Board of Supervisors

Family & Social Services Cluster Agenda Review Meeting

DATE: August 20, 2025
TIME: 1:30PM
MEETING CHAIRS: Monica Banken, 5th Supervisorial District
CEO MEETING FACILITATOR: Claudia Alarcon

THIS MEETING IS HELD UNDER THE GUIDELINES OF BOARD POLICY 3.055.

To participate in the meeting in-person, the meeting location is:

~~Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration~~
~~500 West Temple Street~~
~~Los Angeles, California 90012~~
~~Room 140~~

VIRTUAL/ CALL-IN MEETING ONLY.

To participate in the meeting virtually, please call teleconference number 1 (323) 776-6996 and enter the following 995 916 944# or

Click here to join the meeting

For Spanish Interpretation, the Public should send emails within 48 hours in advance of the meeting to: ClusterAccommodationRequest@bos.lacounty.gov

Members of the Public may address the Family & Social Services Cluster on any agenda item during General Public Comment.
The meeting chair will determine the amount of time allowed for each item.
THIS TELECONFERENCE WILL BE MUTED FOR ALL CALLERS. PLEASE DIAL *6 TO UNMUTE YOUR PHONE WHEN IT IS YOUR TIME TO SPEAK.

I. **Call to Order**

II. **Consent Item(s)** (Any Information Item is subject to discussion and/or presentation at the request of two or more Board offices):
-- None --

III. **Motions:**

- SD4: Protecting Veteran Benefits.
- SD5/SD3: Foster Family Agency Insurance Stipend Program.

IV. **Presentation/Discussion Items:**
-- None --

V. **Public Comment**

VI. Standing item(s) and those continued from a previous meeting of the Board of Supervisors or from a previous FSS Agenda Review meeting.

VII. Adjournment

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO EMAIL A COMMENT ON AN ITEM ON THE FAMILY & SOCIAL SERVICES CLUSTER AGENDA, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESS AND INCLUDE THE AGENDA NUMBER YOU ARE COMMENTING ON:

Family_Social_Services@ceo.lacounty.gov

AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN September 2, 2025

Protecting Veteran Benefits

Veterans with service-connected disabilities, meaning conditions or illnesses caused or aggravated by military service, may be eligible for disability compensation. Accessing and qualifying for this compensation often involves complex and challenging claims processes. In California, veterans can get assistance with these claims through a number of resources intended to help veterans and their families navigate these processes free of cost. In Los Angeles County, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), along with other veteran service organizations, provide veterans access to accredited Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) who guide veterans through their claims.

With the passage of the PACT Act in 2020, aspects of the claims process were streamlined by expanding eligibility for veterans to claim service-connected disabilities. The law established presumptive conditions that reduce the burden of proof veterans have when filing claims for certain illnesses, disabilities, and other conditions based on potential exposures based on their military service history.

In recent years, unaccredited agents, commonly referred to as “claim sharks,” have emerged. These claim sharks are individuals or companies offering unsanctioned assistance with filing initial and subsequent claims, often while charging illegal or excessive fees. Federal law prohibits charging for initial benefit claims and requires that

<u>MOTION</u>

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those representing veterans be VA-accredited, such as CVSOs or representatives from nationally chartered Veterans Service Organizations.

Given that claim sharks are unaccredited, they are not held to the ethical or professional standards that VA-accredited organizations and officers must follow. This lack of oversight puts veterans at significant risk of exploitation. Veterans who are already vulnerable, including those with limited financial resources, minority veterans, older veterans, and others facing barriers to access, are at even greater risk of being targeted by these predatory actors. Many of these agents attempt to avoid legal accountability by misrepresenting their services as "coaching" or "consulting," which further threatens the integrity of the claims process and the well-being of veterans.

Since 2006, changes in federal law have enabled unaccredited groups to exploit our country's veterans without consequence. By removing penalties for violations of federal veteran benefits laws, the lack of enforcement has allowed unaccredited entities to operate freely, including charging fees for initial claims, a practice that puts veterans, especially those already at risk, at heightened danger of financial exploitation. The California Attorney General has issued consumer alerts warning veterans of claim sharks charging for services that CVSOs and nationally chartered Veteran Service Organizations provide for free.

Concerns have been raised about claims processes being deliberately dragged out to allow for the maximum amount of back pay to accumulate. This increases the money unaccredited agents can charge for their services, which are often calculated based on the amount of financial benefit their victims receive.

Senate Bill 694, authored by State Senator Bob Archuleta, proposes creating state-level consumer protections for veterans from unaccredited entities that charge veterans for services they should receive for free. This bill would introduce penalties and fines and provide options for enforcement and legal accountability to support the existing prohibition on illegally charging veterans for initial claims, ultimately bringing accountability back to these unlawful, unaccredited groups.

There is widespread support for this bill and its objectives, demonstrating strong and robust veteran support for the protection of veterans from the predatory practices of claim sharks. Veterans, particularly those in at risk and underserved communities, should not have to go into debt or face exploitation in order to access the benefits they earned through their service to our country.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations to:

1. Take a standing position in support of all state and federal legislation that protects veterans' claims benefits from commercialization, prohibits the charging of fees for the preparation and submission of initial claims, strengthens consumer protections for veterans from unaccredited claims agents, and advances the expansion of eligibility and access to veterans' disability compensation;
2. Advocate for the inclusion and preservation of penalty provisions within such legislation to ensure accountability and deter predatory practices targeting veterans; and
3. Support Senate Bill 694, which establishes consumer protections for veterans, ensures that veterans are not exploited, and adds state level penalties and enforcement mechanisms against unaccredited individuals and entities that illegally charge veterans for services related to initial claims.

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AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND LINDSEY HORVATH

September 2, 2025

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY INSURANCE STIPEND PROGRAM

Nonprofit organizations operating Foster Family Agencies (FFAs)[1] provide essential services to children and families in foster care. In Los Angeles County (County) alone, FFA's support nearly 1,800 children, offering high-quality, supportive care in family-settings.

In 2024, the Nonprofit Insurance Alliance of California (NIAC), which insures a significant number of FFA programs throughout the state, announced its intention to cease offering coverage to Non Profit organizations operating FFA Programs. The challenge presented by this development in the insurance industry compounded other challenges FFAs were experiencing. In September 2024, there were 45 FFAs that contracted with the County. One year later, the County expects that number to fall to 36-41 agencies.

The County Board of Supervisors (Board) immediately engaged the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as well as other county departments and numerous community stakeholders to explore options and take actions to support the County's FFA partners.

[1] The County contracts with Nonprofit Organizations that operate several types of programs that serve children and families in the foster care system. Throughout this motion, the term "FFA" is used to refer specifically to nonprofit organizations that operate Foster Family Agencies.

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On September 24, 2024, the Board passed a motion titled "FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY INSURANCE CRISIS ANALYSIS," which called for County Counsel to provide the Board with a confidential report back detailing contracting options to address the insurance crisis. On November 6, 2024, the Board passed a follow-up motion titled "FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY INSURANCE CRISIS COUNTY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN" that directed DCFS to develop a proposed a subsidy/stipend plan for the Board's consideration. The Board has also commissioned a risk financing feasibility study and made adjustments to the County's insurance requirements in an effort to support FFAs through this crisis. Lastly, the Board directed the County's legislative advocates to support a FY2025-26 budget proposal of $31.5 million in bridge funding to prevent the closure of FFAs. The budget proposal was subsequently approved by the Legislature.

As directed by the Board, DCFS has developed a proposed subsidy/stipend plan that consists of the following action steps:

- DCFS developed and released a subsidy application/survey that provided FFAs an opportunity to request a one-time subsidy/stipend.
- DCFS released the application/survey for a 30-day submission period that ran from March 21, 2025, to April 25, 2025, and was extended to accommodate a few FFAs.
- DCFS received and analyzed responses to this initial submission period. DCFS received 25 requests totaling $4,597,362.
- DCFS opened up a second 30-day submission period that will run from June 24, 2025 to July 30, 2025.
- DCFS identified existing one-time budgeted resources in the amount of $1 million to fund the subsidy/stipend program.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct and delegate authority to the Department of Children and Family Services to:

1. Allocate a total of $1M in one-time budgeted resources to fund the FFA insurance subsidy/stipend program.
2. Upon completion of the survey/application submission period that closes on July 30, 2025, offer a subsidy/stipend to applicants who requested funding during both submission periods; are still operating an FFA program; experienced increased premiums in 2024 for the policy types that are required in County contracts; and provided placements for children under DCFS or Probation care and supervision in 2024-2025, with consideration given to the specific number of children placed by Los Angeles County in relation to the FFAs overall number of placed children.
3. In consultation with County Counsel, amend the FFA contract of each FFA that accepts a subsidy/stipend to incorporate the new funds. The amendment shall require that the FFA apply the funds exclusively to the cost of its insurance

premium(s) and confirm the FFA's understanding that the County's subsidy/stipend program is a one-time extraordinary event that will not be ongoing. The amendment shall also require each FFA to demonstrate, through financial statements or similar documentation, that the entity will continue its operations for the foreseeable future and include language requiring a prorated repayment of the subsidy/stipend if the FFA does not continue to serve LA County DCFS or Probation children, youth or Non-Minor Dependents for at least one year after accepting the subsidy/stipend.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the CEO Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs office to advocate that the California Department of Social Services, in consultation with the Alliance of Child and Family Services and the County Welfare Directors Association of California develop equitable criteria and methodology for distribution of the $31.5 million included in the 2025 State Budget Act for eligible licensed foster family agencies that are experiencing increases in the costs of liability insurance.

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