



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:				
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
Public Comment		Favor	Ayala Kimberly	My name is Kimberly Ayala and I am a Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist at Allies for Every Child. I Strongly support Supervisors Barger and Horvath's motion calling for county solutions and state level advocacy related to the FFA insurance crisis. I work with Children in Foster Care daily. Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) are a critical component of the continuum of care for children and youth. FFAs enhance the work of the Department of Children and Family Services to keep children safe, ameliorate the effects of system involvement, and facilitate reunification and permanency through a spectrum of services and supports available to families 24/7. This is a model of care that the current system cannot replicate. I am deeply troubled by the FFA insurance crisis that could negatively impact the nearly 1,900 children served by FFAs in L.A. County today. The loss of high-quality, experienced FFAs throughout the County could result in disruption and trauma for thousands of children and families. If the underlying insurability problems are unaddressed, I further worry that non-profit human services organizations will not be able to continue to step up to serve communities. I ask that you act now to expediently identify and implement short and long-term solutions to the FFA insurance crisis that will prevent the placement disruption and irrevocable loss of services for thousands of children.
			colin campbell	Could we use the federal funds for Kamalacare/Universal Healthcare/Oracle federal AI of 238.5 billion to be spent in 2024 to help protect children and youth online? I announced the budget on 9/10/2024 and Kamala Harris proposed winning out quantum computing race on 9/10/2024 making an upgrade to obamacare. Michelle Vega said she would reach out to Governor Newsom to ask if he really wanted to rollout Kamalacare in LA for the healthcare and court systems last week.
			Jackie Takarabe	Help FFAs
			LaKisha G Camese	



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			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Public Comment		Favor	Lorin Ruttenberg	Foster Family Agencies(FFAs) are a critical component of the continuum of care for systems-involved youth. FFAs support the work of the Department of Children and Family Services to keep children safe, ameliorate the effects of system involvement, and facilitate reunification and permanency through a spectrum of services and supports available to families 24/7. This is a model of care that the current system cannot replicate. I am deeply troubled by the FFA insurance crisis that could negatively impact the nearly 1,900 children served by FFAs in L.A. County today. The loss of high-quality, experienced FFAs throughout the County could result in disruption and trauma for thousands of children and families. If the underlying insurability problems are unaddressed, I further worry that non-profit human services organizations will not be able to continue to step up to serve communities. I ask that you act now to expediently identify and implement short and long term solutions to the FFA insurance crisis that will prevent the placement disruption and irrevocable loss of services for thousands of children.
			Nadia Gonzalez Saucedo	My name is Nadia Gonzalez Saucedo and I'm the Early Education Intake and Enrollment Specialist at Allies for Every Child's Early Education Center. It's a priority for us to serve children who are in the child welfare system and experiencing homelessness, and we do this by working in partnership with our Foster Family Agency (FFA) program. Day in and day out, we need to be ready and willing to respond to the trauma that our children and families come in with. It takes a village to support them with whatever they may need, and our in-house expertise makes this all possible (educators, mental health, occupational therapists, support with behavioral challenges like food hoarding, nutrition specialists, public health nurse, etc.). We have great community partnerships that support our staff in providing resources to children and families where there's food and housing insecurity, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc. We pride ourselves on serving families in our community that need our help the most.
			Nicole A Duquette	
			Ricardo M Pulido	item#7 & 67....thank you, Rick Pulido for your consideration & support of these two vital motions....rp
			Terrill Ross	Prop 9 we need fair and equitable solutions not backwards draconian responses to the real problem. There needs to be more infrastructure geared towards justice not status quo's injustice reaction



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Public Comment		Oppose	Elgin Lee	<p>4217 E. Live Oak Ave in unincorporated Arcadia is the purposed site of a 6-story, 95-unit for those who have experienced homelessness. In a 2005-2017 study published by the National Library of Medicine, that recidivism rates studied among 246 recently homeless participants and incarceration associated with relapse into stimulant and opioid use, reported a period of cessation lasting six months or longer, 165 (67.1%) relapsed at some point during study follow-up.</p> <p>In the immediate 2 blocks of this proposed site, lays three marijuana dispensaries (4120 E. Live Oak Ave., 4145 E. Live Oak Ave., and 4105 Foss Ave.), two bars (4167 E. Live Oak Ave. and 4273 E. Live Oak Ave.), one liquor store (4275 E. Live Oak Ave.) and a 7-Eleven which serves alcohol (4323 E. Live Oak Ave.)</p> <p>While I recognize the need to support the unhoused, I feel that the recidivism rates outweigh the humanity efforts proposed by the developers whose major funding is contributed by the Los Angeles County Development Authority.</p> <p>I am implore that the Board of Supervisors weigh in and oppose this development.</p> <p>There will be a Public Hearing on Monday, September 30, 2024 at 5:00pm at bit.ly/elara2024.</p> <p>Project Name: Elara Address: 4217 E. Live Oak Ave., Arcadia CA 91006</p>



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Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
Public Comment		Oppose	Enrique Guerrero	<p>To whom may concern.</p> <p>"For nearly a hundred years, Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) like ours have served the children and families of Los Angeles County in myriad ways. Today, FFAs in L.A. County serve nearly 1,900 children, providing high-quality, and supportive services to children with some of the highest levels of need. We support the work of the Department of Children and Family Services to keep children safe, ameliorate the effects of system involvement, and facilitate reunification when possible and permanency through adoption when not. We have a unique, profound understanding of working with families and utilize that expertise to provide vital services through a model that the County is not situated to replicate. The loss of high-quality, experienced FFAs throughout the County could result in disruption and trauma for thousands of children and families. Working in different capacity as a therapist I see the invaluable contribution of FFAs to the youth of California. If many agencies have to be forced to close their doors because not able to afford insurance would be devastating, not just to the youth in California, to the county of Los Angeles as crime, homeless, and addiction to drugs will increase.</p> <p>I am appealing to you to explore all solutions, including amending County contract language to help support the procurement and affordability of insurance policies, facilitating the creation of insurance coverage for County contracted FFAs, and creating a fund that helps organizations with increased premiums in the short-term, while sustainable solutions that address the underlying issues can be found. I ask that you use whatever resources you have available to expediently identify and implement short and long term solutions that will prevent the placement disruption and irrevocable loss of services for thousands of children."</p>



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Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
Public Comment		Oppose	Giovanni Frausto	<p>I am in favor of opposing Prop 36. Prop 36 does not promote safety, or address root causes of crime. Evidence of Prop 47's success is that violent and property crime rates in California remain well below historical peaks.</p> <p>However, there is even longer standing evidence that sentencing enhancements like those proposed in Prop 36, do not promote safety.</p> <p>The vast majority of people exiting jail or prison are unemployed, have unstable housing, have no steady source of income, and find work difficult or nearly impossible to obtain after release.</p> <p>Studies repeatedly demonstrate that employment after incarceration is key in preventing recidivism and rebuilding stability and social networks that deter criminal activity. Unemployment is the single most important indicator of recidivism.</p> <p>The state has invested over \$200 million in the California Violence Intervention and Prevention grant over the past three years, which provides</p>
			Hannah Galloway	Prop 36 will increase mass incarceration and I am opposed to it because it will not help with crime and it will hurt the community, further driving up the incarceration rate and ruining lives. Vote NO on Prop 36!
			Nancy Frayde	I oppose proposition 36. Money should go to treatment and resources to address substance use as a mental health issue. Jails/prisons are already overcrowded. Help address our mental health crisis instead of adding to the problem. Substance use has an underlying cause- people need help addressing what led to substance use and other socioeconomic factors- not be intimidated into programs that will not solve the problems long term.
		Other	CAMILLE BANKS	



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			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Public Comment		Other	Christal Jones	<p>I come before the Board to appeal for long-overdue and measurable assistance. Our Association has received little, if any, help regarding the unauthorized parking (squatting) of RVs belonging to homeless families within our residential neighborhood. We have tried in vain to work with Holly Mitchell's office for a solution and the only thing that was offered was that they simply don't know where the people would go. Really??? The answer is, in fact, simple -- anyplace other than a residential neighborhood where you do not pay taxes, nor do not care about health and safety or the protection of property value, and where you can be found by this so-called homeless task force to be offered services you desperately need. We have been made to feel that our neighborhood is not as important as others, and that our losses in terms of safety, aesthetic, and property value is expendable. We empathize with those who are less fortunate and hope that their government and the MANY CBOs who service such people will provide the assistance they need. However, that assistance shouldn't come at the expense of our neighborhood. Unfortunately, the only "help" these people are getting is being able to live for free in our community, while the tax-paying homeowners spend time writing letters, making calls, taking pictures, and otherwise expending our energy to try and get someone to finally do the jobs they were elected, appointed, or hired to do. Make this current scenario make sense to those of us who can't even walk our own neighborhood when piles of RV trash, excrement, the RV squatters' personal belongings, and car parts are everywhere. Explain to us how being able to park for months on end in the same street space without moving is allowable for some, when Parking Enforcement tickets every week for people who live here legally. Provide some justification for how these people can infiltrate a neighborhood and benefit from it without investing in it. We are tired of hearing platitudes about the plight of these individuals and what "efforts" to help them in inches has been offered, and having to hear myriad "pass the buck" excuses for why this or that agency can't ticket, tow, and enforce. A solution you can implement today is that County flat land (you have MANY abandoned buildings with parking lots -- use THOSE) is used as authorized parking, and that ordinances are in place to discourage overnight sleeping in the streets in residential neighborhoods. Oh... but then, these people will be a bit of a nuisance to YOU, and why inconvenience yourself? Our neighborhoods need to be protected by your Board. That is your obligation. You are failing this community by not taking necessary action to identify acceptable areas for these people to go, where they can be processed for assistance, and where other assistance measures can come and offer what they have, and by making it clear that residential neighborhoods may NOT be used for squatting in an RV. These RVs are a NUISANCE. They are ILLEGAL. And they should never be allowed to utilize residential neighborhoods.</p>



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			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Public Comment		Other	DEVORA SMART	I'd like to discuss why the County does not have some type of Housing Program for the people that work for the county? I have been homeless for 5 1/2 years after losing my very 1st home...I've maintained perfect attendance ever since, but I've come across some resistance from these new housing developments because my credit score was dropped from a 700 to 332 when my house went into foreclosure and then auctioned away, leaving me to sleep in my car, staying in motels, sleeping on co-workers couches!! it has been extremely frustrating and depressing, and to be perfectly honest, embarrassing and my health now has challenges!!(I'm 61) it's really sad that were I have worked (Los Angeles County) for 24years has not one iota of a program to help with housing at a reasonable rent for employees to afford an apartment without struggling, and what really sucks is that I've found out that I'm not the only County employee that is going through this homeless situation :(
			Evelyn Harris	The West Athens Neighborhood Association would like for the Los Angeles County to follow San Francisco's lead on dealing with RVs. latimes.com/california/story/2024-09-21/san-francisco-warns-rv-occupants-accept-help-or-be-towed? fbclid=IwY2xjawFekmdleHRuA2F1bQ1xMQABHQeuoNzF95kusj8ir9HAKCYte9cdO4xR8m9UFxmSVIdAA87jPIEKOAYvtw_aem_Mav_BRZiSRKlIK1Mlj1Ngw
			Evelyn J Harris	The West Athens Neighborhood has been inundated with RVs and strange people parking in our community. There are many seniors in our neighborhood who are afraid to come out of their homes and others residents who are afraid to have their children play in their own yard because we have no idea who these people are in these RVs. They are leaving trash and some of them are just rude. We need for the authorities to enforce the law and ticket these over the weight limits; the ones parking outside of posted hours and remove all without current California tags. Our quality of life is being diminished and our property values are being lowered. I am empathetic to the plight of those impacted by high cost of housing, but we as homeowners are the ones paying the taxes and should not be neglected. We have rights too.



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Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
Public Comment		Other	Jessica Kastner	<p>Sample Non-FFA Organization and Other Community Partner/Supporter Written Public Comment</p> <p>I am currently parents counsel at Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers. I was also previously a resource parent with a FFA.</p> <p>Foster Family Agencies(FFAs) are a critical component of the continuum of care for systems-involved youth. FFAs support the work of the Department of Children and Family Services to keep children safe, ameliorate the effects of system involvement, and facilitate reunification and permanency through a spectrum of services and supports available to families 24/7. This is a model of caret hat the current system cannot replicate. I am deeply troubled by the FFA insurance crisis that could negatively impact the nearly 1,900 children served by FFAs in L.A. County today. The loss of high-quality, experienced FFAs throughout the County could result in disruption and trauma for thousands of children and families. If the underlying insurability problems are unaddressed, I further worry that non-profit human services organizations will not be able to continue to step up to serve communities. As it is, the county department of social services itself struggles to meet the needs of all the families who it is supposed to serve. I have clients, who have their children detained, who are not able to have their court ordered visits, and frequent instances where the county social worker may not be able to meet all their obligations due to caseloads. FFAs help to ease these burden and provide needed services to families, such as monitors and locations for family visits.</p> <p>I ask that you act now to expediently identify and implement short and long term solutions to the FFA insurance crisis that will prevent the placement disruption and irrevocable loss of services for thousands of children and families. Thank you.</p>
			Melissa Gee	<p>I would like to bring up to the board of supervisors that there are 5 reserved parking spots for the board of supervisors at 7555 Van Nuys Blvd Van Nuys 91405. This parking structure at the Zev Yaroslavsky Family Support Center has less disabled parking slots because these parking spaces are reserved. This parking structure is shared by mid valley comprehensive health center and one of the elevators has been broken for months. I think the board of supervisors should have these spaces changed to disabled parking spaces to help the patients and visitors that need these close parking spaces.</p>



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			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Public Comment		Other	Monisha Parker	<p>Dear Board of Supervisors,</p> <p>I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the performance and management of the Department of Public Works. It has become increasingly apparent that this department consistently has an overwhelming number of agenda items compared to others, which raises questions about its efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>It seems that the current director of the Department of Public Works is struggling to manage the workload and meet deadlines. As a result, critical projects are not being completed on time, which not only hampers community development but also impacts the trust that residents have in our local government's ability to deliver services effectively.</p> <p>Moreover, I have concerns regarding the department's budgetary practices. It appears that there is a pattern of overspending without the accountability and oversight necessary to ensure that taxpayer funds are being used efficiently. This raises significant concerns among the community, as responsible fiscal management is essential for maintaining public confidence.</p> <p>Given these issues, I believe it is time for a change in leadership within the Department of Public Works. If the current director cannot improve the department's performance and adherence to budgetary constraints, it may be necessary to consider new leadership that can bring about the necessary improvements.</p> <p>It is essential that we hold our departments accountable for their performance. If a change in leadership does not lead to the improvements needed within the Department of Public Works, it might even be necessary to re-evaluate the compositions of the Board of Supervisors itself. Effective governance should be our top priority, and we must ensure that all departments are functioning at their best for the benefit of the community.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to these pressing matters. I hope that you will take my concerns seriously and work toward meaningful changes that will better serve our community.</p> <p>Sincerely, Monisha Parker</p>



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Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
Public Comment		Other	Nikisha Williams	<p>Hello Board Members. My name is Nikisha Williams am a resident of West Athens community.</p> <p>I have a concern about the continuous mobile homes that reside in our small community. There are over 20 RVs that do not move and disobeys street parking signs. My street alone (122nd) has not been cleaned in months due to these RVs. One of them inoperable and has been on the street since 2020. I have called Parking Enforcement dozens of times and was told by the sheriffs that it is not their problem.</p> <p>I am now reaching out to my community leaders to help rid of these RVs. I have two children at home that are unable to ride bikes and skateboard on their own block because of the constant strangers that are in and out of these RVs. It is very unsafe and concerning. We have parking signs that say "NO Parking from 10pm -6am" which are disobeyed and not enforced. Old red tags sit on these RVs as they know the threat is not real.</p> <p>I am begging for assistance for removal. We have been waiting for years to see some change and unfortunately it is getting worse.</p> <p>We have been reaching out to Holly Mitchell's office for months now by emailing and calling. We want to be heard and to take our issues in West Athens seriously.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
			Ranette E Rowan	Parking of RVs in residential neighborhood in illegal and causing significant safety concerns for residents. Holly J. Mitchell, LA County Supervisor for the West Athens area has been unsupportive in resolving these concerns.
			Rashun Aljuwani	Proposition 36 does not positively impact the individuals suffering from homelessness or drug use, studies have shown that increased punishment and longer-tenured sentences only promote mental deterioration and worsen the issue that is supposed to be being addressed. Speaking as a previously incarcerated individual time spent behind bars negatively affects mental health and places them in a worser position when they are released.
			ronda banks	
			Tina Rios	Thank you for continuing to bring the voices of those with Lived Experience and Expertise to your advisory bodies on Domestic Violence, Public Health, Mental Health, and Child Welfare. We continue to see the fruits of this by way of more families remaining together safely in their homes, cultures, and communities. Please see the attached CA State Work on Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting effort.
		Item Total		27

Grand Total			27	
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DEAR NEIGHBORS,

ARE YOU OUTRAGED AT THE NUMEROUS HOMELESS RVs THAT ARE BEING ALLOWED TO COME INTO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND TAKE OVER OUR STREETS BRINGING DOWN THE AREA AND CAUSING SIGNIFICANT SAFETY CONCERNS?

IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT OUR LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERVISOR AT THE BELOW NUMBER AND FILE A COMPLAINT.

LA COUNTY SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

HOLLY J. MITCHELL

(213) 974-2222

SHE'S THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR OUR COMMUNITY. AS HOMEOWNERS WHO PAY TAXES, WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WATCH OUR COMMUNITY BEING TRASHED.

YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT THE **NBC I-TEAM (VIA EMAIL) TO LET THEM KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR NEIGHBOR.**

SHIFTING FROM REPORTING FAMILIES TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES

California's Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and Recommendations

SEPTEMBER 2024



**Mandated Reporting to
Community Supporting
Task Force**

*Communities Keeping Children Safe
and Families Together*

INTRODUCTION

Mandated reporting refers to the legal requirement for certain professionals to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Per the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories have some form of mandated reporter laws.¹ Mandated reporting laws have expanded greatly over the past 50 years, leading to the requirement to report ANY suspicion of abuse or neglect. The result has been significant increases in the number of reports made with no corresponding evidence that children are safer. The harm and trauma of unnecessary reporting falls disproportionately on Black/African American and Native American children and families.

California is committed to addressing these systemic failures and inequities. In March 2023, the California Child Welfare Council (CWC) unanimously approved the [Community Pathway Recommendations](#) prepared and presented by the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee of the CWC. The ultimate goal is to create a child and family well-being system that consists of an integrated continuum of family serving systems that support parents and families in providing safe, stable, and nurturing environments for their children. Essentially, supporting families—not reporting families.

Kathryn Icenhower

Co-Chair,
Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee
Chief Executive Officer,
SHIELDS for Families Los Angeles, CA

The Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force was created to review California’s mandated reporting system, including the policies and practices that lead up to, but not into, child protective services. The Task Force is not focused on reforms aimed at child protective services or the child welfare system.

It is important to understand—and distinguish between—two frequently used terms in this report—child welfare system (CWS) and child protective services (CPS). CWS is an expansive network of government agencies and community supports that are charged with the safety, health, and well-being of children, families, and communities through public health, education, behavioral health, public social services, and child protective services. CPS, a subset of CWS, is a governmental agency responsible for investigating reports of child maltreatment and intervening where abuse or neglect has occurred, to provide safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families.*

The PEI Committee and its MRCS Task Force, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), believe in a child and family well-being system that takes broad and comprehensive action to strengthen families and keep children safe. Mandated reporting reform is a step closer to that goal.

David Swanson Hollinger

Co-Chair,
Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee
Former Child Welfare Director,
Ventura County, California

* See the [Glossary](#) for more detailed definitions of all technical terms used in this report.

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Executive Summary

Mandated Reporting Reform is Essential

Mandated reporting is the legal requirement for certain professionals to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Per the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), all 50 states have some form of mandated reporting laws.ⁱ California has one of the most extensive networks of mandated reporters with over 49 categories of professionals required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

California's expanding mandated reporting laws and categories have produced a decade-long pattern of high levels of allegations—400,000 to 500,000 children in California are reported to child protective services (CPS) annually. However, after review and investigation, nearly 90% of allegations are not substantiated, meaning there is not a need for CPS involvement for the child to safely remain with their family.ⁱⁱ

This is a societal crisis, a system that unnecessarily over-surveils and over-reports children and families—especially Black/African American and Native American—inflicting trauma instead of finding new ways to support them to safely stay together. Even after controlling for poverty, data shows that Black/African American and Native American children are more likely to be identified by and remain within the child welfare system. The harmful impact on children and families creates a ripple effect throughout communities. Families that are reported and investigated often develop a multi-

generational fear of public agencies and become alienated from their natural support networks. Moreover, CPS resources and attention are often diverted from children who are in urgent need of intervention, thereby increasing the risk to those who are most vulnerable.

A number of factors—a complicated combination of system failures, structural racism, and human bias—have led us here. Mandated reporting too often equates issues related to issues related to poverty—a child in unclean clothing, inadequate housing, or experiencing food scarcity—with abuse or neglect. Although recent mandated reporting laws have attempted to address this issue, a catch-all reporting category called “general neglect” is where 45% of reports land, with nearly 80% of those reports not substantiated by CPS.ⁱⁱⁱ General neglect often also encompasses co-occurring issues like substance use disorder, domestic violence, and mental illness. Additionally, mandated reporters fear for their livelihood given that a failure to report can mean a loss of their job, significant fines, or even incarceration. These factors are endorsed through outdated mandated reporting training that points to CPS as the only response to families in vulnerable situations.

And for all of that, there is no data that shows children are any safer. Even in states where there is Universal Mandated Reporting—meaning every adult in the state is by default a mandated reporter—there is no evidence that children are safer or better off with our current mandated reporting structures.^{iv}

ⁱ Child Welfare Information Gateway, Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect, May 2023, <https://cwig-prod-prod-drupal-s3fs-us-east-1.s3.amazonaws.com/public/documents/manda.pdf>

ⁱⁱ California Child Welfare Indicators Project. (CCWIP), CDSS/U.C. Berkeley, <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} American Journal of Public Health, May 2017, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303667>

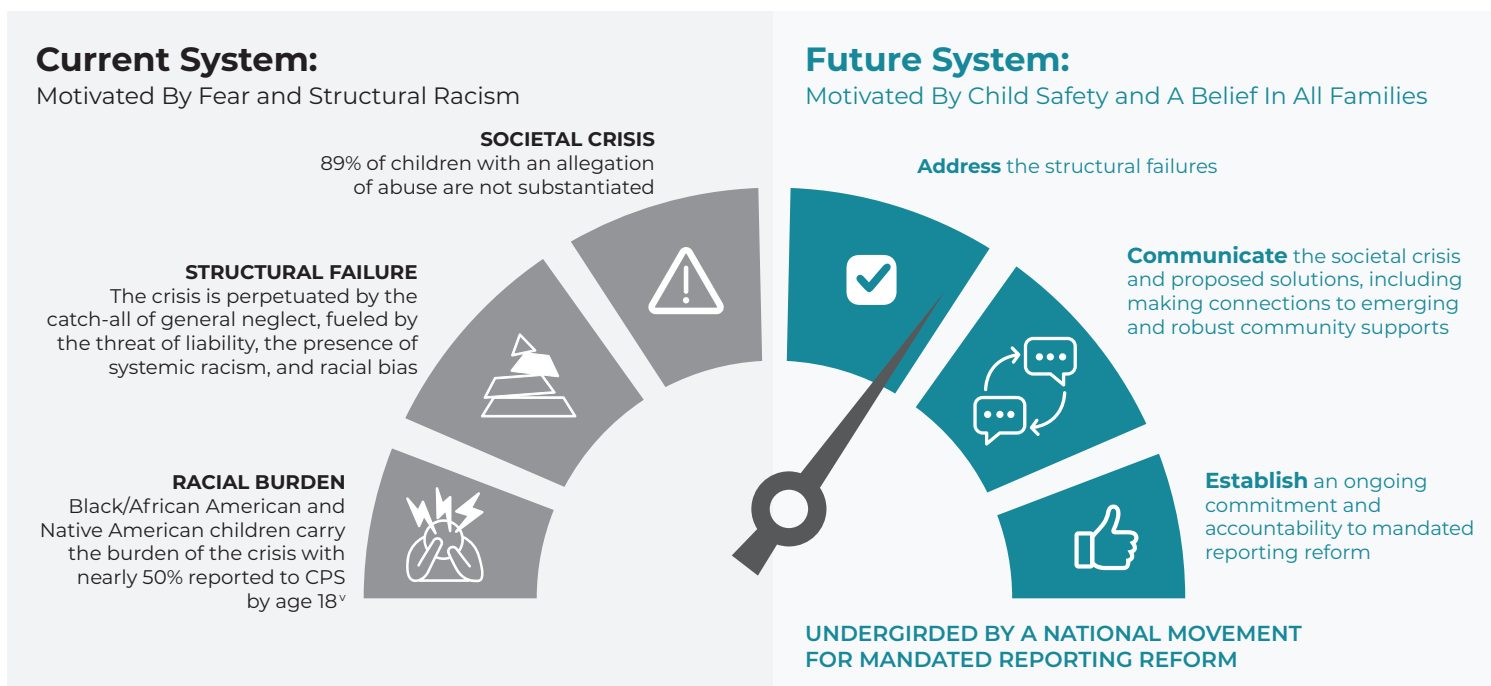
Children, families, and communities deserve a better approach to safety and support. Members of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force agreed that we must address systemic failures—rooted in structural racism, bias, and fear. Only then will there be an opportunity to create a system that trusts in the strength of all families and is committed to keeping them safely together. This new system must empower families and their communities and provide the necessary resources for them to thrive.

The Time is Now: Mobilizing for Action

California has strategically and consistently advanced a vision of child and family well-being. Bolstered by the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), a steady cadence of action laid the path for the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee to present the [Community Pathway Recommendations](#) to California’s [Child Welfare Council](#) in March 2023. With unanimous approval,

Recommendation #1 called for the creation of a task force to develop recommendations to reform the mandated reporting system. Over the following months, the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force took shape, and California alongside other states, continued to lead the way for reallocating resources towards true primary prevention and reforming mandated reporting.

To form the Task Force, an expansive application process was quickly put into place to engage a diverse and expert group of people with proximity to mandated reporting and child protective services. This process specifically focused on including those who had lived experience with child protective services, specifically with the mandated reporting system. From over 250 applications, 32 Task Force Members and 78 Subcommittee members were chosen through a rigorous vetting process with an emphasis on lived experience and racial and ethnic diversity. The Task Force launched its work in September 2023, and in November, with the guidance of the Task Force members, an equally



^v Legislative Analyst's Office. California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionalities and Disparities. Apr. 2024, <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2024/4897/disproportionalities-disparities-child-welfare-042424.pdf>

diverse group of Subcommittee members filled positions across the following Subcommittees:

1. Narrowing the Definition of Neglect
2. Mandated Reporter Curriculum & Training
3. Potential Legal/Liability Issues for Mandated Reporters
4. Policy & Practice Reforms
5. Research & Data
6. Lived Experience Group (formed in February 2024)

The Task Force comprised 88% of members who had worked in or had personal experience with mandated reporting and the child welfare system, including CPS. Most notably, with 28% of the members possessing lived expertise, and 74% being people of color, the Task Force upheld its commitment to diversity. Composition of the Subcommittees was equally diverse.

“The way the Task Force has approached this work, with the deep and transparent engagement of individuals with lived expertise throughout the process, is a model for how we should be doing the work of the Child Welfare Council and across the state.”

— Statement by Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, June 2024, following the Task Force presentation of recommendations.

To guide their work, the Task Force developed and unanimously embraced a North Star which was central at every meeting, serving as the benchmark for testing recommendations. During challenging discussions, the Task Force consistently referred to it to ensure their work remained accountable to children, families, and communities, not personal goals or agendas.

As the Task Force’s work deepened, themes around the “why” and “how” of mandated reporting reform began to emerge. Five strategic priorities and 14 recommendations were born out of months-long iterative process of discussion, drafting, debating, and fine-tuning.

NORTH STAR: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

Recommendations to Transform California's Mandated Reporting System

NORTH STAR: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous people, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.

Recommendation 1: The California Child Welfare Council (CWC), through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee, shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) to ensure the transformation of Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting continues and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated.

[Implementation/Accountability]

Recommendation 2: Request the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to continuously monitor disparities in the child welfare system.

[Implementation/Accountability]

Recommendation 3: The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall ensure the implementation of AB 2085 in all California Counties and Tribes until such time that Recommendation #5 is implemented, and General Neglect is removed as a Mandated Reporting requirement.

[Implementation/Accountability]

Recommendation 4: In alignment with the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report, California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities, encourage the LAO to continue analyzing disparities in the Mandated Reporting system to determine if narrowing mandated reporter categories in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) negatively impacts child safety.

[Legislative]

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California's mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families' needs appropriately.

Recommendation 5: Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to remove the reporting requirement of General Neglect for Mandated Reporters. *[Legislative]*

Recommendation 6: Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to revise and clarify the definition of Severe Neglect to be aligned with the definition of Severe Neglect utilized in the California Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tool. *[Legislative]*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Ensure that Mandated Reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.

Recommendation 7: Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) and Counties, to implement a two-year pilot that provides Mandated Reporters with immunity from liability. *[Legislative]*

Recommendation 8: Support the amendment of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to require all Mandated Reporters in California receive standardized training on child abuse and neglect. *[Training/Legislative]*

Recommendation 9: Require the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to develop, with participation of individuals with lived expertise, a standardized curriculum for Mandated Reporters. *[Training]*

Recommendation 10: Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to develop a Mandated Reporter web page specific to Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting. *[Training]*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Ensure that Mandated Reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.

Recommendation 11: Require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to incorporate an assessment of the capacity of community supports and services. *[Community Pathway]*

Recommendation 12: Consistent with the PEI Community Pathway Recommendations, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall

be required to ensure Counties' Comprehensive Prevention Plans (CPP) incorporate information and education specific to Mandated Reporters regarding the implementation of and access to Community Pathways and/or community resources available to support families in their communities. *[Community Pathway]*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in Mandated Reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.

Recommendation 13: Require the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) to ensure recommendations from the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force and any subsequent policy reforms related to Mandated Reporting are enacted, and efforts necessary to ensure continued

transformation of the Mandated Reporting system are advanced. *[Implementation/Accountability]*

Recommendation 14: Ensure the creation and implementation of a statewide narrative change initiative. *[Narrative Change]*

Conclusion

California's vision of a child and family well-being system requires dramatic reform of current practices and policies regarding mandated reporting and responses to child abuse and neglect allegations, including the underlying mindsets that lead to unnecessary over-surveillance and over-reporting of children and families. The need for reform is evidenced in the large volume of reports to CPS each year that are unsubstantiated. These types of reports cause harm and trauma as opposed to providing support, and over-reporting continues to increase the numbers of children in out-of-home care who are dis-

proportionately Black/African American and Native American. The strategic priorities and recommendations put forward by the MRCS Task Force are a critical step towards building a system motivated by child safety and a belief in all families. This societal crisis demands collective action—a coalition of committed individuals in their communities and organizations to create a paradigm and system shift from harming children and families with over-reporting, to supporting children and families with the resources they need to thrive.

“We can do so much better, and the time is now. Maybe 20 years ago the time wasn't right, but the time is now. Communities are strong and ready to do this work. The Task Force is made up of transformers who must continue to do the work, no matter how scary. It takes all of us living in the uncomfortable zone to push.”

— Janay Eustace, President & CEO, The Child Abuse Prevention Center

LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Honorable Members of the Child Welfare Council,

There are moments that define who we are as individuals, as leaders, as organizations, and as a State. These moments are rooted in the potential for transformation, and challenged by inaction and complacency. But ultimately, these moments are shaped by our collective willingness to examine systems, face our fear of change, and take action.

In March 2023, the Child Welfare Council approved recommendations from the Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI) Committee that created the conditions for such a moment. With those recommendations, the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force was created, and with it the opportunity to call out system failures, break through the inertia, and replace fear with transformation to ensure that families can remain together and be safe, well, and strengthened by the supports and resources they need to thrive.

We seized the moment and created a Task Force like no other. With a commitment to disrupting the status quo, the Task Force and Subcommittees were made up of over 100 individuals who are not usually invited to discuss child welfare issues together. Over 80% of the members have proximity to the mandated reporting system, and more than 25% have personal experience with the system's challenges and failures.

Our work to reform the mandated reporting system directly addressed the impacts of explicit and implicit bias and structural racism. It is about changing HOW the system works and WHO it works for, because the failures—and successes—of the system do not impact people equally. If we keep the current system in place, Black/African American and Native American families and children suffer the most.

Together, the MRCS Task Force has created recommendations that require our attention, focus, and forward momentum. The recommendations advance the extensive efforts that have been underway for years in California and nationwide to build a robust child and family well-being system. In fact, the work is already happening in many counties including Humboldt, Los Angeles, San Diego, Ventura, and many others. The Task Force recommendations lay the groundwork for counties to bolster—or jumpstart—their work.

We invite you to read this report with curiosity and possibility, and to keep in mind the numerous and diverse viewpoints that have created these recommendations. We did not always agree on the path, but we held strong to the collective destination. Join us there, because this is a moment in time that has the potential for a lifetime of change.

With gratitude and in partnership,

Roger De Leon Jr.

Co-Chair, MRCS Task Force
Child Welfare Council Member

Parent Partner, Fatherhood Advocate,
Professional with Lived Expertise

Dana E. Blackwell

Co-Chair, MRCS Task Force
Child Welfare Council Member

Senior Director, CA Strategic Consultation,
Casey Family Programs

On behalf of the [MRCS Task Force](#)

STATEMENT FROM THE LIVED EXPERIENCE GROUP

Honorable Members of the Child Welfare Council,

Throughout our tenure on this Task Force, we have shifted our focus from mandated reporting to supporting our communities, embedding the principle of shared power with community members and those with lived experiences. This includes parents, youth, children, caregivers, relatives, teachers, social workers, and many others in dual roles. One thing has become abundantly clear: the crucial importance of including these diverse voices in shaping a system that values accountability and effective practices.

This accountability honors the hundreds of thousands of voices across our state who have contributed to defining what it truly means to listen—and to transform that listening into action. As members of the Lived Experience Subcommittee, we recognize that this paradigm shift is critical for airing out disparities in belief about the value of community engagement and the healing of families. Those resistant to acknowledging the systemic impacts of racism and harm are being rightfully phased out of this field, as they should be.

We strongly urge the Child Welfare Council and all integrated systems to honor the voices of those directly impacted by these issues. Please uplift and implement the Task Force recommendations with bravery and determination. Let us ensure that our voices are heard loud and proud, adhering to the principle that there should be “nothing about us, without us.”

Recommendation on accountability, to the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force: Implementation should be centralized at the state level, specifically within the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). This office will be crucial in maintaining the integrity of our commitment to equity and inclusion, particularly as it relates to those with lived experience. By positioning this work within CDSS, we want assurance that the transition from mandated reporting to community support is embedded within a framework that prioritizes these values. CDSS is ideal as the Foster Care Ombudsman’s office is uniquely positioned there, and can help assure the equitable accountability for recommendations to the work of the Children’s and Families Services Division of the Health and Human Services, and Department of Social Services.

As for the implementation strategy, the Secretary of State should develop and implement a “good faith clause” and oversee in partnership with the CDSS, a 3–5-year plan to defer legal liabilities for mandated reporters. During this time mandated reporters are given the flexibility to not report and instead seek community engagement to support parents, children, and youth. This clause will facilitate a good faith effort in shifting our approach from mandatory reporting to community support. Under this new paradigm, mandated reporters will not face prosecution if they choose, in good faith, not to report but instead direct families towards community-based support. This shift should align with the implementation of the Family First

Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), ensuring that our systems and practices support families holistically and preventatively, rather than punitively. With that, CDSS could support an ongoing task force which will comprise 50% of participants who have been impacted by mandated reporting or have advocated for changes in the child welfare system including those with lived experience, community members, and community organizations. Individuals with lived expertise will be compensated for their essential contributions to the work.

Lived Experts Areas of Importance:

1. Defining Key Terms:

There is a consensus among various groups on the need to **clearly define what constitutes mandated reporting**. This involves delineating the circumstances under which reporting should occur, to minimize both underreporting and overreporting. It's essential that these definitions are widely understood by professionals in the field as well as the general public.

2. Legal and Liability Concerns:

- **Liability Concerns:** Address the liability issues surrounding forced reporting, ensuring that those obligated to report are protected. For a bold shift in practice, policy must step in with the aforementioned “good faith clause.”
- **Legislative Changes:** Advocate for legislative changes that provide clearer guidelines and protections for mandated reporters while under the “good faith clause.”
- **Implementation:** Public campaign for community partnership to support families debunking the idea that the “system” can better care for children. Truth telling campaign to help support identifying when systems intervention is necessary.
- **Legal Definition of Neglect:** Consideration must be given to how **racial biases and the needs of special populations** can affect perceptions and accusations of neglect. We recommend eliminating the legal definition of neglect. This will allow for a more comprehensive assessment of child welfare adjudication not based on a “catch all” category but facts defined in the welfare and institution codes which define child abuse.
- Address **fully funding community-based organizations** and resource centers to “fill the systems” concrete needs and financial gaps for prevention of entrance into the child welfare system due to “general neglect.”

3. Curriculum and Training:

- **Uniting Families:** Highlight the benefits of keeping families united and the negative impacts of unnecessary separations.
- **Training Importance:** Stress the importance of thorough training for all stakeholders to ensure an accurate understanding and implementation of reporting requirements.

4. Research & Data:

- **Address the discrepancies in reporting** that disproportionately affect Black/African American, Indigenous, Latinx, and children and parents with disabilities of all spectrums compared to white communities. There is a critical need for ongoing research and data analysis to inform policy changes and ensure equity in reporting practices.
- The work of child welfare needs to be **transparent in the form of data, decision-making and real-time feedback** relating to injustices and disparities. There also needs to be alternative forms of research that are community led and family-involved.
- We need to be able to have an **ongoing and systematic government-and-community dialogue about the data**. There needs to be a process by which families and communities report the data that is harmful to them, and where there is engaged transparency with the data.

We put our hearts and collective lived experience into the recommendations. We know these areas are pivotal for ensuring that our shift from mandated reporting to community supporting is informed, equitable, and effective.

We ask you too, to open your hearts, be bold not only by considering the Task Force Recommendations, but by inviting more persons with lived expertise to join the tables where decisions are made. We know that including and uplifting the voices of those most impacted by mandated reporting and child welfare to leadership and at large positions, will continue to build the momentum we see propelling us toward our North Star of keeping children and families together, safe, well and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

In gratitude and solidarity,

Tina Rios, Co-Chair

MRCs Task Force Member
Co-Chair of the Lived Expertise Group
Tri-Chair of the Narrowing the Legal Definition of Neglect Subcommittee
Reimagine Child Safety Coalition
Indigenous Mother with Lived Experience

Jason Sharpe, Co-Chair

MRCs Task Force Member
Co-Chair of the Lived Experience Group
San Diego District 4 Appointee of the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board
Parent Partner, Case Manager, Father with Lived Experience

On behalf of the [Lived Experience Group](#)

I. Mandated Reporting Reform is Essential

Far Too Many Children Are Reported Unnecessarily

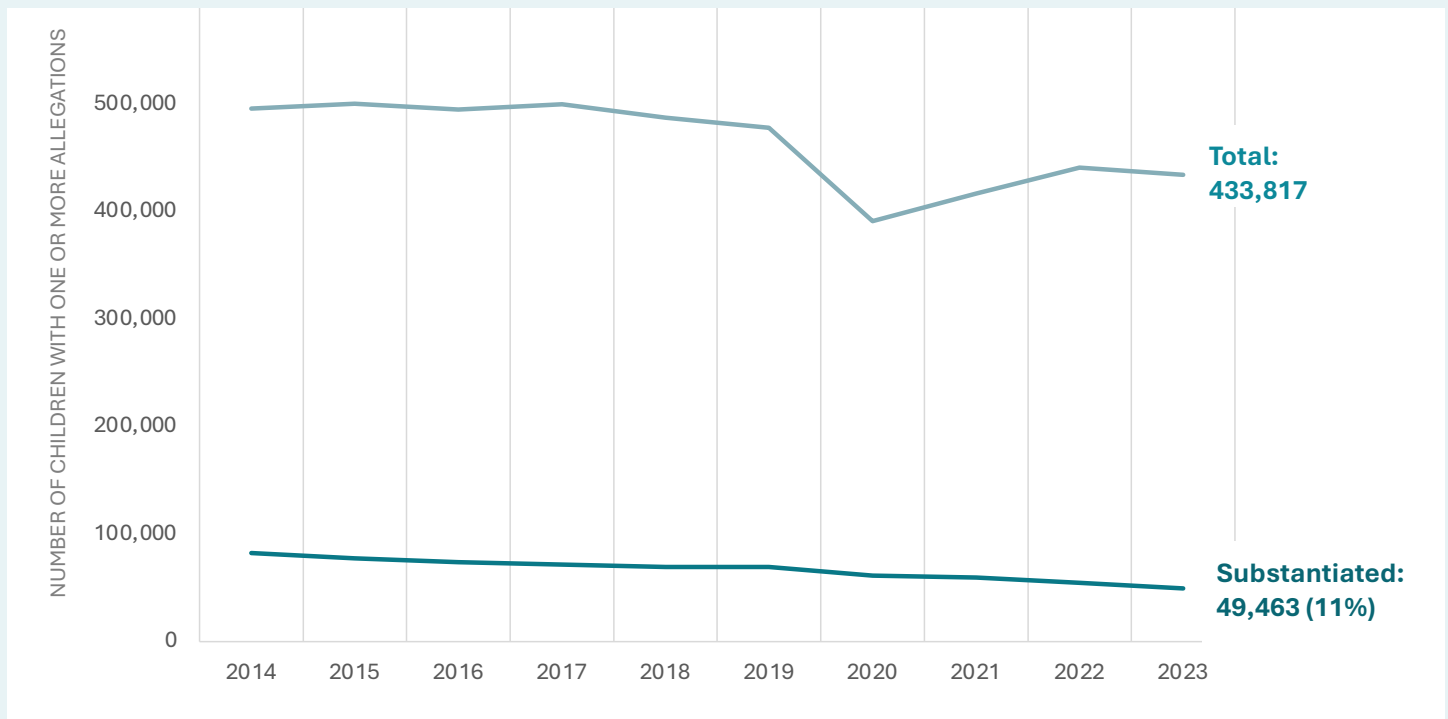
Over the last decade, the number of children in California reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) annually has ranged between 400,000 to 500,000. Yet, the number of substantiated allegations has consistently been less than 15%, and currently is closer to 11%. Mandated reporting laws have expanded—widening the gap between allegations and substantiations—without addressing critical concerns, including the roles of racism and bias in their enforcement. Even disregarding the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of these laws,

under what circumstances would anyone accept a nearly 90% failure rate?

Yet that is exactly what we as a society are doing in respect to the mandated reporting system that is currently in place. Nearly 90% of the time in a given year, reports made for child abuse and neglect are not substantiated*—thus, there is not a need for system involvement for the child to be kept safe (Figure 1). This high rate of unsubstantiated reports leads to significant unnecessary harm and trauma for children and families.

*Refer to the [Glossary](#) for a detailed definition.

FIGURE 1: OVER-REPORTING CAUSES HARM: ONLY 11% OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT ALLEGATIONS ARE SUBSTANTIATED



Source: [California Child Welfare Indicators Project](#)

This harmful impact on children and families creates a ripple effect throughout communities. Families under investigation often develop a multigenerational fear of public agencies and become alienated from their natural support networks due to stigma and embarrassment. This isolation reduces their trust in and access to community supports and resources. For example, in cases of domestic violence, mandatory reporting can discourage help-seeking and hinder access to needed community services.

Moreover, CPS is adversely affected by over-reporting, as this dynamic diverts attention and resources away from children who genuinely need immediate intervention. This misallocation of resources can delay responses to actual cases of abuse or neglect, putting vulnerable children at greater risk.

In summary, over-reporting harms individual children and families, disrupts the natural and nurturing connections within the community, and undermines the effectiveness of CPS in protecting those truly in need.

“My daughter was born medically fragile. I had no support from my family, and I didn’t know where to go for help or even what to ask for. The domestic violence in our home got worse because of the stress of being parents of a child with significant needs. When the police called CPS, I had no idea that my child could be removed because I was a victim of domestic violence. How could they take her away? I believe my experience—and my daughter’s life—would have been different if we had support and had known about the “failure to protect” laws. Even though my daughter was in foster care for less than a year, she continues to suffer from the experience.”

— Shelley Lopez, MRCS Task Force and Lived Experience Group member, parent, and advocate

“A focus on child safety has been foundational to the work of this Task Force. We know that our current mandated reporting system has resulted in the over-surveillance of families, the vast majority of whose challenges don’t rise to the level of true safety concerns and child protection system involvement, and who are disproportionately families of color. We are reimagining how we as a society, as systems, and as communities address family stressors early through community supports and services, while ensuring that families referred to the child protection system are those with true safety concerns.”

— David Swanson-Hollinger, former child welfare director and Co-Chair, Prevention and Early Intervention Committee

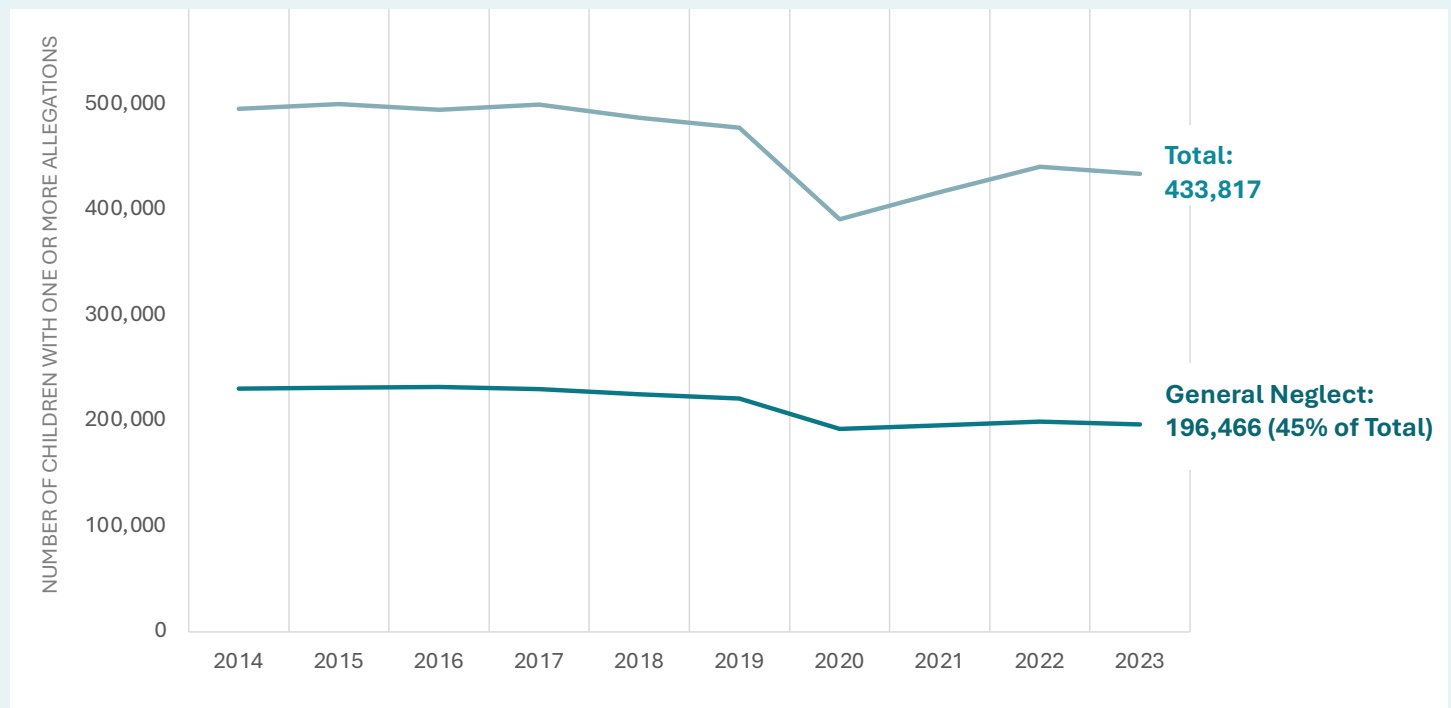


General Neglect Is a Catch-All That Leads to Over-Reporting

General neglect consistently accounts for nearly half of all CPS reports in California. As shown in Figure 2, since 2012 nearly 50% of all children each year who were the subject of a maltreatment allegation in California—almost 200,000 children per year on average—are reported due to general neglect. This “catch-all” allegation is often tied to the impacts of poverty, including a lack of childcare, housing, basic utilities, food, and medical and legal support, not true issues of child safety. In addition to having a direct or indirect relationship with poverty, some general neglect allegations

arise from suspicions related to a caregiver’s mental health, substance use, or involvement in domestic violence situations.² These challenges may not pose an immediate safety risk to children, especially when appropriate services and tangible supports inside the broader child welfare system (SNAP, CalWorks, Behavioral Health, etc.), as well as outside of the system and in the community are available for parents and caregivers. Even allegations of severe neglect and physical abuse, which go beyond general neglect, have single-digit substantiation rates, particularly among certain groups of reporters. This underscores the ineffectiveness of the current mandated reporting laws, approaches, and narrative.

FIGURE 2: GENERAL NEGLECT: A CLASSIFICATION THAT PERPETUATES OVER-REPORTING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Source: [California Child Welfare Indicators Project](#)

Fear of Liability and Personal Consequences Drives Over-Reporting

What are potential explanations for such a low substantiation rate for CPS reports? As it currently exists, mandated reporting is too often influenced by racial bias and motivated by fear of legal or professional liability for failure to report. As mentioned, nearly half of children reported are not for specific and identifiable instances of abuse or severe neglect, but rather under a broad catch-all category of general neglect which often equates abuse with poverty, a long-standing consequence of structural racism in the United States. Black/African American and Native American children carry the burden of this system failure. This is evidenced in California with one in two children from these groups—a shocking 50%—being subject to an investigation by the time they turn 18.³

Additionally, mandated reporters concerned about serious personal consequences such as loss of professional credentials, job termination, financial repercussions, and even potential incarceration, may feel compelled to report any behavior they think or fear could be abuse or neglect. The broad and imprecise language of the law—including fines and/or incarceration for failure to report “reasonable suspicion” of abuse and neglect—encourages over-reporting and reliance on liability-driven interpretations, rather than focusing solely on the safety and welfare of children. The litigious nature of our society and the insurance industry often fuels this fear of liability.

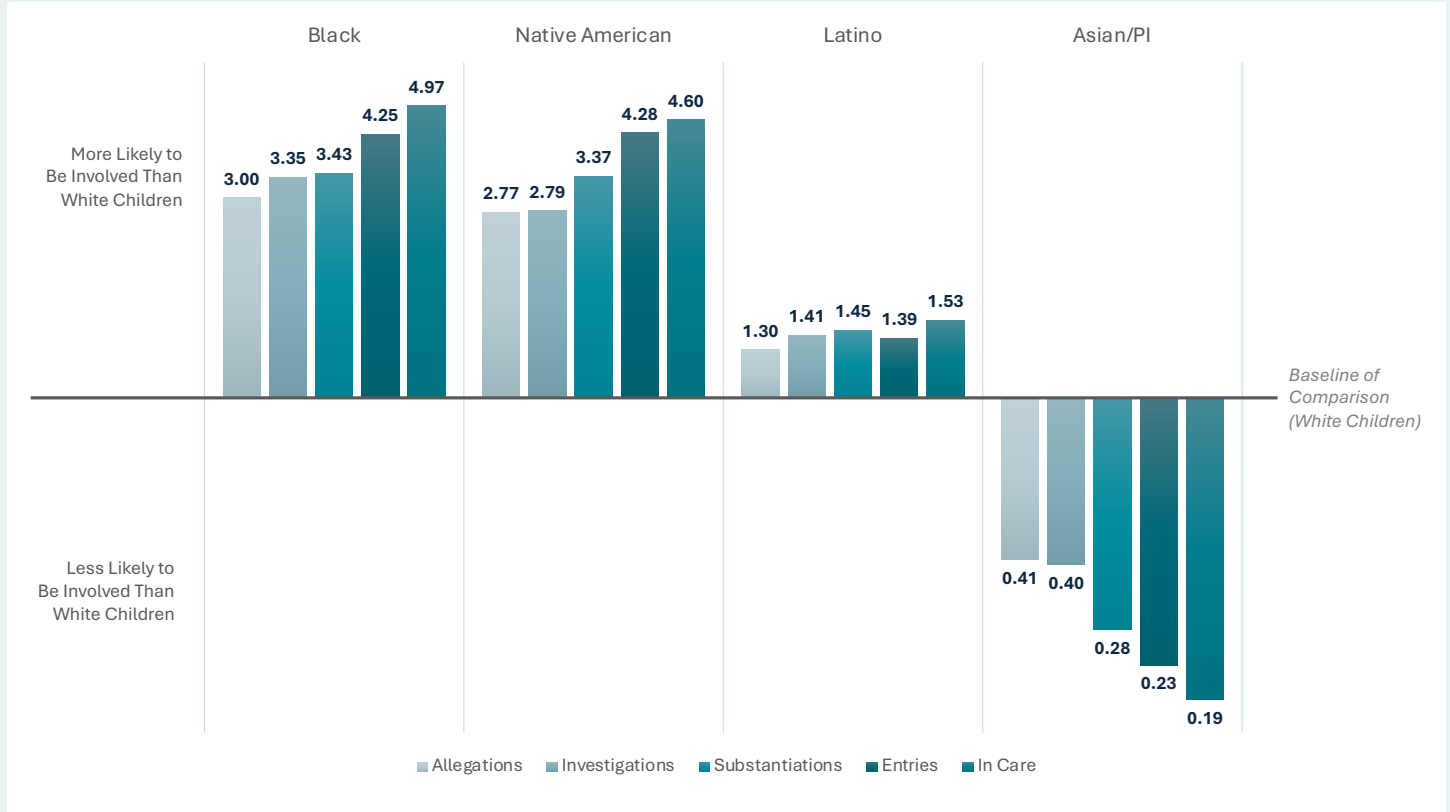
Racial Burden: Black/African Americans and Native Americans Are Impacted the Most

Data shows evidence of the systemic bias and structural inequalities of mandated reporting laws in particular, as well as for child protective services

as a whole. Figure 3 presents data on both higher levels of reporting of Black/African American, Native American, and Latino children, as well as deeper and more persistent involvement in the system once reporting occurs for these populations. Not only has structural racism resulted in these communities facing higher levels of poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to supportive resources, but they are also subject to implicit and explicit biases resulting in increased scrutiny and suspicion and higher reporting rates, even when the circumstances may not warrant intervention. This over-reporting exacerbates the challenges faced by these communities, perpetuating cycles of distrust and disadvantage.



FIGURE 3: RACIAL BURDEN: OVER-REPORTING HARMS A DISPARATE NUMBER OF BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN, 2023



Source: [California Child Welfare Indicators Project](#)

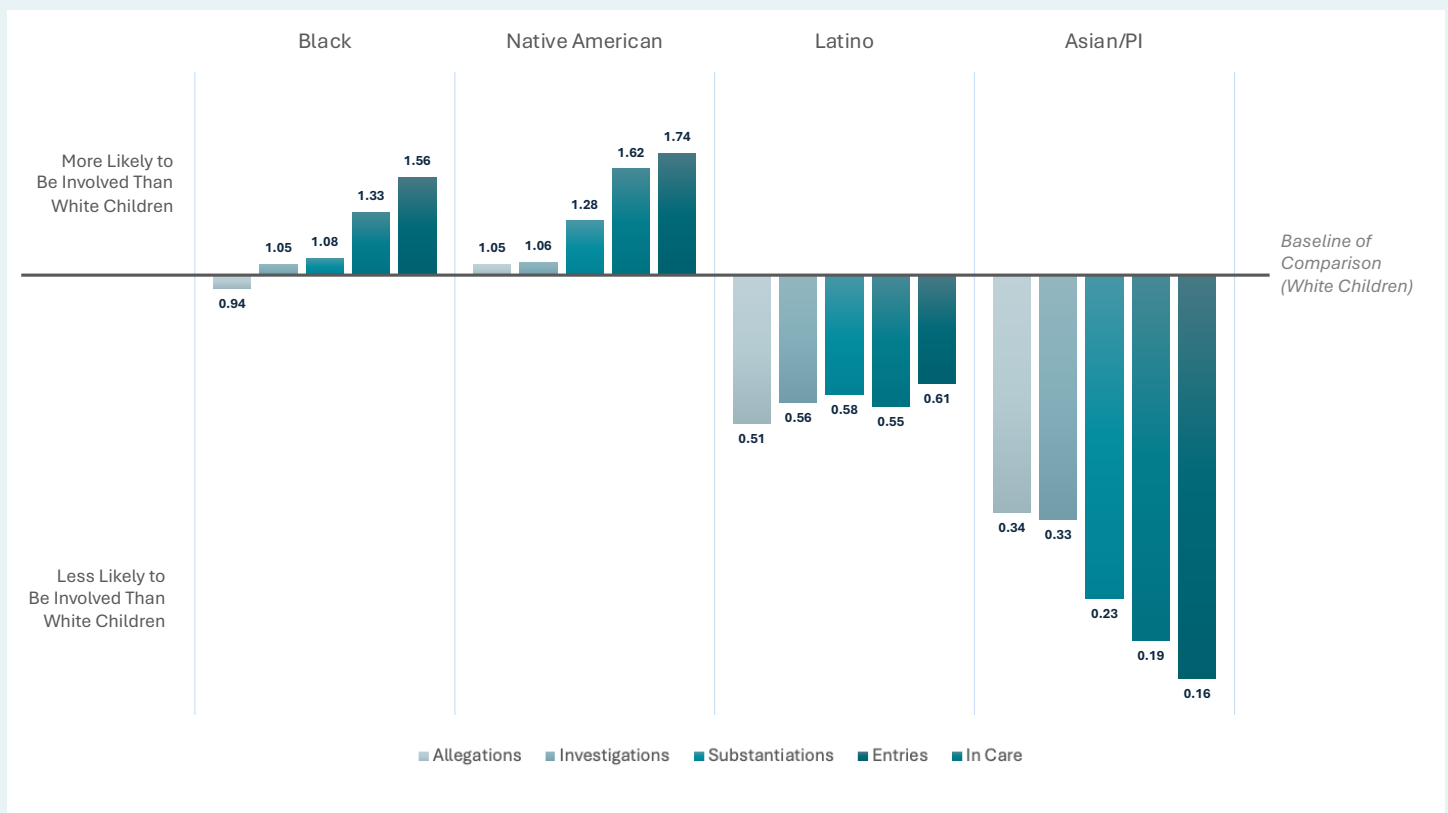


Disproportionate and Disparate Outcomes Persist Even When Poverty Is Taken Into Account

As stated, poverty is often a factor among child welfare-involved families and is conflated with neglect. Figure 4 takes the California analysis of disproportionate impact a step further by considering the proportions of different ethnic groups estimated by the Census Bureau to be in poverty. The resulting ethnic disparity indices

underscore the structural bias of child protective services. Accounting for poverty in the analysis results in near parity of allegations and CPS investigations for Black/African American, Native American, and White children. However, once Black/African American and Native American children and families touch the system, they are more likely than White children to be removed from their homes and remain in an out-of-home placement, highlighting the continuing racial disparities in child protective services.

FIGURE 4: RACIAL BURDEN: DISPARITIES EXIST EVEN WHEN CONTROLLING FOR POVERTY, 2023



Source: Racial Disparity Indices (General Population), California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP), CDSS / U.C. Berkeley

Moving From Fear-Based Over-Reporting to Trust-Based Community Supporting

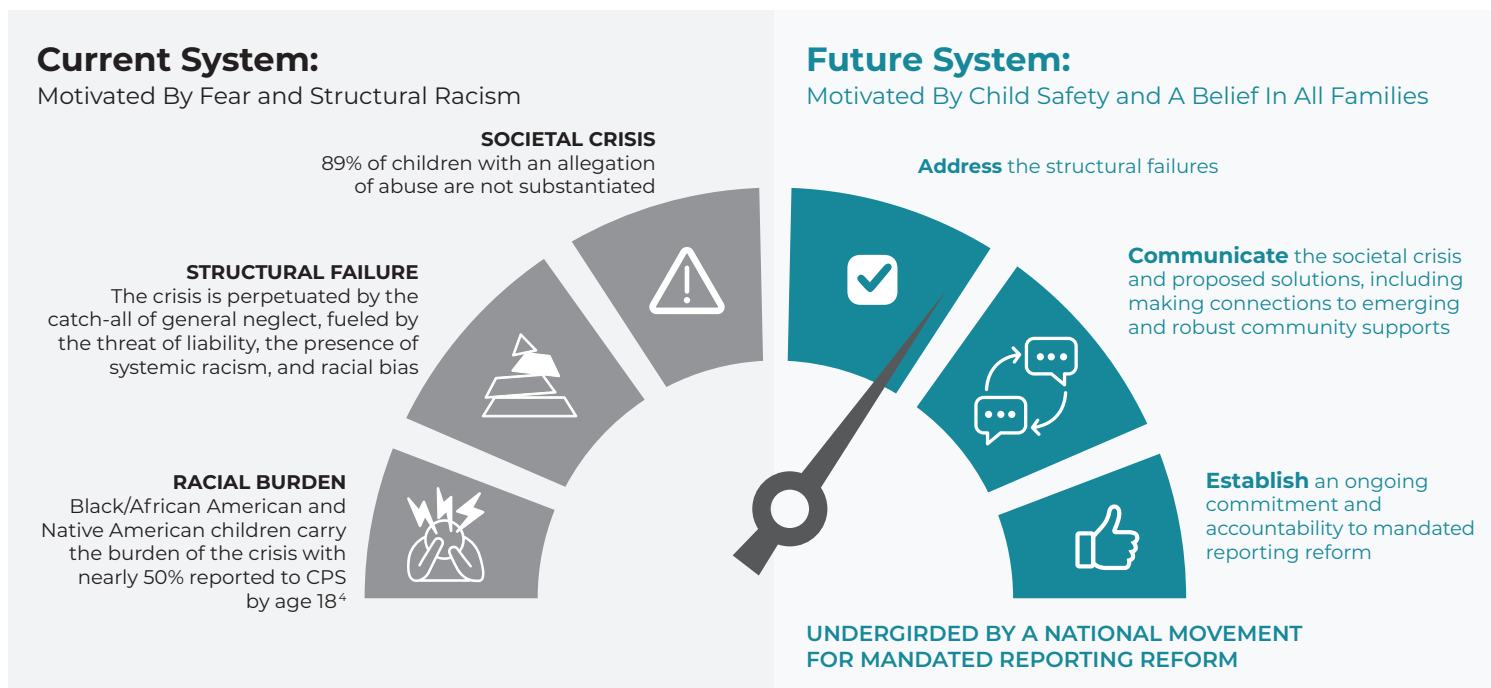
Nearly 90% of children reported to CPS each year have allegations that lack sufficient evidence or information to substantiate that abuse or neglect occurred—or in many cases, to even merit a CPS investigation. Unnecessary investigations often cause considerable emotional trauma, with children experiencing confusion, fear, and anxiety, and parents feeling stigmatized and mistrusted, which strains family bonds. The harm inflicted by reports has a lasting impact on the child's well-being, the family's cohesiveness, and the community's support of the family. Examining and addressing this significant failure rate is both a moral and ethical societal imperative.

Children, families, and communities deserve a better approach to safety and support. Task Force members agreed that we must address systemic failures—rooted in structural racism, bias, and fear—and transition to a system that trusts in the strength of all families and is committed to keeping them safely together (see Figure 5). This new system should empower families and provide the necessary resources for them to thrive, rather than separating them, further undermining their personal agency and causing individual and community trauma. Critical steps for this transformation include addressing structural failures, communicating the societal crisis and solutions, and establishing an ongoing commitment to mandated reporting reform and narrative change around families and child safety.

The next section explains why now is the opportune moment for California to advance these transformative efforts in earnest.



FIGURE 5: FROM FEAR-BASED OVER-REPORTING TO TRUST-BASED COMMUNITY SUPPORTING



“Reforming mandated reporting is essential to reducing government intrusion into the lives of families and ultimately improving safety for all children. The current system compromises safety of the children and families in need of child protections intervention by overwhelming the agency with reports that don't actually involve child abuse or neglect. By focusing our response to those children at immediate risk of severe abuse or neglect we can improve safety and assure access to necessary supports and services to those children and families who need help to prevent later difficulties. This approach respects family integrity and empowers families to build on their strengths, creating a more just and effective child welfare system.”

— David Sanders, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, Systems Improvement, Casey Family Programs

II. The Time is Now

“In California, we have long demonstrated our commitment to supporting youth and preserving and strengthening families. The overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system is a profound and persistent issue that demands our continued attention. To this end, California has made many recent, historic investments to support youth and families as we work towards a more equitable system. We must continue working to ensure that every child, regardless of race, Tribe, or background, can thrive in a safe and supportive environment, supported by a system that serves all families with fairness and equity.”

— Kim Johnson, Director, California Department of Social Services

California Is at an Unprecedented Moment in Time

California has strategically and consistently advanced a vision of family strengthening and well-being. Bolstered by the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), a steady cadence of action has laid the path for the creation of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force and its comprehensive recommendations to reform the state’s mandated reporting laws and practice. The work of the Task Force is just one component, albeit critical, to the overall shift toward family strengthening. The work to reform mandated reporting sits alongside an [Ecosystem of Prevention](#) that is shared across California’s state and county agencies, community-based organizations, and individuals with lived expertise.

In addition to its longstanding commitment to preventing child maltreatment, the state has recently placed a visible and urgent focus on establishing a comprehensive continuum of prevention services and supports for families. California, alongside other states (see [page 17](#)), has taken significant steps to shift the focus of the child welfare system toward investing in prevention. This shift has paved the way for reallocating resources towards true primary prevention and reforming mandated reporting.

[California’s vision for child, family, and community well-being](#)—centered on racial equity, social justice, and respect for tribal sovereignty—requires a robust network of community-based resources. This vision is sustained by the state’s Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) funding, along with additional resources. These resources must be

culturally derived, relevant, and responsive to those needing support, and provided by organizations and individuals who are known and trusted within the community. This approach already exists; communities naturally come together, both formally and informally, to fill gaps in need and build trusted relationships that strengthen families. By further formalizing and expanding these structures, we can create a more equitable and effective support system for all families.

FFPS funding and other transformative California programs offer the opportunity to expand and strengthen existing community connections

and supports. Nevertheless, for child and family well-being to be realized fully, current practices and policies around mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect must be reformed. Providing resources and nurturing environments must be paired with trust-building and an acknowledgment that the current reporting system harms families, perpetuates structural racism and bias, and often dissuades families from seeking services. Reforming these practices will create a more supportive and equitable system that genuinely benefits all children and families.



CALIFORNIA PREVENTION LEADERSHIP

The **California Child Welfare Council (CWC)** was established in 2006 and serves as an advisory body responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and courts that serve the children in the child welfare system. Membership is comprised of state departments, county departments, nonprofit service providers, advocates, parents and former foster youth. The Council is charged with monitoring and reporting on the extent to which the agencies and courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care.

The **Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee** was created in 2007 as one of four standing committees of the Child Welfare Council with the charge of working on issues of prevention and early intervention and providing recommendations and guidance to the CWC. Membership is representative of diverse multi-sector, multi-stakeholder leaders from across public systems, community-based organizations, and individuals with lived experience and expertise.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION TO REFORM MANDATED REPORTING

Signed 9/27/2022: **AB 2274** - Limits the filing for a failure to report an incident of known or reasonably suspected child abuse or severe neglect to within one year of the discovery of the offense, and no later than 4 years after the commission of the offense.

Signed 9/29 2022: **AB 2085** and **SB 1085** - AB 2085 modified the definition of reportable general neglect by clarifying that “economic disadvantage” is not general neglect and that a child must be at “substantial risk” of suffering serious physical harm or illness, while SB 1085 specified that poverty alone is not a reason for the court to take jurisdiction and for a family to enter the child welfare system.

Passed out of Public Safety Committee on 7/2/2024. On 8/6/2024, a third reading in the Senate was ordered. **AB 1799** - Introduced on June 3, 2024 and based on the MRCS Task Force recommendations. The bill removes the requirement for a mandated reporter to report instances of general neglect.

SNAPSHOT:

California Is Part of a National Movement to Keep Families Safely Together

California is not alone in its efforts to examine the intent and practices of the broader child welfare system. A growing national movement⁵ is emerging with a shared goal of keeping families safely together and addressing the well-documented racial disparities and over-reporting that plague our country's mandated reporting structures.

This snapshot provides a summary of some of the efforts underway across the country to address the failures of mandated reporting practices, and provide families and professionals with more options to address needs and access services and supports.

COLORADO

- In 2022, the [Colorado Legislature](#) created the [Mandatory Reporting Task Force](#) to look at reforming policies related to mandatory reporting with a focus on the disproportionate impact on families of color, people with disabilities and under-resourced communities.
- An [Interim Report](#) was released in January 2024 with a high level summary of the Task Force work in the first year, including discussions with experts and reviews of extensive research and data.
- A final report is expected by January 2025.

CONNECTICUT

- Legislative actions have focused on decreasing mandated reporting from schools where 40% of reports originate.
- Legislation passed in May 2024 now allows schools to “conduct preliminary inquiry to determine if reasonable suspicion exists” before making a report. The goal of the legislation is to create a "good faith effort" clause to decrease the number of reports that could be addressed with community support by minimizing the liability on school personnel.

NEW YORK

- In 2023 New York revised its mandated reporter training to address the implicit bias in reporting.
- In New York City, 1800 school liaisons have been provided with new training to foster a culture of support for families and to utilize the state decision tree to help determine when a report is warranted.
- There is also a bill under consideration to eliminate anonymous reporting.

TEXAS

- The coalition working towards reforming mandated reporting laws to reduce unnecessary reporting includes a broad political spectrum of stakeholders as well as motivations spanning from the limitation of government intervention to addressing systemic inequality.

- In 2021 House Bill 567 was passed to narrow the legal definition of child neglect by including the statement “an act or lack of action that puts a child in ‘immediate danger’ of harm,” and also states that the caregiver must have “blatant disregard” for the safety of the child.⁶
- Other key mandated reporting reform legislation passed since 2021 includes:
 - ◇ Prohibiting removal of a child based on evidence that the parent tested positive for marijuana, unless the parent’s marijuana use actually harms the child.
 - ◇ Removal of anonymous reporting.
- Since 2022, the number of children in Texas’s child welfare system has decreased by approximately 40%.
- While it is still too early to conclusively determine the outcomes of these new laws, Texas has reported no increase in child fatalities.⁷



III. Mobilizing for Action

A Task Force for Actionable Recommendations

The Child Welfare Council approved Recommendation #1 of the PEI Committee [Community Pathway Recommendations](#) on March 13th, 2023, calling for the implementation of a statewide Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force with the primary goal of providing guidance and actionable recommendations to reform mandated reporting statewide. Co-Chairs were appointed within days, and a Task Force Working Group began meeting in April 2023. In August 2023, the Working Group launched an open and broad Task Force and Subcommittee application process to engage a diverse and expert group of people with proximity to mandated reporting and child protective services to develop recommendations to reform the mandated reporting system and safely narrow the front door to child welfare. This process specifically focused on including those who had lived experience with the child welfare system, specifically with the mandated reporting system.



CREATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE (LEX) GROUP

Forming the Task Force was an ongoing learning experience, particularly in discovering how to best support and elevate the invaluable input of members with lived expertise. The Task Force and Subcommittees were intentionally structured to incorporate lived expertise at all levels from the outset, ensuring that the insights and ideas of these individuals were woven into every conversation and decision-making process.

In the planning phase, members with lived experience were together in meetings and could build on and reinforce each other's comments, giving more weight to their suggestions. When the Task Force shifted to Subcommittee activities, members were assigned to different groups which unintentionally created feelings of isolation. Some members of the LEX Group decided it would be helpful to meet collectively to not just do the work of the Task Force, but to fully process how their personal experiences would help lead to true transformation. Task Force leaders moved quickly to help make it happen.

The organic creation of the Lived Experience Group, and the contributions that came from the Group, are some of the most significant successes of the Task Force.

The Task Force and Subcommittees: An Extensive and Diverse Group of Change Agents

A comprehensive group of community, tribal, and agency partners supported the outreach efforts to help generate a broad and diverse set of candidates.

Over 250 applications were received. Thirty-two Task Force Members and 78 Subcommittee members were chosen through a rigorous vetting process with an emphasis on lived experience and racial and ethnic diversity. The Task Force launched its work in September 2023, and in November, with the guidance of the Task Force members, an equally diverse group of Subcommittee members filled positions across the following Subcommittees:

1. Narrowing the Definition of Neglect
2. Mandated Reporter Curriculum & Training
3. Potential Legal/Liability Issues for Mandated Reporters

4. Policy & Practice Reforms
5. Research & Data
6. Lived Experience Group (formed in February 2024)

Through a far-reaching and thorough outreach and application process, members of the Task Force and Subcommittees brought diverse professional backgrounds, representing both small and large counties. The group included individuals closely associated with mandated reporting, those with various cultural and ethnic perspectives, and a significant number of individuals with first-hand experience with mandated reporting and the broader child welfare system, including CPS. The members represented diversity in experience, perspective, race, and professional perspective (Figures 6 and 7).

“The way the Task Force has approached this work, with the deep and transparent engagement of individuals with lived expertise throughout the process, is a model for how we should be doing the work of the Child Welfare Council and across the state.”

— Statement by Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, June 2024, following the Task Force presentation of recommendations.

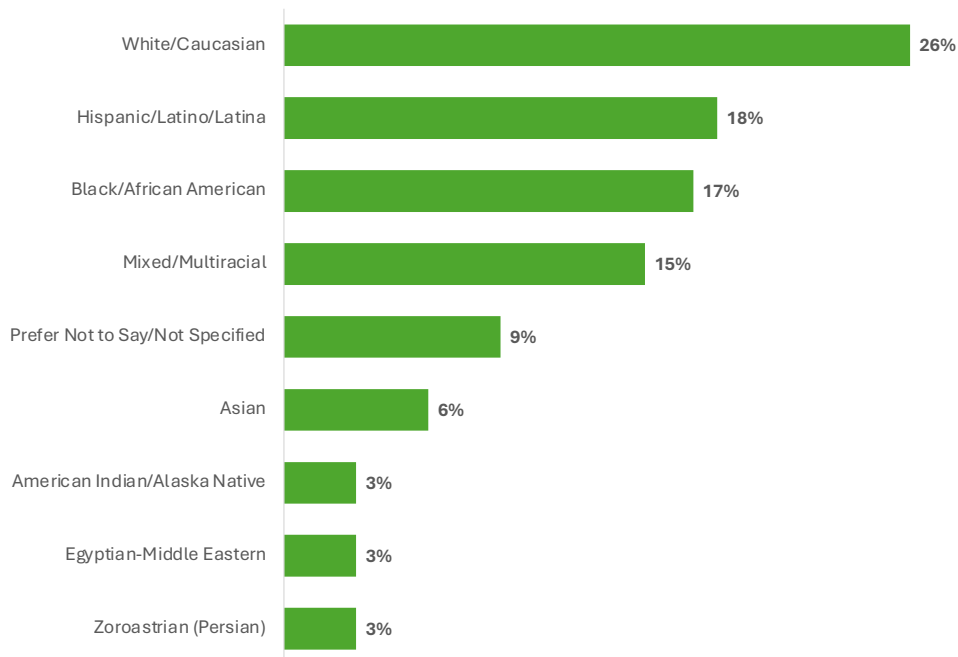
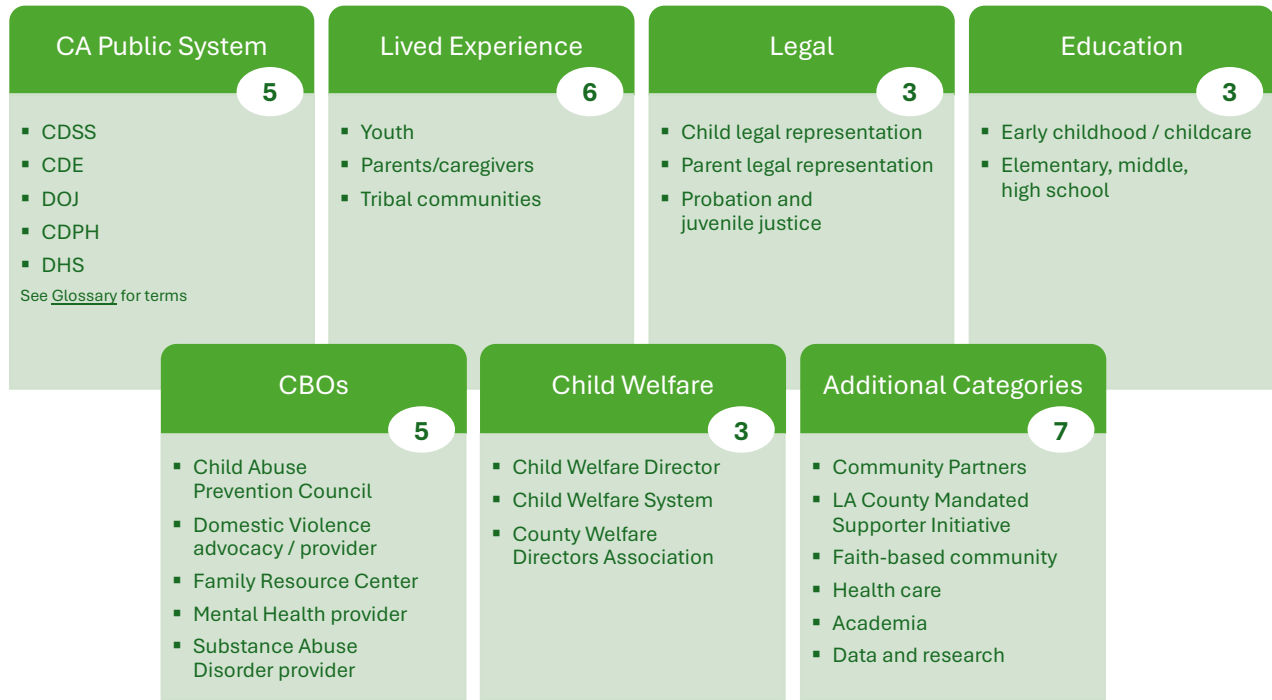
“True, lasting reform of a mandatory reporting system grounded in fear, control, and racial bias will require a cycle of continuous re-evaluation, adaptation, and improvement. Our more than 50 years in the community has repeatedly shown that such challenging work will only succeed when there is dedicated and sustained investment in genuine and equitable partnerships with trusted community organizations, such as family support centers, and those most impacted by the system we are trying to transform.”

— Jenny Pearlman, Chief Policy Officer, Safe & Sound and the San Francisco Family Services Alliance, MRCS Task Force Member and Subcommittee Co-Chair



FIGURE 6: TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

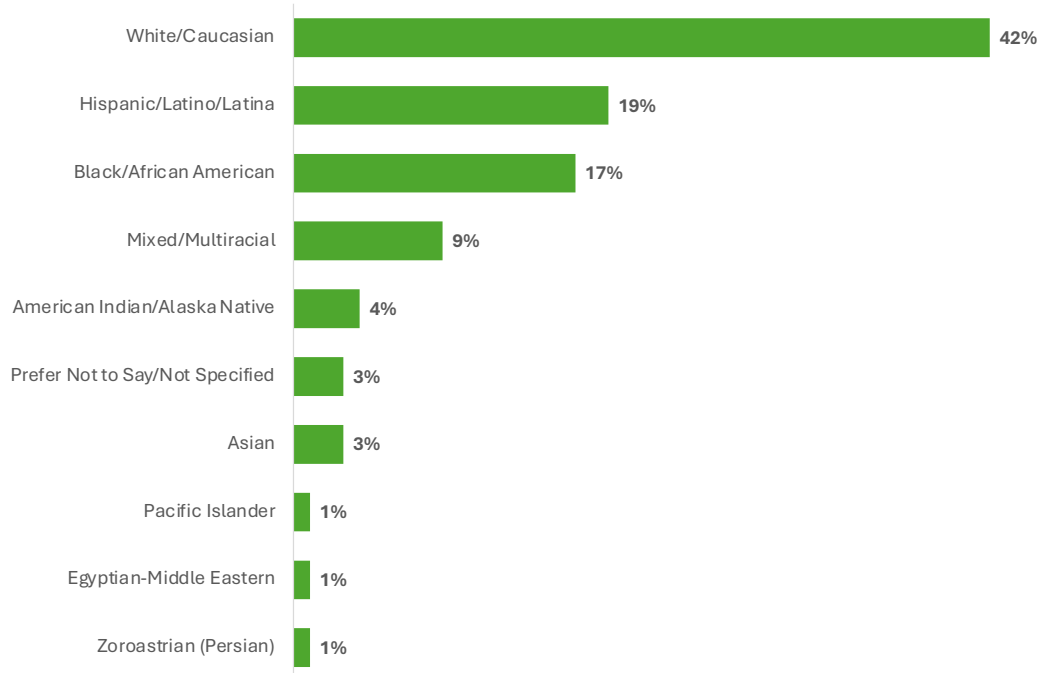
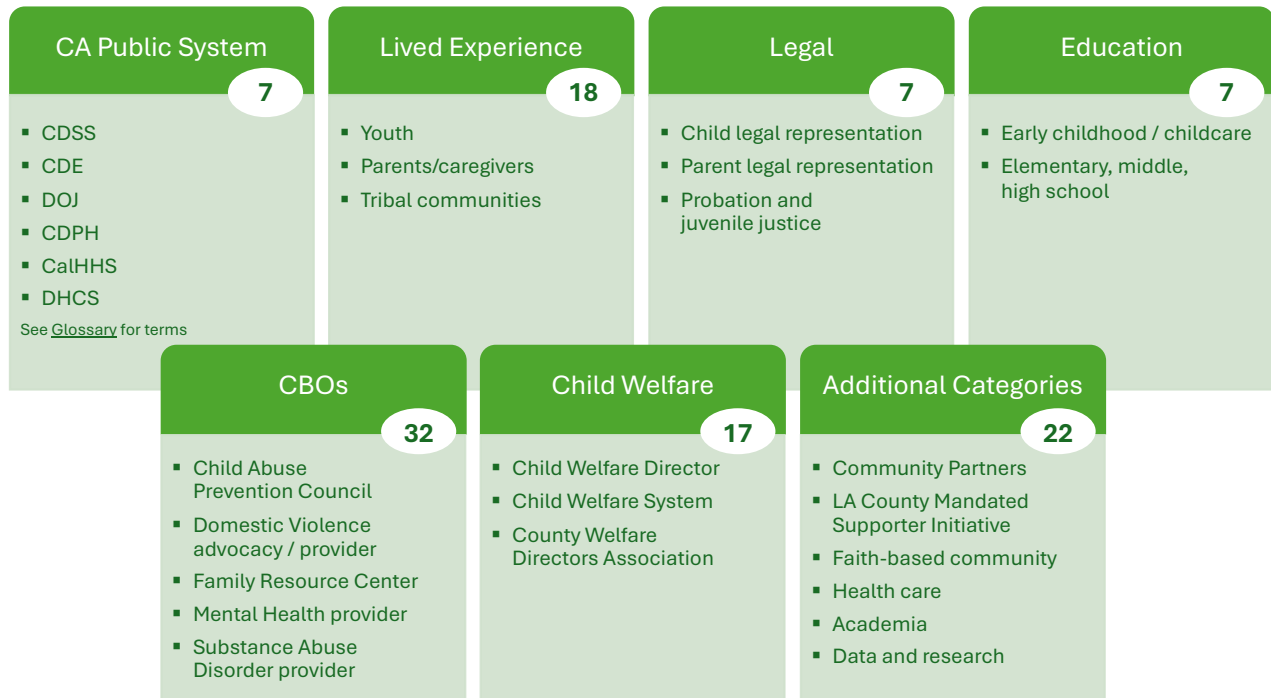
The 32-person Task Force comprised 88% of members who had worked in or had personal experience with mandated reporting and the child welfare system, including CPS; and, in fact, nearly all (94%) of the members were either mandated reporters or had personal experience with mandated reporting laws and practices. Most notably, with 28% of the members possessing lived expertise, and 74% being people of color, the Task Force upheld its commitment to diversity.



*Note: percentages add up to more than 100% as some members fall into multiple categories

FIGURE 7: SUBCOMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The 110-person Subcommittees, including the 32 Task Force members, were made up of 79% of members who worked in or had personal experience with mandated reporting and the child welfare system, including CPS, with 25% of that group having lived expertise with the system. Over 80% of members were mandated reporters or had personal experience with mandated reporting laws and/or practices.



*Note: percentages add up to more than 100% as some members fall into multiple categories

“We can do so much better, and the time is now. Maybe 20 years ago the time wasn't right, but the time is now. Communities are strong and ready to do this work. The Task Force is made up of transformers who must continue to do the work, no matter how scary. It takes all of us living in the uncomfortable zone to push.”

— Janay Eustace, President & CEO, The Child Abuse Prevention Center



IV. Task Force North Star and Strategic Priorities

Our North Star and Strategic Priorities Guided the Work of the Task Force

The layers of diversity within the Task Force brought to life rich and complex discussions, and the group quickly realized the need for a guiding statement—a touchstone during times of debate and disagreement—that synthesized the essence of what all members hoped for as a result of their collective work. The North Star was unanimously embraced by the Task Force after several working sessions where members grappled with their own personal “why” of the work, and opened their minds and hearts to find the intersection of purpose across the group.

NORTH STAR: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

The North Star was central at every meeting, serving as the benchmark for testing recommendations. During challenging discussions, the Task Force consistently referred to it to ensure their work remained accountable to children, families, and communities, not personal goals or agendas.

As the Task Force’s work deepened, themes around the “why” and “how” of mandated reporting reform began to emerge. Members began to identify several paths to mandated reporting reform that could be pursued. What wasn’t as clear was which path was “right,” more efficient, more likely to gain support—and most importantly—best for the

safety and well-being of children and families. The Strategic Priorities (Figure 8) were born out of this realization, along with a months-long iterative process of discussion, drafting, debating, and fine-tuning. The process itself, and ultimately the final set of Strategic Priorities, provided both clarity and a framework for developing recommendations that were in service to our North Star.

A FAST TIMELINE TO TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

The urgency and opportunity of the moment set the Task Force on a 12-month path to develop recommendations intended to reimagine the way communities engage with families to safely keep children and families together.



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023

MRCS Task Force launches and begins its work.



NOVEMBER 2023 - APRIL 2024

Subcommittees launch, develop, and revise recommendations.



MAY 2024

Task Force and PEI Committee vote and approve recommendations to advance to the CWC.



JUNE 2024

Task Force presents recommendations to CWC.



SEPTEMBER 2024

CWC votes on recommendations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

North Star: Keep children and families together, safe, well, and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

- 1** Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous people, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.
- 2** Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California's mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families' needs appropriately.
- 3** Ensure that mandated reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.
- 4** Ensure that mandated reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.
- 5** Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in mandated reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.



V. Recommendations to Transform California's Mandated Reporting System

Guided by the North Star and anchored in the five Strategic Priorities, the recommendations were created as a comprehensive approach to transforming California's mandated reporting system. The MRCS Task Force believes that these recommendations will significantly and safely narrow the front door to CPS with special attention to equity and closing disparities for Black/African American and Native American communities. These recommendations have the potential to change how systems truly serve children, families, and communities, and reach California's vision of "Child and Family Well-Being for ALL."



Key Levers for Change

Each recommendation is connected to a specific lever for change:

- **Implementation/Accountability:** Focus and sustain action to ensure the efforts of mandated reporting reform are carried out with fidelity and accountability.
- **Legislation:** Enact laws and regulations that will address the well-documented over-reporting of the current mandated reporting system, with a focus on the disproportionate burden on Black/African American and Native American communities.
- **Training:** Leverage training as a tool to begin shifting the conversation from reporting families to supporting families.
- **Community Pathway:** Help ensure mandated reporters understand the resources available to support families and the mechanisms for making connections to supports instead of reporting.
- **Narrative Shift:** Increase awareness and understanding of the need for mandated reporting reform; as well as the individual, family, and societal benefits of safely narrowing the front door to CPS.

Note: The full detail for each recommendation can be found in the [Appendix](#).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Eliminate Disproportionality in Mandated Reporting


Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous people, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.

Racial disparities in California's child welfare and mandated reporting systems are well-documented and a long-time focus of multiple reform initiatives—and yet the issue persists. It will take a system-wide and data-driven effort to address the entrenched biases and fears, at all levels of the system, that drive the disproportionate over surveillance and reporting of Black/African American and Native American families.

In April 2024, the California Legislative Analyst's Office released a report titled "[California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities](#)"⁸ which made a clear case for the need to reform the mandated reporting system with special attention to equity and closing disparities for Black/African American and Native American communities. Specifically, the data shows that a staggering 50% of Black/African American and Native American children will be reported to CPS before the age of 18.⁹

Additionally, racial disparities persist throughout the child welfare system. The disproportionate and unequal representation of certain groups at all levels of the child welfare system leads to well-documented disparities in outcomes for these children and families.

For example, 3.2% of Black/African American children and 3.8% of Native American children in California experienced termination of parental rights, compared to 1.3% of White children. This means California's Black/African American and Native American children were significantly more likely—specifically, about three times as likely for Native American children—as White children to have their legal relationship with their biological parents severed by the time they turned 18. The disproportionately high rate of reporting perpetuates this cycle.



Nearly one in two Black and Native American children in California is subject to an investigation of child abuse by the time they turn 18.¹⁰

To ensure California is on a path to eliminating disproportionality, the Task Force agreed that an ongoing action and oversight body must be established with its work recognized and supported by the state. In addition to advancing the implementation of all MRCS Task Force recommendations, the oversight body will help advance the data collection and analysis needed to strategically and safely address disproportionality, while also ensuring that prior legislation in support of mandated reporting reform is put into practice across the state.

A critical aspect of this Strategic Priority is the substantial grappling by Task Force and Subcommittee members to develop the recommendations. Members with lived expertise highlighted a deepening distrust that arises when data about individuals and communities is tracked and compiled without their involvement or consideration. This disconnect underscores the need for a more inclusive and transparent approach, ensuring that data collection serves the interests of those it concerns and benefits.

State agencies and any newly formed committees must commit to public participation, transparency, and accountability in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data that impacts the lives of children and families.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELIMINATE DISPROPORTIONALITY

1. The California Child Welfare Council (CWC), through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee, shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) to ensure the transformation of Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting continues and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated. *[Implementation/Accountability]*
2. Request the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to continuously monitor disparities in the child welfare system. *[Implementation/Accountability]*
3. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall ensure the implementation of AB 2085 in all California Counties and Tribes until such time that Recommendation #5 is implemented and General Neglect is removed as a Mandated Reporting requirement. *[Implementation/Accountability]*
4. In alignment with the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report, California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities, encourage the LAO to continue analyzing disparities in the Mandated Reporting system to determine if narrowing mandated reporter categories in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) negatively impacts child safety. *[Legislative]*



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Increase Precision in Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California’s Mandated Reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families’ needs appropriately.

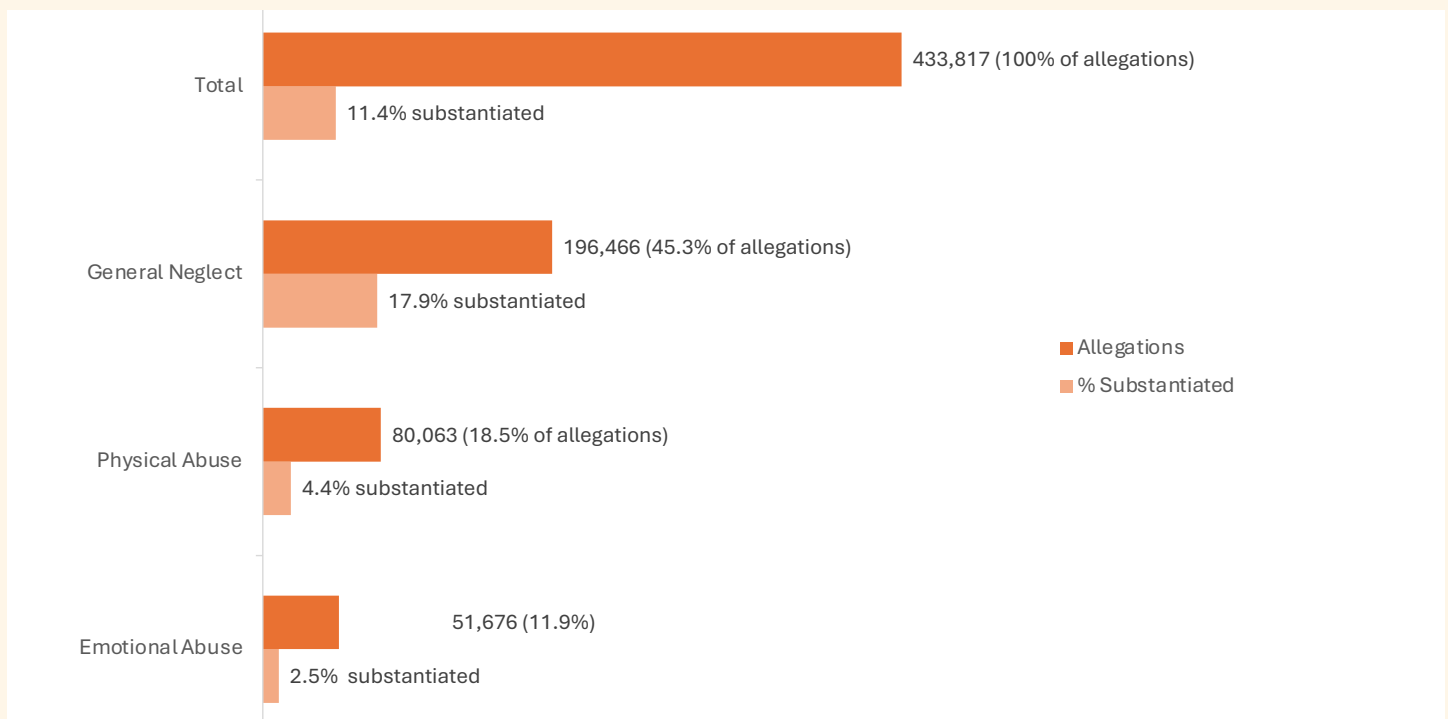
The experiences of MRCS Task Force members with lived experience confirm that the imprecision of the general neglect reporting category exacerbates the harmful effects of over-reporting and undermines families’ access to the community-based supports they need.

As previously discussed, general neglect is a “catch all” reporting type that currently accounts for 45% of all reports made for child abuse and neglect in California. Taking it a step further to substantiated allegations confirms that general neglect is an overused category that too often brings children and families deeper into the system when they could be safely supported in their communities.

As shown in Figure 9, only 17.5% of general neglect allegations are substantiated as needing involvement from CPS. This means that over 80% of the time that a child is reported under general neglect, CPS determines that the child can remain safely with their family.

It is also worth noting the extremely low substantiation rates for both physical abuse (4%) and emotional abuse (3%), the latter being a standard reporting category for domestic violence allegations. Although physical and emotional abuse affect fewer children than general neglect, the impact of over-reporting remains equally harmful.

FIGURE 9: PERCENT SUBSTANTIATION BY ALLEGATION TYPE, 2023



Source: [California Child Welfare Indicators Project](#)

Experiences from individuals who have been impacted by the child welfare system confirm the harm inflicted on children, families, and communities by the overly broad reporting category of general neglect.

California state agencies are beginning to analyze data to increase the understanding of underlying issues and needs that lead to a report categorized as general neglect. However, the work will be slow, and more families will be unnecessarily harmed in the process. Based on significant data on the occurrence and harm of over-reporting using the general neglect category, the Task Force identified legislative recommendations to give mandated reporters the opportunity not to report situations of general neglect and to detail and clarify "severe neglect" so it aligns with the child welfare system's definition rather than becoming a default catch-all reporting category.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE PRECISION IN REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

5. Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to remove the reporting requirement of General Neglect for Mandated Reporters. *[Legislative]*
6. Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to revise and clarify the definition of Severe Neglect to be aligned with the definition of Severe Neglect utilized in the California Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tool. *[Legislative]*

“My commitment to this work began with the promise I made to my son. When he was six years old he told me, if daddy ever takes me again from you, fight like a wild animal. He is 12 now, and I continue to fight. Not only for him, but for all children, including those of my ancestors and those children yet born.”

— Tina Rios, Reimagine Child Safety Coalition, Indigenous mother with lived experience, member of the MRCS Task Force

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Remove Incentives That Lead to Over-Reporting

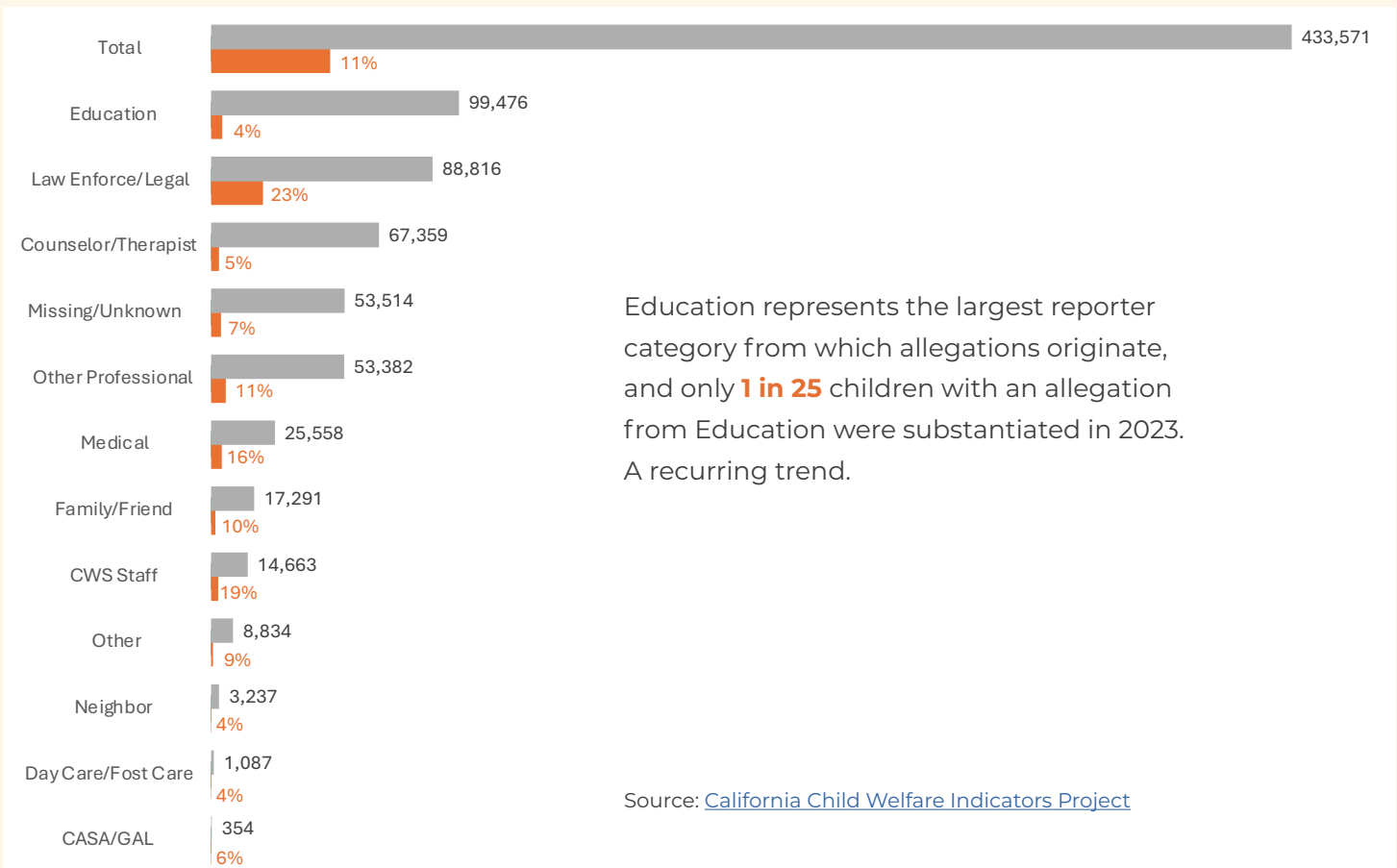
Ensure that Mandated Reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.

The question of whether laws criminalizing the failure to report to child welfare authorities are appropriate or effective remains unanswered, particularly in light of the continued expansion of mandated reporting laws. The current mandated reporting approach encourages reporting at a low threshold of “reasonable suspicion” that a child or family is struggling—an approach often reinforced by mandated reporter training and influenced by bias, racism, and fears of punitive legal repercussions.

As shown in Figure 10, this over-reporting is heavily weighted toward three reporter types—

Education, Law Enforcement, and Counselors/Therapists—that account for nearly 60% of all reports into CPS. Unnecessary and harmful reporting from these primary groups could be significantly and safely decreased by examining the impact of California’s strict liability laws on mandated reporters and providing balanced and detailed training that de-emphasizes fear of liability and informs mandated reporters of the traumatizing impact of mandated reporting on families as well as options and connections to resources and services for supporting versus reporting families.

FIGURE 10: CHILDREN WITH ONE OR MORE ALLEGATIONS BY REPORTER TYPE & PERCENT SUBSTANTIATED, 2023



“Students learn best in safe and supportive school environments. We must re-examine our training and support for mandated reporters, as well as our policies and practices to ensure that we are centering child safety and strengthening families through prevention. We need to better understand and address over-reporting and over-surveillance, especially around general neglect, and critically examine how bias contributes to harm experienced by our historically underserved students and families.”

— Dr. Debra Duardo, Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools

The Task Force recognized that multiple levers would need to be pulled to address the deep and broad system incentives, policies, and practices that currently drive over-reporting. In addition to revising mandated reporting curriculum and training, legislative actions are also needed to test the impact on safely reducing liability for failure to report.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO REMOVE INCENTIVES THAT LEAD TO OVER-REPORTING

7. Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) and Counties, to implement a two-year pilot that provides Mandated Reporters with immunity from liability. *[Legislative]*
8. Support the amendment of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to require all Mandated Reporters in California receive standardized training on child abuse and neglect. *[Training/Legislative]*
9. Require the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to develop, with participation of individuals with lived expertise, a standardized curriculum for Mandated Reporters. *[Training]*
10. Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to develop a Mandated Reporter web page specific to Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting. *[Training]*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Focus on Connections That Support Families

Ensure that Mandated Reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.

Although it is beyond the scope of the MRCS Task Force to build or maintain community resources and establish a formal Community Pathway, the Task Force's recommendations emphasize the importance of mandated reporters connecting families to community supports. Additionally, the Task Force felt it was critical to establish accountability measures to ensure the availability of community resources that can help keep families strong and safely together.

As previously stated, the general neglect reporting category is more complicated than its link to poverty. However, studies like the one from the American Academy of Pediatrics¹¹ (Figure 11), shows significant evidence that access to financial resources and basic needs decrease CPS involvement. Specifically, for each additional \$1,000 states spent on benefit programs per person living in poverty, there was an associated reduction in child maltreatment as evidence by a: 1) 4.3% decrease in reporting, 2) 4.0% decline in substantiations, 3) 2.1% fewer foster care placements, and 4) 7.7% reduction in child fatalities.

FIGURE 11

For every \$1,000 states spent per person in poverty directly addressing **financial stability, housing, and access to child care and healthcare...**



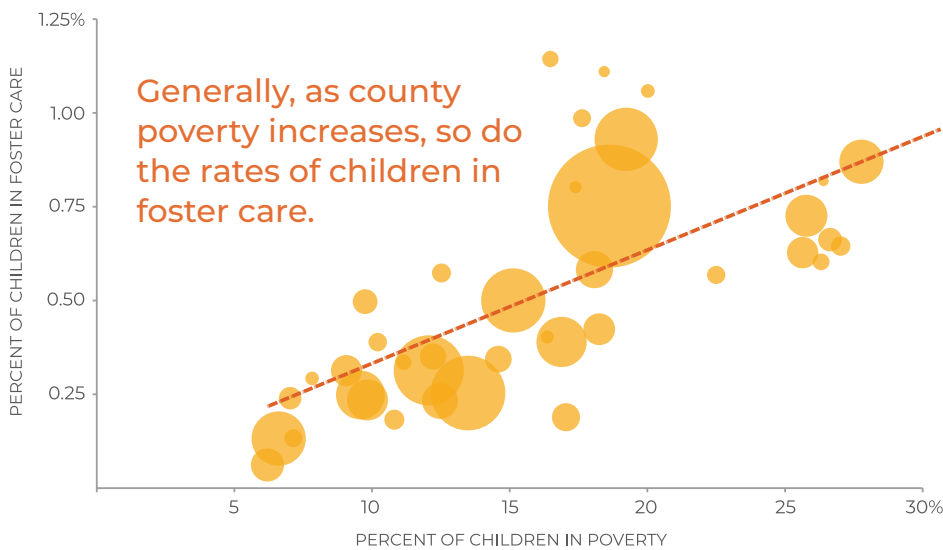
Source: "State Spending on Public Benefits Programs and Child Maltreatment." American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021

Additionally, the previously cited April 2024 report from the California Legislative Analyst’s Office shows that counties with higher levels of poverty have correspondingly higher rates of children entering foster care (Figure 12).

Therefore, the Task Force developed recommendations that hold the state responsible for assessing the statewide capacity of providing a robust path-

way of services and supports that are culturally aligned and readily available, and that the assessment includes input from individuals with lived expertise and is communicated publicly and with transparency. Specific to mandated reporters, the Task Force determined it is necessary that they are aware of the importance of, and opportunity to connect families to services and supports.

FIGURE 12
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY AND FOSTER PLACEMENTS ACROSS CALIFORNIA COUNTIES



RECOMMENDATIONS TO FOCUS ON CONNECTIONS THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES

11. Require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to incorporate an assessment of the capacity of community supports and services. *[Community Pathway]*
12. Consistent with the PEI Community Pathway Recommendations, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall be required to

ensure Counties’ Comprehensive Prevention Plans (CPP) incorporate information and education specific to Mandated Reporters regarding the implementation of and access to Community Pathways and/or community resources available to support families in their communities. *[Community Pathway]*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:

Invest in Ongoing Reform of Mandated Reporting

Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in Mandated Reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.



California has a long history of progressive reforms that too often falter during implementation. The Task Force took its direction from Secretary of State Dr. Mark Ghaly very seriously after his bold statement in March 2023, after the Child Welfare Council approved PEI recommendations. Specifically, he declared that, “This is not just an average vote that we turn our backs on. This is a vote with a commitment that we all stay involved and support a mindset shift to make this happen.”

Additionally, as Task Force members developed the comprehensive set of recommendations, the interconnectivity and complexity of each recommendation and the set as a whole became increasingly apparent. Over time, the recognition that system transformation requires sustained time and investment evolved into a foundational recommendation that supports and enhances the success of all other recommendations.

Testimonies from individuals with lived experience of the injustices and harm caused by the current mandated reporting system, along with the commitment of state leaders to change, confirm the need for comprehensive and sustained investment to transform California’s mandated reporting system. The Task Force also realized that by the design of its structure and output, the members had also created an internal movement to spark sustained—and broad public—commitment.

“This Task Force was my introduction to a statewide platform and collaboration with so many entities and organizations. I'm happy with the outcome, and from what I think it lacks, I have been inspired to match the energy exerted in local efforts. I have reexamined my thoughts on where community organizations fit in the child welfare continuum and what practices help/hurt our families. I feel I have made an impact from being my authentic self in the space and it has translated to more opportunities to serve.”

— Jason Sharpe, MRCS Task Force member, Co-Chair of the Lived Experience Group, Father with Lived Experience

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INVEST IN ONGOING REFORM OF MANDATED REPORTING

13. Require the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) to ensure recommendations from the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force and any subsequent policy reforms related to Mandated Reporting are enacted and efforts necessary to ensure continued transformation of the Mandated Reporting system are advanced.

[Implementation/Accountability]

14. Ensure the creation and implementation of a statewide narrative change initiative.

[Narrative Change]



VI. The Vote on the Recommendations: Task Force and PEI Committee

Summary of the Votes



MAY 2024

MRCS TASK FORCE

- 93% vote to approve the recommendations and to advance to the PEI Committee
- 28 Task Force members participated in the vote, with 26 voting yes and 2 voting no



MAY 2024

PEI COMMITTEE

- 100% vote to approve the recommendations and to advance to the Child Welfare Council
- 21 PEI members participated in the vote



SEPTEMBER 2024

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

The voting members of the California Child Welfare Council unanimously approved:

- This report, in its entirety, as prepared and presented by the MRCS Task Force.
- Working in partnership with CalHHS and CDSS to develop an implementation strategy to move forward the [Recommendations](#). See the [Motion](#) that was approved.

Alternative Perspectives

The MRCS Task Force acknowledges that although the recommendations have been advanced to the Child Welfare Council for approval, there were varying levels of consensus among Task Force members. It is important to not only acknowledge these alternative perspectives, but also give voice to them. Full statements on alternative perspectives can be found in the [Appendix](#).

VII. Moving Forward

What We Are Still Learning

The Task Force prioritizes the safety and well-being of children. The question is whether the current system of mandated reporting truly makes children safer and better positioned to thrive, and whether reforms that reduce unnecessary mandated reporting might compromise their safety or well-being. In states where there are Universal Mandated Reporting Laws, meaning everyone 18 years and older is automatically a mandated reporter, there is no evidence that children are safer.¹²

Research also shows that over-reporting places a significant burden on an already stressed system, preventing CPS social workers from focusing on children whose families are genuinely unable to safely care for them. As a result, involving children and families unnecessarily in CPS can inadvertently make them less safe by diverting resources elsewhere. Additionally, there is evidence that placement in foster care itself is not always a safe alternative, and can actually raise safety issues. A report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2019 showed that the rate of substantiated maltreatment for children in foster care was only slightly less (0.41%) than maltreatment in the general population (0.47%).

COVID-19 provided a unique opportunity to examine the impact of mandated reporting on children's safety. For 18 months, most children were learning from home with schools shuttered. With school personnel being the largest source for reports of abuse and neglect, a societal fear was that an increase in child abuse and neglect was imminent without the watchful eye of the community. In California, the data shows that although allegations plummeted, the rate of substantiations remained mostly consistent. Although not conclusive, the



data suggest that true cases of abuse and neglect were still identified and reported, while the significant number of previously unsubstantiated allegations did not result in additional documented harm.

Moreover, the unprecedented monetary and basic needs resources that were available to families during COVID may have filled a gap for many economically disadvantaged families, thus decreasing reports of general neglect based on a lack of basic needs.¹³ Although many factors are at play, it is important to also note that studies show overall ER visits for children initially decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴

“During the pandemic when the nation shifted to being on lockdown, I remember conversations and questions about how we would keep children safe at home because they weren’t at school or in public places where mandated reporters could have their eyes on them. I found that reaction very odd and concerning. What are we saying about the families and people in our communities if children cannot actually live there safely? It was an ‘aha’ moment for me that we have a lot of work to do if we think the only way for children to be safe is if they’re being surveilled and reported to the child welfare system.”

— Commissioner Rebecca Jones Gaston, The Administration for Children and Families



VIII. Conclusion

California's vision for child, family and community well-being, centered on equity and social justice and respect for tribal sovereignty, requires an approach that is dependent upon the successful implementation of the State's Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) Plan that keeps children, youth and families out of the child welfare system through investments provided by the FFPS as well as continued efforts to build a Community Pathway in every California county.

The vision also requires dramatic reform of current practices and policies regarding mandated reporting and responses to child abuse and neglect allegations, including the underlying mindsets that lead to unnecessary over-surveillance and

over-reporting of children and families. The need for reform is evidenced in the large volume of reports to child protection hotlines each year that are unsubstantiated. These types of reports cause harm and trauma as opposed to providing support, and these reports continue to increase the numbers of children in out-of-home care who are disproportionately Black/African American and Native American.

This societal crisis demands collective action—a coalition of committed individuals in their communities and organizations to create a paradigm shift from harming children and families with over-reporting, to supporting children and families with the resources they need to thrive.



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For further information on Task Force members and their seats, see [Appendix](#).

X. Acknowledgements

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We extend our thanks to the **California Child Welfare Council** and the **California Department of Social Services** for their unwavering support of the Task Force's work. We also appreciate the partnership and generous funding provided by **Casey Family Programs** and **Safe & Sound**.



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LEGISLATION

[Assembly Bill 2085](#): This bill limits the definition of general neglect to only include circumstances where the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness, and would provide that general neglect does not include a parent's economic disadvantage. The bill makes other technical and clarifying changes.

[Senate Bill 1085](#): This bill prohibits a child from being found to be within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court on that basis solely due to indigence or other conditions of financial difficulty. The bill states the intent of the Legislature that families should not be subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court nor should children be separated from their parents based on conditions of financial difficulty, as specified.

TASK FORCE MATERIALS

All slide decks, recordings, minutes and supplemental materials from MRCS Task Force meetings can be found on the [CWC Website](#).

GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

AB (Assembly Bill)

A bill introduced in the California State Assembly.

CalHHS (California Department of Health and Human Services)

A state agency that oversees departments and offices that provide a wide range of services in the areas of health care, mental health, public health, alcohol and drug treatment, income assistance, social services and assistance to people with disabilities.

CANRA (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act)

Codified at California Penal Code §§ 11164-11174.3, this act defines groups of mandated reporters, and their reporting and liability requirements.

CDE (California Department of Education)

The agency within the government of California that oversees public education.

CDPH (California Department of Public Health)

The state department responsible for public health in California. It is a subdivision of the California Health and Human Services Agency.

CDSS (California Department of Social Services)

The state agency for many of the programs defined as part of the social safety net in the United States, and is within the auspices of the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS).

CPS (Child Protective Services)

Child protective services (CPS) is a governmental agency responsible for investigating reports of child maltreatment, determining whether child abuse or neglect has occurred, and intervening to ensure a safe environment for the child. In most cases, CPS agencies assist families in finding appropriate support services to protect and improve the well-being of their children. When it is deemed necessary, these agencies also secure alternative placements for children or pursue the termination of parental rights.

CWC (Child Welfare Council)

The California Child Welfare Council (CWC) was established by the Child Welfare Leadership and Accountability Act of 2006 and serves as an advisory body responsible for improving the collaboration and processes of the multiple agencies and the courts that serve the children in the child welfare system. The Council is charged with monitoring and reporting on the extent to which the agencies and courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care.

CWS (Child Welfare System)

CWS is an expansive network of government agencies and community supports that are charged with the safety, health, and well-being of children, families, and communities through public health, education, behavioral health, public social services, and child protective services.

DHCS (California Department of Health Care Services)

The state agency responsible for providing health care services to Californians, including the administration of the federal Medicaid program for California, which is known as Medi-Cal.

DOJ (California Department of Justice)

The statewide investigative law enforcement agency and legal department of the California executive branch under the elected leadership of the Attorney General of California which carries out complex criminal and civil investigations, prosecutions, and other legal services throughout the US State of California.

FFPSA (Family First Prevention Services Act)

A federal act signed into law in 2018, the FFPSA's objective is to enhance support services to families to help children and youth remain at home and reduce the use of congregate care placements by increasing options for prevention services, increased oversight, and requirements for placements, and enhancing the requirements for congregate care placement settings.

GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS (continued)

FFPS (Family First Prevention Services Program)

Established by California state law, the program provisions state California's intent to opt into the Title IV-E prevention services program authorized by Part I of the federal FFPSA, incorporate definitions and requirements of the federal law, and further specify the State's approach to implementation of the prevention services program established under the FFPSA.

LAO (Legislative Analyst's Office)

A nonpartisan office within the California state government that provides the California Legislature with fiscal and policy advice.

LEX (Lived Experience Group)

A subgroup of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and its subcommittees made up of members with lived experience with the Child Welfare System, either as youth and/or as parents/caregivers.

MRAC (Mandated Reporting Advisory Council)

A committee recommended to be established to ensure the transformation of Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting continues, and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated.

MRCS (Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting)

The name of the statewide Task Force established in 2023 and implemented under the auspices of the Child Welfare Council with oversight by the PEI Committee and in partnership with CDSS to lead a coordinated statewide effort to reform the mandated reporting system in order to avoid child welfare system involvement for families that can be supported in the community.

Not Substantiated

Includes allegations that were evaluated out and not investigated, as well as those that were investigated and determined to be unfounded, inconclusive, or unsubstantiated.

OCAP (Office of Child Abuse & Prevention)

Under the auspices of the California Department of Social Services, the OCAP administers federal grants, contracts, and state programs designed to promote best practices and innovative approaches to child abuse prevention, intervention and treatment. The OCAP serves as a statewide source of information, developing and disseminating educational materials regarding prevention/early intervention programs, activities, and research.

PEI (Prevention and Early Intervention) Committee

The PEI Committee is a committee of the California Child Welfare Council, charged to work on issues of prevention and early intervention.

SB (Senate Bill)

A bill introduced in the California State Senate.

Title IV-E

Title IV-E is a federal program that provides funding for a variety of child welfare programs in California.

XIII. Appendix

- A. [Task Force members by seat](#) (last updated March 2024)
- B. [Subcommittee definitions](#)
- C. [Subcommittee members](#)
- D. [Lived Expertise Group Membership](#)
- E. [Task Force Ecosystem](#)
- F. [North Star and What We Believe](#)
- G. [Full Recommendations](#)
- H. Alternative Perspective Statements
 - [Jason Sharpe](#)
 - [Eve Sheedy](#)
 - [Arati Vasan](#)
 - [Daniel Webster](#)
 - [County Welfare Directors Association \(CWDA\) of California](#)
- I. [The California Child Welfare Council Charts a Path for Success](#)
- J. [The Motion for vote at the September Child Welfare Council meeting](#)



THE MANDATED REPORTING TO COMMUNITY SUPPORTING TASK FORCE WAS
MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF:



Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force

Communities Keeping Children Safe and Families Together



MRCS Task Force Recommendations Child Welfare Council | June 5, 2024

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee

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David Swanson Hollinger
Children & Family Services
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Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force

Co-Chairs:

Dana Blackwell
Casey Family Programs

Roger De Leon Jr.
Parent Partner / Fatherhood Advocate

“This will take a reorientation of both mindset and how people work—how we invest in the work and invest in the people who do the work. This is not just an average vote that we turn our backs on. This is a vote with a commitment that we all stay involved and support a mindset shift to make this happen.”

- Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency [In response to unanimous CWC approval of PEI Community Pathway Recommendations, March 13, 2023]

California’s vision for Child, Family and Community Well-Being, centered on equity and social justice and respect for tribal sovereignty, requires an approach that is dependent upon the successful implementation of the State’s Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) Plan that keeps children, youth and families out of the child welfare system through supports provided by FFPS.

This vision also requires dramatic reform of current practices and policies regarding mandated reporting and responses to child abuse and neglect allegations. The need for reform is evidenced in the large volume of reports to child protection hotlines each year that are screened out, unsubstantiated, or include allegations of general neglect only. These types of reports cause harm and trauma as opposed to providing support, and these reports continue to increase the numbers of children in out-of-home care who are disproportionately Black/African American and Native American children.

That is the path we started down in earnest just fifteen months ago—March 2023—when the California Child Welfare Council (CWC) unanimously approved a set of [Community Pathway Recommendations](#) with the goals to: **1) Reform the state’s mandated reporting system, and 2) Build strong and connected community supports.** The combination of these aspirational goals will help to ensure families and children are strong and supported in their communities.

Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force

Communities Keeping Children Safe and Families Together



The first of the seven Community Pathway Recommendations stood up the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force. The 32-member Task Force, along with its 78 subcommittee members, leaned into the work of developing the thorough, thoughtful, and transformative set of recommendations stated below. With more than 25% of members bringing lived expertise, and over 80% of members having worked in or bringing personal experience of mandated reporting laws and practices, we brought both expertise and passion to our change efforts.

“We can do so much better, and the time is now. Maybe 20 years ago the time wasn't right, but the time is now. Communities are strong and ready to do this work. The Task Force is made up of transformers who must continue to do the work, no matter how scary. It takes all of us living in the uncomfortable zone to push.”

- Janay Eustace, Task Force Member, President & CEO, Child Abuse Prevention Center

We have not developed these recommendations in a silo. We have all reached out, across our areas of expertise, across the traditional lines of engagement, to create recommendations that both fit within our area of focus and also support and propel the extensive work that has been happening for years to build a child and family well-being system.

Upstream prevention efforts with a focus on building accessible community resources is already underway in many counties including San Diego, Los Angeles, Ventura, Humboldt, to name a few. Our statewide Task Force Recommendations lay the groundwork for counties to bolster and/or jumpstart their work based on the unique needs of their county. These recommendations fit within the state's Prevention Ecosystem and build on the original set of [PEI Community Pathway Recommendations](#) as well as the [March 2024 PEI Committee Financing Recommendations](#).

The MRCS Task Force believes that this set of recommendations will significantly and safely narrow the front door to child protection services with special attention to equity and closing disparities for Black/African American and Native American communities. These recommendations have the potential to transform how systems *truly serve* children, families, and communities, and reach California's vision of “Child and Family Well-Being for ALL.”



NORTH STAR

Keep children and families together, safe, well and strengthened by the resources they need to thrive.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Eliminate the disproportionate surveillance and reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous Peoples, and Latino families and communities, thereby leading to an environment of anti-racism in support of all children and families.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The California Child Welfare Council (CWC), through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee, shall establish a Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) to ensure the transformation of Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting continues and disparities in the child welfare system are eliminated.

The PEI Committee shall appoint tri-chairs to lead the MRAC's efforts, with at least one individual with lived expertise, one Child Welfare Council member, and one child and family serving system representative in these positions. A minimum of 50% of the MRAC's membership shall be representative of those who have been impacted by Mandated Reporting or have advocated for changes in the child welfare system including those with lived experience, community members, and community organizations who are critical to the transformation to community supporting. Additionally, the MRAC shall consist of key stakeholders comprising Mandated Reporters, community representatives, and County and State Departments including Child Welfare, Justice, Behavioral Health, Education, Housing and Health Care. To the extent possible, individuals who served on the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force will be given priority consideration and individuals with lived expertise shall be supported with training and resources to actively participate. The primary goals of the MRAC shall be to monitor the impact of Mandated Reporter system changes particularly with respect to the disproportionate reporting of Black/African American, Native American/Indigenous Peoples, and Latino families to child welfare and provide recommendations for additional changes and reform needed. Further, the MRAC will be tasked with analyzing existing and new decision-making tools and/or processes that can be incorporated into the Mandated Reporting process, including ensuring adequate equity checks and an evaluation of impact on racially disproportionate reporting. The MRAC will provide the CWC with semi-annual reports on its progress.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 (continued)

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Request the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to continuously monitor disparities in the child welfare system.

This will happen by gathering and analyzing research, data, and the impact of all reports of abuse and neglect, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, rural/urban, ZIP code/geographic region, domestic violence, substance use, mental health, disabilities, mandated reporter category and other factors to be published publicly and submitted to the California State Legislature on a minimum of an annual basis. Further, this research, data, and impact information shall be made available to the Community Pathway Advisory Committee to aggregate by community and/or region in order to support the identification of inequities in the distribution, availability and accessibility of needed services and supports based on underlying concerns related to reports of abuse and neglect and Social Drivers of Health (SDOH). Research shall include experiential and non-traditional sources of information on mandated reporting including community participatory research, as well as data on access to community-based support and services, including referral patterns, family engagement, and safety and well-being outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall ensure the implementation of AB 2085 in all California Counties and Tribes until such time that Recommendation #5 is implemented and General Neglect is removed as a mandated reporting requirement.

Implementation of AB 2085 will happen with fidelity to its legislative intent through policies, practice, communications, and training to clearly instruct that Mandated Reporters may not refer families to Child Protective Services (CPS) based solely on a parent's economic disadvantage. Further, a child must be at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness for a mandatory report to be filed. CDSS shall oversee the implementation of this recommendation and provide Counties and Tribes with training and support as needed. This shall include regular reporting on the implementation of [ACL 23-105](#) and the data supporting its impact to the CWC and MRAC.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 (continued)

RECOMMENDATION 4:

In alignment with the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) report, *California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities*,¹ encourage the LAO to continue analyzing disparities in the Mandated Reporting system to determine if narrowing mandated reporter categories in the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) negatively impacts child safety.

This would further existing research, which indicates no discernable impact on child safety is evidenced when Mandated Reporter categories are expanded or Universal Mandated Reporting is required.² Elimination of categories in CANRA may further the paradigm shift from mandated reporting to community supporting. The LAO analysis shall include: (a) factors weighed to determine whether a category of individuals or a profession should carry the liability of a mandated reporter; (b) whether direct contact with children should be a criterion for mandated reporter classification; and (c) qualitative and quantitative analysis of the referrals, investigations, and dispositions related to reporting for each of the categories of abuse and neglect, aggregated by mandated reporter categories. Findings and any supporting recommendations shall be reported to the State Legislature, as well as the Child Welfare Council.

¹ Legislative Analyst Office, California's Child Welfare System: Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities, April 2024 <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2024/4897/disproportionalities-disparities-child-welfare-042424.pdf>

² PubMed, [Universal Mandatory Reporting Policies and the Odds of Identifying Child Physical Abuse](#), Grace W. K. Ho, 2017



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Analyze all categories and subcategories of child abuse and neglect under California’s mandated reporting law to create more precision about what should and should not be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) to make consistent decisions to respond to families’ needs appropriately.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to remove the reporting requirement of General Neglect for Mandated Reporters, while continuing to require mandated reporting on instances of Severe Neglect and child abuse (inclusive of physical and sexual abuse).

The current definition of General Neglect is overly broad and incorporates situations that are screened out by child protection agency hotline workers at a high rate. The removal of General Neglect as a mandated reporting requirement will lower the rate of screened out and unsubstantiated calls, enable resources to be redirected to substantiated cases of abuse and severe neglect, and even more importantly, reduce the harm and trauma to children, families and communities. Amending CANRA to remove *General Neglect* from Mandated Reporting requirements would not prohibit Mandated Reporters from reporting General Neglect if they determined a child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness. Further, California must ensure that Mandated Reporters are adequately trained and, as needed, community resources are available and accessible to support the implementation of this amendment.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Support the amendment of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to revise and clarify the definition of *Severe Neglect*³ to be aligned with the definition of Severe Neglect utilized in the [California Structured Decision Making \(SDM\) Tool](#)⁴ consistent with practice in child protection agencies.

Aligning the definition of Severe Neglect with the SDM will enable Mandated Reporter training to be reflective of current practice and increase the accuracy of mandated reporter decision-making. Further, the MRAC shall be responsible for evaluation of the Severe Neglect definition in the SDM tool to determine if there is a more accurate way of defining this category that does not unintentionally cause further harm to families.

³ California Legislative Information
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&division&title=1.&part=4.&chapter=2.&article=2.5

⁴ Refer to Appendix 1 of this document for a detailed comparison.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Ensure that Mandated Reporting laws, policies, practices, education, and training do not incentivize or encourage inappropriate referrals and separation of families.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC) and Counties, to implement a two-year pilot that provides Mandated Reporters with immunity from liability as identified in [Penal Code Section 11166\(C\)](#) when there is a demonstrated use of a child abuse and neglect decision-making process that indicates a child's safety is not at risk and a report is not required.

This pilot shall serve as a step towards the evaluation of the elimination of liability for Mandated Reporters when an informed decision is made regarding the need for a child abuse and neglect report, in support of the shift toward community supporting. The decision-making process to be piloted will be selected by the MRAC based on sufficient evidence of efficacy and risk mitigation. At the conclusion of the pilot, the MRAC, or an entity appointed by the MRAC, will evaluate the pilot to determine if a recommendation for removal of liability should be made.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Support the amendment of Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) to require all Mandated Reporters in California receive standardized training on child abuse and neglect to increase consistency of appropriate referrals to Child Protective Services and decrease disproportionate referrals due to race, ethnicity, or income status.

It is critical to the reform of the Mandated Reporting system to ensure all Mandated Reporters are adequately trained to understand CANRA, are aware of the impact of structural racism and implicit bias, are provided with decision-making tools to assist with identification of families who meet criteria for "reasonable suspicion" of child abuse and neglect, and are educated on the availability of referral pathways to support families in their communities. This training shall be required for all current Mandated Reporters within six months of passage of this amendment. Thereafter, newly identified Mandated Reporters must complete the training within 90 days of their appointment. Annual updates will be provided, as indicated.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 (continued)

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Require the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) to develop, with participation of individuals with lived expertise, a standardized curriculum for Mandated Reporters.

This standardized curriculum will include core content that must be included in all subsequently developed curriculum. The MRAC will provide oversight to OCAP on training development, as well as assist with the development of standards related to the minimum length of initial training and subsequent updates; mode of presentation (in-person, virtual); and, the certification of Mandated Reporters to verify completion. Further, OCAP shall work in collaboration with the California Departments of Education, Justice, and Health Care Services to develop specific components targeted to educators, law enforcement, and those in the health and behavioral health care fields, respectively. To ensure local flexibility, entities may choose to develop a Mandated Reporter training specific to their community and/or unique population served and/or enhance the standardized curriculum developed. All curricula developed or enhanced by other entities shall be approved by OCAP and/or their designee to ensure consistency with the state standardized curriculum. A list of approved training shall be maintained in each county, as well as on the CDSS website. To the extent possible, individuals with lived expertise shall be incorporated in the review and delivery of mandated reporter training.

At minimum, the core content shall include:

- A. History of mandated reporting laws, including the impact of structural racism on disparities for Black and Indigenous families
- B. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
- C. California Child Abuse and Reporting Laws, including AB 2085, abuse and neglect categories and liability
- D. Best practice for defining “reasonable suspicion” and “substantial risk”
- E. California child abuse, neglect, and disproportionality data
- F. Definitions of bias (implicit and explicit) and trauma; the impact on families and children, and strategies for recognizing and mitigating their impact
- G. The impact on families of making a child abuse and/or neglect report to CPS
- H. Considerations for special populations, including individuals with disabilities, behavioral health, domestic violence, and substance use concerns, as well as the unique factors involved in supporting children ages 0-5
- I. Decision-making processes and tools for Mandated Reporters
- J. Education and information on community resources



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 (continued)

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Encourage the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), in collaboration with the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC), to develop a Mandated Reporter web page specific to Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting to ensure the information is current, comprehensive, and provides alternatives for Mandated Reporters to promote child safety and family well-being.

Specifically, the content of the page shall include, but not be limited to, information and resources to assist with understanding child abuse and neglect reporting law, accessing mandated reporter training, and providing tools and guidance to assist with the mandated reporting decision-making process, as well as resources available to support families. This may include: FAQs related to child welfare, training requirements, review of CANRA and its reporting requirements, the impact of structural racism and implicit bias, implementation status of AB 2085, updates on any future legislative changes regarding mandated reporting, and data specific to mandated reporting and disparities. In addition, the site shall provide links to county resources and supports, as well as the County’s Title IV-E agencies. Further, Health and Human Services (HHS) shall encourage all State Departments under their purview to provide a web page for Mandated Reporters with information consistent with this recommendation, as well as a link to the CDSS Mandated Reporter web page.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Ensure that Mandated Reporters have both access to and training on how families can connect to available resources, services, and supports; that these supports and how they are delivered are culturally aligned; and that families always retain agency in determining whether and how they utilize these supports.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to incorporate an assessment of the capacity of community supports and services that are available and accessible to Mandated Reporters to meet local needs of families in all 58 counties as a priority in the Family First Prevention Services Continuous Quality Improvement process.

Further, CDSS shall support the California Citizen Review Panel in its examination of the CDSS Office of Child Abuse and Prevention (OCAP) funding, to develop a deliberate review of the prevention pathway, with an emphasis on access and connections to Community Pathways for Mandated Reporters. These efforts shall be co-led by individuals with lived expertise, community representatives, and members of the Mandated Reporting Advisory Committee (MRAC). All findings, as well as policy and practice recommendations, shall be available to the public for review and comment.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Consistent with the [PEI Community Pathway Recommendations](#), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) shall be required to ensure Counties' Comprehensive Prevention Plans (CPP) incorporate information and education specific to Mandated Reporters regarding the implementation of and access to Community Pathways and/or community resources available to support families in their communities.

This should be incorporated into all Mandated Reporter training and may include Information and Referral Systems, Warm-Lines, Family Resource Centers and the use of Community Health Workers or Navigators. Further, Counties shall incorporate messaging specific to Mandated Reporters through social media and other communication vehicles to increase awareness and ensure that resource information remains current.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Establish a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive investment in Mandated Reporting reform, and its implementation, to guarantee transformative change and honor the commitments we have made to communities, families, parents, and children.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Require the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to ensure recommendations from the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting (MRCS) Task Force and any subsequent policy reforms related to Mandated Reporting are enacted and efforts necessary to ensure continued transformation of the Mandated Reporting system are advanced.

This shall include resources for and support of Mandated Reporters, implementation of AB 2085 consistent with [ACL 23-105](#), MRAC, as well as monitoring the impact of these recommendations on disparities and inequities in the system. These efforts shall include, but not be limited to, working in partnership with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) for the oversight of standardized training and certification. To the extent necessary, CDSS shall receive additional staffing and/or state operations resources to carry out these additional responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Ensure the creation and implementation of a statewide narrative change initiative.

This initiative will acknowledge the harm committed by mandated reporting and the child welfare system, especially to Black/African American and Native American/Indigenous families, and will shift beliefs and behaviors toward families and communities safely caring for their children. This work shall incorporate the participation of individuals with lived expertise and community members representative of diverse perspectives throughout the process.



APPENDIX 1

Refer to Recommendation 6: Align CANRA's definition with the child welfare Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tool

CANRA Definition

Penal Code Section 11165.2.

1. "Severe neglect" means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to protect the child from severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed nonorganic failure to thrive. "Severe neglect" also means those situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation such that their person or health is endangered as proscribed by Section 11165.3, including the intentional failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

Structured Decision Making Definition

Severe neglect means:

- Diagnosed malnutrition (automatic 24-hour). The child has a current diagnosis by a qualified medical professional of severe malnutrition due to inadequate or unbalanced diet, OR a qualified medical professional states that there are indicators of malnutrition but a formal diagnosis has not yet been made.
- Non-organic failure to thrive. The child has a current diagnosis by a qualified medical professional of non-organic failure to thrive, OR a qualified medical professional states that there are indicators of failure to thrive but a formal diagnosis has not yet been made.
- Child's health/safety is endangered. The caregiver has willfully not provided adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, care, or medical care AND there is imminent danger of serious illness or injury; or serious illness, serious injury, or death has already occurred. Consider child's age, behavior, and vulnerability. For example:
 - The child's clothing is so inappropriate for weather that the child suffered hypothermia or frostbite;
 - Housing conditions result in lead poisoning, severely exacerbated asthma due to smoke exposure, and/or multiple bites from pest infestations;
 - There is methamphetamine production in the home/residence;
 - Medical care has not been provided for an acute or chronic condition and, as a result, the child has required or is likely to require hospitalization or surgery; or the condition may worsen to the extent that unnecessary permanent disability, disfigurement, or death results;
 - Caregiver is willfully not meeting child's mental health needs and child has demonstrated suicidal or homicidal behavior/ideation;
 - Child is not supervised to the extent that the child has been seriously injured, is at risk of being seriously injured, or avoided serious injury only due to intervention by a third party;
 - A young child is left in a motor vehicle during extreme temperature conditions;
 - A caregiver behaves recklessly in proximity to child (e.g., driving under the influence with a child in the car, using weapons, etc.); or
 - Caregiver is breastfeeding while using dangerous substances (type of substances and/or amount resulted in or is likely to result in serious injury/illness to child).







