



CWDA

March 29, 2007

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

Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

Re: **Technical Clean-up of Kin-GAP Plus Program – URGE
ADOPTION OF PLACEHOLDER TRAILER BILL LANGUAGE**

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) urges adoption of placeholder trailer bill language to clarify the state share of costs for the Kin-GAP Plus Program clothing allowance and allow three counties currently prohibited from offering a clothing allowance to opt in.

The Kinship Guardian Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP) is a guardianship program for foster children transitioning out of the foster care system and into permanent guardianship with a relative caregiver. Kin-GAP began in 1999-2000 and successfully transitions more than 14,000 foster children into permanent stable homes each year, leading to better outcomes for children while creating savings in the foster care program.

Prior to the 2006-07 fiscal year, foster children transitioning to permanent guardianship with a relative caregiver faced the loss of the state clothing allowance and any specialized care increment received while in foster care. The 2006-07 Budget removed the disincentive by creating the Kin-GAP Plus program. Kin-GAP Plus continues the clothing allowance, and any specialized care increment, that foster children had been entitled to while in foster care. Doing so avoids penalizing relative caregivers for transitioning children from foster care to permanency through guardianship.

The Kin-GAP Plus clothing allowance was intended to replicate the 100 percent state support that exists for the foster care state clothing allowance. Many counties offer a county funded clothing allowance on top of the state clothing allowance. However, the budget trailer bill (AB 1808, Statutes of 2006) apparently lacked sufficient clarity on the state

share of cost for the clothing allowance. Therefore, we request that placeholder trailer bill language be adopted to clarify that the state share of cost for the Kin-GAP Plus clothing allowance is 100 percent. This action would be fully covered within the existing appropriation.

In addition, there are three counties that are currently excluded from the state clothing allowance due to what counties believe is an unintentional glitch in the way current law was drafted.

The existing statute governing the clothing allowance statute states that any county that has in effect clothing allowances as of the date of the section being effective shall continue to receive the same amount as they were receiving from the state for the clothing allowance. The statute prohibits any increase in state participation that exceeds adjustments made according to the regular rate increase methodology.

The interaction between these two provisions keeps Tehama, Plumas and Colusa counties from offering a clothing allowance. When the California Department of Social Services took over the job of setting foster care rates in the 1980s, counties were grandfathered in, and the three counties who did not have clothing allowances were “forever barred” by the code from instituting one. These three counties would like to be able to opt into a clothing allowance, and they are concerned that their foster children cannot receive one.

The number of foster children and Kin-GAP children in these counties as of January 2007 was 424. If all three of the counties opted to provide a clothing allowance, it would cost the state an estimated \$15,900 per year.

Therefore, we urge the adoption of placeholder trailer bill language to clarify the 100 percent state share of cost of the KinGAP Plus clothing allowance and delete the clothing allowance prohibition for the remaining three counties.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

cc: Nicole Vasquez, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Gail Gronert, Office of The Honorable Fabian Nunez
Julianne Huerta, Consultant, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Scott Carney, Health and Human Services Agency
Jennifer Kent, Health and Human Services Agency
Ana Matosantos, Office of the Governor
Cliff Allenby, Director, Department of Social Services
Michael Wilkening, Department of Finance
Todd Bland, Legislative Analyst's Office
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