



March 24, 2017

To: The Honorable Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

**RE: MENTAL HEALTH CHILDRENS CRISIS SERVICES –
OPPOSE PROPOSED FUNDING REDUCTION**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) opposes the proposed \$17 million State General Fund reduction in the Governor’s budget for the development of a continuum of mental health crisis services for children and youth. The 2016-17 State Budget appropriated one-time funding totaling \$30 million for crisis mental health services for children to help bring California into compliance with Federal Medicaid requirements for timely and equal access to medically-necessary services and codified the program elements in trailer bill, SB 833 (Statutes of 2016). The Governor’s proposed budget would leave just \$11 million of unspent Mental Health Services Act funding to establish these life-saving programs.

County child welfare agencies serve among the most traumatized children, and are required under federal and state laws to ensure children in the foster care system receive services to promote their safety, permanency and well-being. Furthermore, foster children have an entitlement to mental health services which are medically necessary under the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program under Medicaid. It is critical that foster youth have access to the full range of mental health services – from crisis services through trauma-informed therapies – readily accessible in their communities of residence.

California’s child welfare system recently completed its Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). That review found that the service array available to children to achieve permanency, specifically mental health services, were an area of needed improvement. Failure to achieve improvements in this area could result in federal fiscal penalties. In addition, access to mental health services is a critical component to the successful implementation of California’s Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) effort to reduce the use of higher level congregate care placements and allow foster children and youth to be cared for in the homes of loving families.

Crisis mental health services for children and youth will help to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families, including foster families, and will divert children from hospitalization or placement into psychiatric facilities. This investment will yield savings for the State and counties, and greatly improve outcomes for children, youth and families.

For these reasons, we urge your subcommittee to reject the Governor's proposed reduction of \$17 million State General Fund for crisis mental health services.

- cc: Agnes Lee, Office of the Assembly Speaker
- Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
- Chris Woods, Office of the Assembly Speaker
- Andrea Margolis, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
- Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
- Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
- Frank Prewoznik, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
- Marla Cowen, Office of Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula
- Mark Newton, Legislative Analysts' Office
- Ben Johnson, Legislative Analyst's Office
- Michael Wilkening, Health and Human Services Agency
- Michele Baass, Health and Human Services Agency
- Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
- Will Lightbourne, California Department of Social Services
- Jennifer Kent, California Department of Health Care Services
- Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services
- Kären Dickerson, California Department of Social Services
- Carol Gallegos, California Department of Health Care Services
- Kristin Shelton, HHS, Department of Finance
- Theresa Calvert, HHS, Department of Finance
- Jay Kapoor, HHS, Department of Finance
- Elizabeth Marsolais, California Association of Counties
- County Caucus