



CWDA

January 23, 2008

To: Honorable Patty Berg, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

**RE: Adult Protective Services 10 Percent Cut – OPPOSE
[Item 5180: BBR Pages 607-608]**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) opposes the Administration's proposed cut to the Adult Protective Services program of \$11.4 million (\$6.1 million State General Fund). This cut will leave thousands of vulnerable seniors and dependent adults in abusive situations that could lead to injury and early death.

Program Already Underfunded; 10 Percent Cut Will Decimate Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) is the only program in California that responds 24 hours a day/7 days a week to reports of abuse and neglect of seniors and dependent adults. The program was not fully funded when it was created by the Legislature in 1999, and funding has been frozen since 2002-03, seriously eroding counties' ability to respond to these emergency situations. Last year, the Legislature recognized the critical situation in APS and added a much-needed augmentation of \$12 million, which the Governor vetoed. Asking the program to take another cut of this magnitude will decimate county APS programs.

Cuts Will Harm Abused and Neglected Adults, Cause Untimely Deaths

The cut translates into a loss of 75 APS social workers statewide. As a result, 18,775 fewer incidents of abuse and neglect will be investigated each year, and of those that are investigated, an estimated 2,509 reports will have to be closed without a face-to-face investigation. This means that adults who are potentially being abused or neglected – who our programs might have caught early and served before the situation became life-threatening – will go without services. These individuals will likely be seen again by APS or by another system such as law enforcement or a nursing facility, when their conditions have grown worse.

With fewer resources, local APS agencies will be faced with difficult decisions for responding to reports of abuse and neglect. Response times will increase, more cases will be triaged, fewer reports will be investigated, and cases will be closed earlier. Services likely to be reduced or eliminated include on-going medical case management and training to family members to manage medical issues, linking clients to emergency and low-income housing, home repairs to ensure the client is safe in their own home, linkage to community resources such as Meals on Wheels, and helping victims find in-home care to maintain individuals in their communities.

The ultimate result will be increased recidivism and the provision of services to only the most critical abuse and neglect cases. Our inability to respond fully to all reports of will leave elders and dependent adults more vulnerable to emotional and physical injury and neglect, and even death: Studies show that elder abuse victims are 3.1 times more likely to die than the average senior.

Increased Awareness Causes More APS Reports

A growing focus on elder abuse, especially the fast-rising problem of financial abuse, has led to greater awareness of the problem and more reports to APS programs in recent years. As the population ages, the number of reports will continue to grow. Additionally, recent legislation (SB 1018, Simitian, Statutes of 2005) has triggered early reporting of suspected financial abuse by banks and other financial institutions.

Cutting APS funding at the same time as counties are receiving more and more reports of abuse and neglect will leave these victims without assistance. Financial abuse victims on limited and fixed incomes face particular hardship if they are fleeced out of a lifetime of savings, with little means of support and little recourse. These victims often experience depression, anxiety and other mental health impacts, and untimely death.

Cuts Will Cost State, Taxpayers in Other Ways

An \$11.4 million cut to APS will create pressure on other emergency response systems to respond – particularly law enforcement, paramedics and fire departments, and emergency rooms. APS collaborates with law enforcement to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of elder and dependent adult abuse. However, APS is also intended to address reports of abuse or neglect before abuse rises to the level of law enforcement involvement. For example, APS often builds rapport with clients and pursues restraining orders against perpetrators. APS cuts will lead to reduced services to protect seniors, thus increasing law enforcement activity when the situation worsens. Eliminating counties' ability to lay this groundwork will require public safety agencies to respond instead, often when the situation has grown much worse.

In addition, the Olmstead Supreme Court decision requires California to institute practices and programs to reduced unnecessary institutional placement and maintain elders in their local communities. APS helps California comply with this requirement by connecting seniors and dependent adults with community-based services that can help them remain in their own homes and avoid more costly institutionalization. Without these services, more of these individuals will end up in nursing facilities, at a far greater cost and in violation of the Olmstead decision.

Conclusion: Reject APS Cuts

APS is a critical safety net program that works with other community agencies to prevent premature institutionalization. We are often the first – and sometimes the only – program to come into contact with many seniors and people with disabilities who are experiencing self-neglect or abuse and neglect at the hands of others. APS often makes a link to other needed services to prevent or postpone inpatient hospitalization as well as premature institutionalization.

Cuts to APS are ill-advised and will result in greater harm to seniors and dependent adults, untimely deaths, and greater costs to taxpayers. We urge you to reject the Administration's proposed cut to this already underfunded program.

CWDA APS Memo
January 23, 2008
Page Two

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. We look forward to working with you and your staff as the budget process moves forward. Please do not hesitate to contact CWDA if you have any questions regarding this memo.

cc: Nicole Vazquez, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Gail Gronert, Office of the Honorable Fabian Nunez
Julianne Huerta, Consultant, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Jennifer Kent, Health and Human Services Agency
Pete Cervinka, Health and Human Services Agency
Ana Matosantos, Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
John Wagner, Director, Department of Social Services
Patricia Huston, Department of Social Services
Mike Wilkening, Department of Finance
Ginni Bella, Legislative Analyst's Office
Kelly Brooks, California State Association of Counties
County Caucus