you letter from a client. We're sharing it with you, not as a pat on the back, but as a reminder that these are very difficult times for folks in our communities. We are

all under pressure to provide services to a growing number of clients, and this letter just reminded us how important the courtesy and compassion we all practice - even with expanding caseloads - is to everyone walking through both public and community-based organization doors.

"I wanted to express my profound appreciation for my treatment at your office. I was embarrassed and ashamed to be applying for assistance, but every single staff person that I came in contact with was kind, considerate, and treated me with dignity and respect at what has to be the most difficult time in my life. The trauma of losing my job and then an extension of unemployment benefits left me scared and confused.

Please inform your director of the EXCELLENT (writer's emphasis) customer service I received. I have a temporary job now, and the food stamps I received (helped me) put food on my table."

Child Safety System Pilot Project

You may have recently heard on the news about a pilot program which was launched at one of our Head Start sites in West County. Real Time Locator (RTL) technology provides optimum visibility, security and safety for children in the classroom.

Because Head Start has many reporting requirements (hourly attendance, meal times, etc.), staff time was being spent manually entering this information. Now, with RTL, these tasks can be handled in a matter of minutes (rather than the 1 to 3 hours per day per teacher). This allows teachers to spend more time teaching and less time attending to administrative tasks. Cost savings are estimated at \$45,000 annually.

An added feature of RTL - and one that can't be quantified in dollars - is safety. Staff will know immediately if a child's movement on the campus is outside normal activities and can respond appropriately.

We continue to invite your comments; just [click here](#).

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