



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians

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Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC)

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Expand The CSEC Program

PROPOSAL

Increase funding for the CSEC Program by \$19.7 million in 2016-17. The CSEC Program was established by the Legislature and Governor and enacted as part of the 2014-15 State Budget with an initial investment of \$14 million. It was created in response to a growing statewide, and national, epidemic facing law enforcement and child serving agencies, and due to a recognition that California lacked the needed infrastructure and resources to respond to this growing epidemic.

The Need and Demand for CSEC Services is High

According to federal studies, three of the nation's top thirteen high intensity child sex trafficking areas are located here in California: San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas. However, victims of commercial sex trafficking are seen all throughout California, as children are frequently transported by their perpetrators along major freeways and across state borders. As a result, child welfare agencies across the state are struggling to address this epidemic. Research indicates that demand for sex with children remains high, and profit to sex traffickers has increased. As a result, the prevalence of CSEC continues to spread and grow into many areas of the State, including the Sacramento and Central Valley Counties, Coastal communities including Santa Barbara, Ventura, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, as well as the Northern Counties.

Services to CSEC are Intensive and Require a Multi-Agency Response

CSEC victims suffer from horrific and severe forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse which strains local response systems. This results in severe trauma to the victim and requires a multi-agency response to both protect the victim from further harm, and to help victims in their journey to recovery. Responding to CSEC requires a multi-pronged response that includes prevention, intervention and after care. In California, counties have partnered with local agencies including mental health, public health, law enforcement, the courts,

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community providers and probation to develop protocols for screening and response, and established multi-disciplinary teams, to provide critical services to CSEC youth. Due to the severity of the abuse, specialized training and staffing are needed to meet the unique needs of this population.

New State and Federal Law Requires Child Welfare Agencies to Serve CSEC

SB 855 (Statutes of 2014) clarified that children identified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation are to come under the jurisdiction of the child welfare system. In addition, Public Law 113-183 (signed September 29, 2014) results in new mandates for child welfare agencies. Specifically, the law requires child welfare agencies to develop “policies and procedures (including relevant training for case workers) for identifying, documenting in agency records, and determining appropriate services” for CSEC victims. This provision applies to “any child or youth over whom the State agency has responsibility for placement, care or supervision and who the State has reasonable cause to believe is, or is at risk of being, a sex trafficking victim.” 42 U.S. Code § 671(a)(9)(C). The federal law requires that child welfare agencies provide case management and secure other services and supports to meet unique needs of CSEC youth.

CSEC Services are a Critical Lifeline to Child Victims Yet are Lacking in California

Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation have experienced a brutal environment where the pimp controlled everything, and left the victim with nothing of their own belongings. Once rescued, victims have an immediate need for their own clothing, toiletries, safe housing, and physical care. They need intensive supervision and support away from other foster care populations to protect them from further traumatization and to prevent running away. The traditional child welfare program is not equipped to meet these immediate needs, nor longer-term needs that support the youth in re-engaging in school, re-establishing connection to family, and promoting the youth’s development of healthy relationships.

Early Experience Shows the Need for Services is Great and Current Funding will Fall Short of Meeting these Needs

In 2015-16, forty counties received \$10.75 million of the \$14 million General Fund made available to counties under the CSEC Program.¹ Eighteen counties received Tier I funding to support local protocol development, and twenty-two counties with established protocols

¹ \$3.25 million was re-directed to meet new federal mandates under P.L. 113-183 requiring all counties to develop protocols and procedures to address runaway foster youth and screening for CSEC.

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received Tier II funding to implement those protocols through the provision of direct services to CSEC victims.

In the first year of implementation, county child welfare agencies served 418 CSEC youth between June 2015-September 2015 (4 months) and are expected to serve over 800 youth in this fiscal year alone. However, the need is likely far greater, given the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation in California and the fact that counties are just beginning to identify CSEC youth, as social work staff and community partners are still in process of completing CSEC identification training and implementing local screening protocols.

The \$14 million General Fund was an initial investment to build capacity to serve CSEC victims. Counties that developed local response protocols as a Tier I county will require additional funding to implement those protocols and provide intensive and coordinated response to CSEC through local multi-disciplinary teams. Several Tier II counties have identified additional support needs including intensive victim search and recovery, CSEC-case carrying social work staff, emergency kits, expanding home-based placements, and prevention training to existing foster youth. The CSEC program has saved the lives of hundreds of youth in California, and further investment will enable additional CSEC victims to receive the help and support they need to become survivors.

<p>This budget update was created by CWDA Staff. Direct questions to the contact at right.</p>	<p>County Welfare Directors Association of California</p> <hr/>
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