

Significant Issues Report — March/April 2005 Legislation Update

Children's Network

Children's Network Awarded a Major Grant

The Children's Network is extremely pleased to announce that we have been awarded a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation to work with the Family Resource Center Network on child poverty reduction strategies. The funded program, Investing in Families, will work to streamline the process of linking children and families to the various income supports to which they may be entitled, such as child support, earned income tax credits and food stamps. The National Economic Development Law Center will partner with us to align their self-sufficiency calculator with our Child Net Results Manager data base, enabling the FRC staff to more accurately and efficiently assess income supports, and then track the impact of the resulting improved standard of living on a child's health and well being. We will also be able to provide training to community partners on the differences in decision-making frameworks employed by families from diverse economic backgrounds. We look forward to strengthening existing partnerships with county agencies in our mutual effort to empower families and bring a greater share of federal and state funds to our community.

Child Care Planning Council

Child Care and Development Services Proposed 2005-2006 Budget Summary

The following information provides a summary of the major child care and development issues in the proposed 2005—2006 Budget and includes recommendations from the Solano County Child Care Planning Council.

1. Limit the number of families that qualify for child care subsidies.

Proposals:

CalWORKs Child Care

Permanently expand the general Alternative Payment (AP) program by shifting all current CalWORKs Stage 3 child care recipients and the associated funding to the AP program, limiting guaranteed child care to a maximum of eight years and limiting Stage 3 to one year.

Income Eligibility

Shift eligibility determination to federal poverty level (FPL) measures rather than the current State Department of Education median income calculations.

Recommendation:

The Child Care Planning Council supports increased funding to serve all families that would be transitioning from CalWORKs, as well as those that are currently on the waiting list. The Council also believes that this transition would take at least one year to implement.

Considerations/Background:

Reductions in funding available to serve low-income families' child care needs has a disproportionate impact on Solano County.

2. Require counties to create and/or maintain eligibility lists (consolidate waiting lists) to determine which families are most eligible for child care and development services.

Recommendation:

The Child Care Planning Council recommends that the State simplify this process instead of making it more complex with two tiers. They also recommend allowing more time for implementation.

Considerations/Background:

Child Care Planning Councils across the state were given the mandate to “*design a system to consolidate local child care waiting lists.*” Solano County was the first county in California to develop a web-based central access point to all subsidized center-based care in the County. The Children’s Network first secured funding beginning in 1998 from several sources to plan and implement the Centralized Eligibility List.

3. Require higher standards and rate child care and development settings. Regulate the amount of money received by providers caring for low income families.

Proposal:

Creates a five-tiered child care reimbursement rate structure, reduces the amount the state is willing to pay license-exempt providers, and implements regulations to determine the rate of payment received by a provider with no private pay customers.

Recommendation:

The Child Care Planning Council supports a tiered reimbursement rate structure approach to promote quality improvement among all child care and development programs. The Council believes that the proposal, in its current form, could potentially reduce access to child care and development services if providers refuse to serve subsidized children and low income families could potentially have to pay additional fees that they cannot afford.

Legislative Update – Child Care and Development Highlights

AB 172 – (Chan) Preschool for All

AB 172 is currently a spot/placeholder bill. The newest Preschool for All ballot initiative should be available shortly and will potentially influence the content of this bill.

AB 368 – (Evans) CalWORKs Reauthorization

This bill would require the Department of Social Services to ensure the availability of child care services to all families needing care during the time they are participating in CalWORKs program activities and after they have left aid until they are no longer financially eligible for subsidized child care. As explained in item three (above), Solano County does not receive its fair share of state-subsidized child care funds. Any reduction in subsidized funds has a disproportionate impact on Solano County.

Solano County’s Family Resource Centers Receive First 5 Funding

First 5 recently announced that Family Resource Centers in all seven Solano cities will receive almost one million dollars in funding to provide home-based and center-based family support services. These grants are for two years, beginning July 2005.

Among the members of the Solano Family Resource Center Network who will receive funding for this project include: Vallejo’s Fighting Back Partnership’s on North Vallejo FRC and Sereno Village FRC, Fairfield Healthy Start FRC located at Ana Kyle School, Vacaville FIRST Office FRC operated by the Vacaville Police Department, and the Dixon FRC operated by Dixon Family

Services – each of these FRCs will provide services to families in First 5’s four school readiness areas. Rio Vista C.A.R.E. FRC, Suisun Healthy Start FRC (administered by the Fairfield Suisun Unified School District,) and the Benicia FRC (operated by the Benicia Police Department,) will provide services to other communities in the county.

The FRCs will provide services modeled on the California Safe and Healthy Families (CalSAHF) Family Support Home Visiting Program. This model was successfully piloted in Solano County through Answers Benefiting Children, a project of the State’s Office of Child Abuse Prevention, and was taken to scale in recent years by the Integrated Family Support Initiative. Key features include a broad range of center-based services and home visiting. Case management services, utilizing multi-disciplinary teams including family support specialists, a Public Health Nurse, a CPS worker, and others are provided for families at risk of child abuse and neglect.

The FRC Family Support Services grant also includes funding to support the Solano County Parenting Partnership. The Children’s Network coordinates this project and maintains a website listing current parenting classes and other parenting resources: www.childnet.org/parenting. The Solano Parenting Partnership membership currently includes more than 40 local organizations.

Children’s
Alliance

Current Legislation

The Alliance spent a good portion of their May meeting assuring alignment between its Legislative Platform and that of the Board of Supervisors. The Alliance has developed a list of areas of policy interest which are not currently on the Board of Supervisors Legislative Platform.

The Alliance has also taken positions on, or is watching, several bills they feel are important for both Board of Supervisors and County Department heads to be aware of. Those bills are described below. Our next step will be to bring our Platform changes, those issues on which the Board of Supervisors does not have a position, and this list of bills, to the appropriate CAO staff to assure any subsequent steps are consistent with County processes and Board of Supervisors policy direction.

State Assembly and Senate Bills

AB 6

Alliance Position: Pending

(Chan) *As amended, Personal income tax: rates*

This bill would, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2005, and before January 1, 2010, impose 10% and 11% maximum rates, except as provided, for taxpayers with taxable incomes over certain amounts and impose an 8.5% maximum rate based upon the taxpayer's alternative minimum taxable income.

AB 109

Alliance Position: Watch

(Chan) *California Children and Families Program*

Existing law requires county commissions, for each fiscal year, to receive the portion of the total monies available to all county commissions equal to the percentage of the number of births recorded in the relevant county (for the most recent reporting period) in proportion to the number of births recorded in all of the counties participating in the California Children and Families Program (for the same period), if certain requirements are met.

This bill would impose new requirements on First FIVE commissions: 1) that the county commission, in a public hearing, adopt policies regarding conflict of interest of commission members and commission contracting and procurement policies, 2) that the county adopt a limit on the percentage of its commission's operating budget that may be spent on administrative functions, pursuant to guidelines issued by the state commission, and 3) that the county commission adopt, in a public hearing, policies and processes establishing the salaries and benefits of employees of the county commission.

Additionally, this bill would require each county commission to submit in its audit report a list of all program areas funded and administrative costs incurred, in a format prescribed by the state commission. The bill would require that the state commission's report include expenditures for both administration and program areas funded by the state and county commissions. It would also authorize the state commission to withhold funds from the California Children and Families Trust Fund that would otherwise be allocated to the county commission until a county commission submits data for the written report.

AB 1712

Alliance Position: Spot Bill – Watch

(Hancock) *CalWORKs: Kin-GAP Program*

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to address the provision of benefits under the Kin-GAP program.

AB 711

Alliance Position: Support

(Chan) *Healthy Families Program*

This bill would require the state board to expand the Healthy Families program to uninsured parents and adults caring for children enrolled in the program pursuant to that waiver no later than May 15, 2006. The bill would also delete the provisions requiring the appropriation of state matching funds in order to expand the program.

AB 772

Alliance Position: Support

(Chan) *California for Healthy Kids Program*

Existing law establishes programs to provide health care benefits to children, including the Healthy Families Program and the Medi-Cal program. This bill would express the Legislature's findings concerning the importance of providing health care coverage to all children in the state and its intent to establish the California for Healthy Kids Program to provide access to affordable health care coverage to children from birth to 21 years of age.

SB 786

Alliance Position: Oppose

(McClintock) *Public Assistance: Home Visits*

This bill would require the district attorney's office to investigate all applicants for public assistance. It would require the district attorney's office in the applicant's county of residence, within ten days of the applicant's preliminary approval, to arrange for an authorized investigator to conduct a home call, consisting of a brief interview with the applicant and walkthrough of the applicant's residence.

SB 1071

Alliance Position: Oppose

(McClintock) *CalWORKs: COLA Elimination*

This bill would, commencing July 1, 2005, establish specified maximum aid grant payment amounts under the CalWORKs program. It would provide that these amounts may be adjusted only in those years in which the amounts for this purpose are expressly allocated in the annual Budget Act. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.

AB 172

Alliance Position: Spot Bill – Watch

(Chan) *Amended Bill Text* (Amended in Assembly March 14, 2005)

An act to amend Section 8235 of the Education Code, relating to preschool. (Note: This bill has been recently amended but the amendments have not yet been reviewed by the Alliance.)

SB 116

Alliance Position: Support

(Dutton) *Child Abandonment: newborns*

Existing law, until 2006, provides that no parent or other person having lawful custody of a minor child 72 hours old or younger may be prosecuted for a violation of the above crimes if he or she voluntarily surrenders physical custody of the child to an employee on duty at a public or private hospital emergency room, or any additional location designated by the Board of Supervisors. This bill would delete an end date thereby extending those provisions indefinitely.

Federal Bills

Summary of Information on House Version of TANF Reauthorization (provided by Center for Community Change):

HR 240

Alliance Position: Oppose

- Requires mandatory drug testing of all recipients and penalties if positive
- Emphasizes marriage and provides services to fathers seeking training and employment that it withholds from mothers
- Requires 75 percent of caseload to be in a work activity
- One amendment defines marriage promotion as a work activity and women can be sanctioned for refusing to participate.
- Limits the percent of caseload receiving post-secondary education to 10 percent
- Everyone must be in a work activity 40 hours a week, even with infants.
- Makes full family sanctions mandatory
- Other than Santoriem's marriage promotion activities, counts only work, unpaid work and work experience in the 40 hour requirement – not education or training.
- Virtually no new money for child care despite huge increase in work requirements
- No protections for women in domestic violence situations
- One proposal would pay for increases in child care by reducing the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Budget Bill

Elimination of Safe & Drug Free Schools Program

Alliance Position: Oppose

Among many other things, this bill would eliminate Safe and Drug Free Schools Program.