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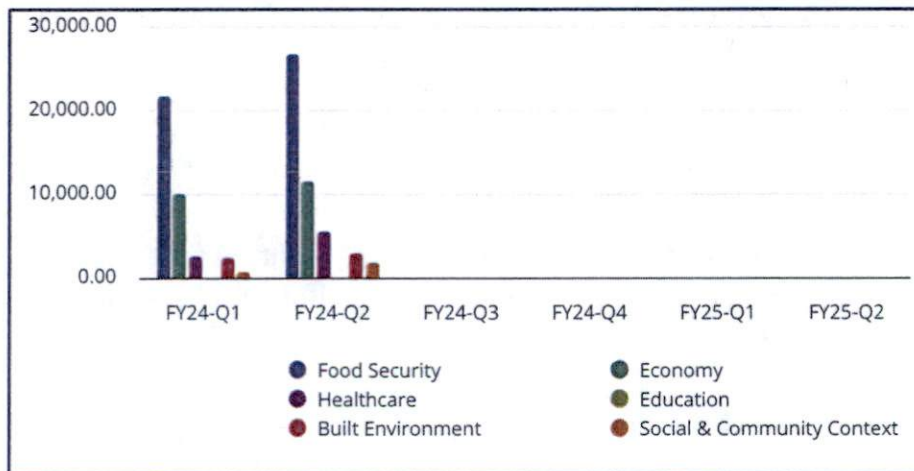
**Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council (CAPCC) of Humboldt
2024 Annual Report to Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
March 25, 2025**

The Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council of Humboldt County (CAPCC) is a broad-based, nonprofit advocacy organization that works to eliminate child abuse and neglect in our community through (1) striving to assure coordinated services and policies for the prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse among agencies and organizations, (2) actively promoting and supporting high-quality programs that successfully reduce child abuse and neglect and (3) increasing public awareness of resources to help prevent child abuse and decrease family stress. Our Mission is:

Strengthening community connections to promote safe, healthy, resilient children and families in Humboldt.

ACAPCC continues to participate in the Cross-Sector Collaborative of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) which has expanded referrals and service delivery through Community Pathways sites throughout Humboldt County. The ultimate goal of strengthening and expanding the work of Family Resource Centers and other community pathway sites is to reduce the number of children taken into foster care. However, we realize that it may take several years to see a clear impact in those numbers. Right now we can say that referrals for nearly all categories of services offered by these sites have continuously increased since we began collecting consistent data in July 2024.¹

Figure 1. Number of referrals to general services made by Community Pathway sites

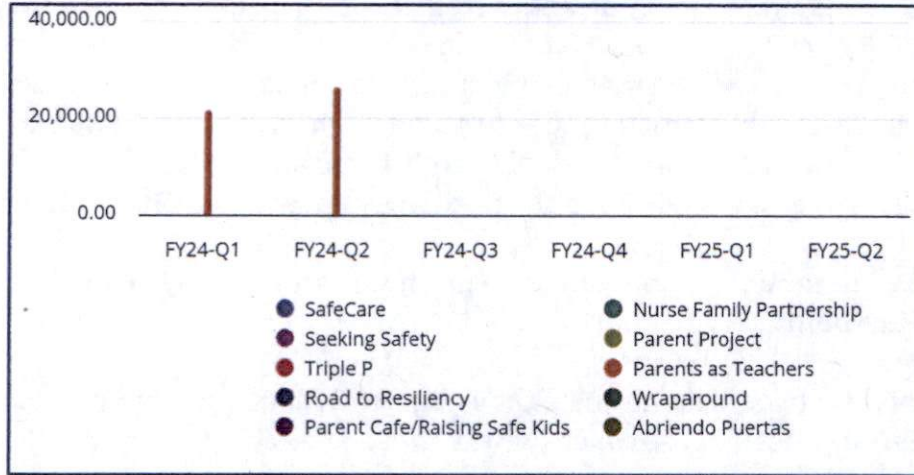


¹ Note: All of the services reflected in these charts receive referrals from other programs. These two charts reflect only those that are recorded by the FRCs, four Tribal resource centers and HCTAYC as part of the FFPSA project.



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Figure 2. Number of referrals to evidence-based practices made by Community Pathway sites



CAPCC will continue to support FRCs as important sources of family support across our widespread rural geography. In July 2024, CAPCC supported the inclusion of a bill in the reauthorization of Title IV-B², which would establish Family Resource Centers as a federally defined entity. As of December last year, it was making committee rounds, and we believe its passage will enable greater federal support of FRCs and their crucial work in our communities.

CAPCC participated in the 2024 Statewide Prevention Convening (FFPSA). This gathering has proven to be an excellent source of support and sharing of experiences for the agencies that are involved in implementing their Comprehensive Prevention Plans, addressing such issues as sustainable financing, meaningful community involvement, and relationship-based leadership vs. compliance-based service delivery. Cindy Sutcliffe and Megan Gotcher presented, with two other people from County Probation Department, a discussion entitled, “Unique Approaches to Family First Prevention Services Programs with Real Impact in Rural Communities”.

CAPCC is currently participating in a process – in partnership with Live Well Humboldt - of mapping its member’s programs that support CHIP strategies in the Healthy Beginnings/ACEs priority area. Our member organizations are delivering family strengthening, parenting education and support, children’s mental health care and

² H.R.8798, the Promoting Community Based Prevention Services Act



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reduction of family stressors, and support of foster youth -- all of which contribute to the reduction of adverse childhood experiences that can result in such debilitating health conditions as substance use disorders, mental and physical illness, and involvement in the criminal justice system. We are currently working with Public Health's Live Well Humboldt initiative to develop measurable outcomes by which our collective impact can be assessed and reflected in their upcoming Community Health Assessment.

Last year we reported to you that we were participating in a state-wide reconsideration of mandated reporter regulations. We conducted a small survey of mandated reporters here in Humboldt in 2023-24. Our goal was to gather specific information about what kind of training programs mandated reporters are required to take in different professions. Our report on the data we collected and the recommendations we will be making to the State Taskforce on Mandated Reporting is under review with our Board Members and will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors within the coming week. The main take-away from our survey is that training quality, frequency of administration, and extent of information imparted should be made consistent across the state. The report examines additional considerations in reforming the mandated reporter training process in California.

CAPCC celebrated the passage of recent legislation (2023) that revised the definition of general neglect to exclude a parent's economic disadvantage from consideration of harm. Research has suggested that across professions, there is a very poor understanding of the meaning of severe neglect which the MR law was originally intended to address and often reports of neglect are made for conditions that could and should be addressed by community support programs. CAPCC of Humboldt agrees that poverty is not a legitimate element of neglect for the purposes of removing children from their family.

CAPCC has been unable to find a feasible solution for promoting the Child Protection Reporting Guide (CPRG) that was created as a result of the Attorney General's stipulations to Humboldt County CWS. The stumbling block has been a lack of funding to support the community education and training required to have it become widely known and trusted as a reliable decision-making system. We are now considering how a volunteer effort may be organized to establish the CPRG as a community resource. We believe the CPRG provides the best foundation for making informed decisions in reporting child abuse and neglect and



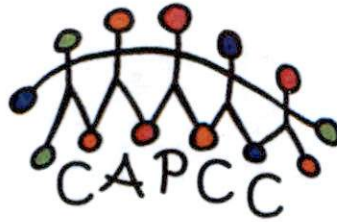
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can be of great service in operationalizing the philosophical shift toward more Community Supporting than Mandated Reporting.

In 2024 our Service Provider Roundtable Event took place in May, with the theme of Centering Our Families. 120 people registered, and 94 attendees participated. A total of 25 local service organizations tabled at the event. Increasingly, organizations are advising or requiring greater participation in governance by persons with lived expertise. Our panels and keynote talk were designed to lift up the value of recruiting people with lived expertise to participate in guiding or governing systems that serve people like themselves. A number of our panelists had both personal experience and work competence – and often professional training as well – and illuminated the insights as well as some of the quandaries of working in a field that had once served them or their family members. A majority of the attendees ranked the conference presentations highly and some came forward and expressed an interest in working with our Board.

During April 2024, which is Child Abuse Prevention Month, CAPCC accomplished the following:

1. Accepted a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors on April 9th.
2. Arranged for street banners to be hung in Eureka and Arcata.
3. Published a Spring e-newsletter in Spanish, English, and Hmong, distributed via email throughout our membership, posted on our website and our Facebook page.
4. Broadcast a 60-second radio spot highlighting April as Child Abuse Prevention Month on local radio stations.
5. Provided a 15-minute interview on our Spanish-only radio station highlighting April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and the work that CAPCC is doing in the community.
6. Arranged for the children's memorial flag raising to occur on the 4th Friday of April at the Eureka Boys & Girls Club Teen Center.
7. Recognized the outstanding work of youth leaders of IPA School-Based Wellness Centers, Child and Family Services Specialist Carolyn Albee, Parent Educator Haydee Hopkins and Officer Jayme Clark as recipients of our 2024 Children First awards. We posted their accomplishments to reduce or prevent child abuse on our Facebook page.



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8. Organized several pinwheel parades in April to coincide with our promotion of the Child Abuse prevention theme, traditionally led by College of the Redwoods Child Development Center and participated in several childcare sites in Eureka and Arcata (see photo of CR group below).



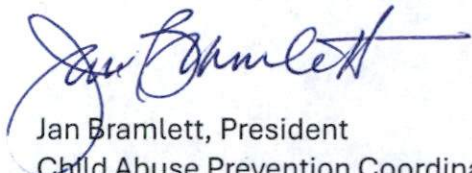
Also in 2024, CAPCC Board Members participated in a Strategic Planning session that reviewed our self-assessment to consider what areas of our work warrant improvement. We determined that renewed energy would be directed to expand our membership and recruitment, with a specific focus on youth and parents with lived expertise in the systems of family support and foster care toward which our policies are focused. We will be developing educational materials to better communicate the programs CAPCC champions and to build greater community awareness of the family support structures we promote in the Comprehensive Prevention Plan.



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CAPCC maintained a presence at a number of community events throughout the year, including the Redwood Coast Mental Health Symposium and a conference on Murdered and Missing Indian Persons, both last May, the Juneteenth celebration in Eureka, and others. We continue to share, through our newsletters, Facebook posts, and our website, regional training opportunities, child vaccination clinic schedules, and family-supporting activities not only in April but also throughout the year. We appreciate the opportunity to report on our work.

Respectfully submitted,



Jan Bramlett, President
Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council of Humboldt

Attachment:

Shifting From Reporting Families to Supporting Families: California's Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force and Recommendations (Summary), September 2024.

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>

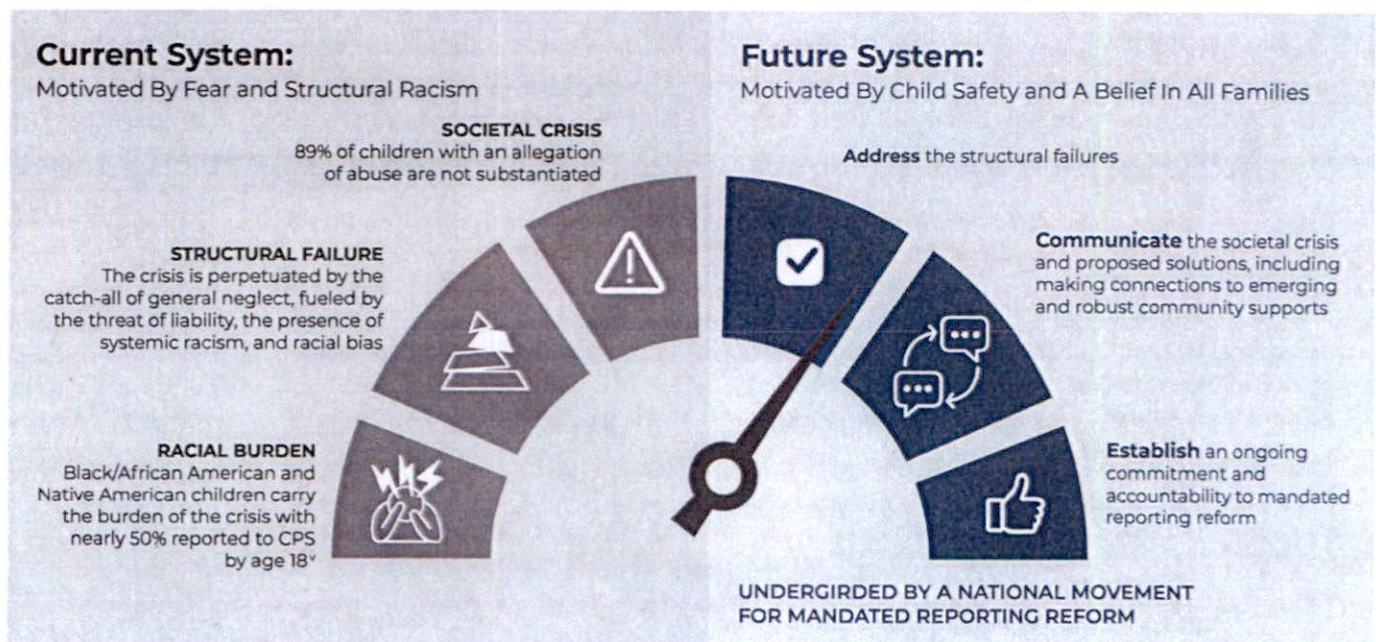
Children, families, and communities deserve a better approach to safety and support. Members of the Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force agreed that we must address systemic failures—rooted in structural racism, bias, and fear. Only then will there be an opportunity to create a system 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

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Co-Chair of the Lived Expertise Group
Tri-Chair of the Narrowing the Legal Definition of Neglect Subcommittee
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On behalf of the [Lived Experience Group](#)