

COVID-Induced Budget Cuts Place Vulnerable Children at Even Greater Risk

Sacramento, CA – The California Alliance of Child and Family Services – an organization of more than 145 non-profit organizations serving more than 500,000 vulnerable children and families -- released this statement following Governor Newsom’s May Revision:

“The impact of this pandemic on the health and mental health of Californians is unprecedented and Governor Newsom is to be applauded for his leadership in navigating this immensely difficult budget situation. The urgency and necessity to secure significant, additional federal funds is clear throughout the May budget revision and we strongly support and continue to advocate for these funds with Congressional leaders. At the same time, California must be clear in our state’s resolve to protect foster youth and other vulnerable children by finding alternatives to proposed cuts to essential Continuum of Care Reform programs including Foster Family Agencies and Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs,” stated Christine Stoner-Mertz, CEO of the CA Alliance.

Alliance member organizations are on the front lines of supporting children, youth and families who have lost their most basic supports. “Sometimes the only thing that keeps children, youth and families going is knowing that they can expect that call or visit from their social worker or therapist,” said Dr. Laura Heintz, CA Alliance Board President and CEO of Stanford Sierra Youth and Families. “With proposed cuts at both the state and local levels, these nonprofit organizations that are the essential safety net for hundreds of thousands of families will have to reduce critical staffing, limiting the ability to respond to the overwhelming behavioral health needs that we all see coming.”

Service providers are already seeing increased calls to suicide prevention hotlines and increased stress in families. There are grave concerns about California’s ability to effectively support our most vulnerable children and youth with sharply reduced resources in an already underfunded system.

The California Alliance and its member organizations will continue to work closely with the Administration to secure any and all federal funding that can support the essential needs of vulnerable children, youth and families. We will also continue to advocate for other ways of reducing costs, such as regulatory relief, telehealth, and paperwork reduction. Our immediate concern is for the health and safety including the mental health of these young people, ensuring stability in their home life and their educational supports.