

**RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**

**RESOLUTION OF THE HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
RECOGNIZING THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DIVISION OF THE HUMBOLDT
COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

WHEREAS, since 1935, Title IV-B of the Social Security Act has allowed for the provision of federal funding to states in order to support and provide preventative and protective services to vulnerable children and youth through the Child Welfare Services program; and

WHEREAS, the requirements specified in Division 31 of the California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures govern the Child Welfare Services division of the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services ("DHHS – Child Welfare Services") in the administration of child welfare services; and

WHEREAS, in California, all juvenile dependency cases are overseen by the juvenile court system, and each parent, guardian and child are appointed an attorney, in order to ensure that the rights of children and their families are protected in accordance with any and all applicable local state and federal laws, regulations and standards designed to protect abused and neglected children and youth; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services has more than 160 staff members dedicated to protecting the safety and well-being of children, youth and families and additional staff from other DHHS divisions provide specialized services to support child welfare-involved children, youth and families; and

WHEREAS, Section 827 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code protects information related to juvenile dependency cases by restricting access to, and the release of, juvenile case files, as defined Rule 5.552 of the California Rules of Court, to specific authorized entities and individuals; and

WHEREAS, it is critically important that all children, youth and families reported to and involved in the juvenile dependency system within the small, rural community of Humboldt County receive their legal right to confidentiality; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of DHHS – Child Welfare Services that all confidential and privileged information and documentation remain protected and only be released, discussed and shared with legally authorized entities and individuals; and

WHEREAS, all local child welfare agencies across California are required to utilize specific standardized assessment tools to ensure that families are systematically assessed for **safety** and **risk** at critical decision points, and throughout the life of the juvenile dependency case; and

WHEREAS, use of these standardized tools promotes a uniform and consistent practice of assessment for each social worker, as well as provides for consistency in service delivery and child protection throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services received an average of 275 reports of child abuse and/or neglect each month in calendar year 2023; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services provided ongoing services, beyond an investigation, to 662 children and non-minor dependents in calendar year 2023; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services inquires of all reporting parties whether they know if the child is or may be a Native American child and conducts affirmative and continuing inquiry as to whether the child is or may be Native American child; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the unique political and sovereign status held by Tribes in Humboldt County and beyond, and in an effort to address disproportionality, historical trauma and to acknowledge the distinct strengths and resources of Tribal communities, DHHS – Child Welfare Services has developed an Indian Child Welfare Act program that includes specifically trained, educated, culturally responsive and knowledgeable staff who respond to allegations of abuse and/or neglect of Native American children and work with the children, families and their Tribe to reach and maintain safety; and

WHEREAS, child welfare social work is extremely challenging, in part because it is involuntary for most families, and the social workers who do this difficult work find it deeply rewarding, but sometimes thankless; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services, like many other child welfare agencies across the state, is often under scrutiny and criticism, and consistently receives and applies feedback when provided, but often is unable to respond to family and community members to their satisfaction due to applicable confidentiality laws and ethical standards; and

WHEREAS, criticism can create a self-perpetuating cycle, making it harder to recruit and retain qualified personnel which results in understaffing; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services has made significant improvements in policies, processes and practices over the last several years, and is committed to continuous quality improvement, having implemented a formal quality improvement process, recognizing that there will always still be work to do; and

WHEREAS, child welfare staff across the state enter children's and families lives at their most difficult time, often after other approaches or interventions have been attempted by institutions, friends, neighbors and family; and

WHEREAS, it is inherent in child welfare work across all jurisdictions that children, parents and families may disagree with the child welfare agency's assessment regarding their safety and ongoing service needs and the decisions made by the juvenile court; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services works with families and caretakers to keep children safely in the home or develop and maintain a safe home a child can return to; and

WHEREAS, many children entering the juvenile dependency system have unaddressed or under-addressed physical and mental health needs, and DHHS – Child Welfare Services provides linkage to behavioral health and medical services in order to ensure that their health needs are being met in an appropriate and efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services' social workers work compassionately and straightforwardly with biological and adoptive parents, family member caretakers and unrelated foster parents, who also have complex stories, including unaddressed trauma and unmet needs; and

WHEREAS, DHHS – Child Welfare Services' social workers continue to fill their critical roles during adverse events which have impacted them, their clients and the community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the hard-working people and dedicated public servants within DHHS – Child Welfare Services are members of communities across Humboldt County and are our neighbors, family and friends who have dedicated themselves to the noble challenge of keeping children safe, well and in forever homes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors hereby recognizes DHHS – Child Welfare Services for its diligence in meeting applicable local, state and federal laws, regulations, standards and mandates through the provision of compassionate, professional, appropriate and trauma-informed services to the children, youth and families of Humboldt County.

August 27, 2024




Rex Bohn, Chair