



Reimagining Child Welfare: The Mandated Supporting Initiative

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March 8, 2025



Disclosure information

- I have no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturers of any commercial products and/or providers of commercial services discussed in this CME activity.
- I do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in my presentation.



Mandated supporting initiative: The premise

- Too many children are removed from their home because of overreporting families for abuse and neglect when the issues are related to poverty, racial bias and inequity, and fear of civil liability for failure to report .
- Families and children are traumatized by such disruption.
- Most reports to the Child Protection Hotline (CPH) are unfounded

SHIFTING FROM REPORTING FAMILIES TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES

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

SEPTEMBER 2024



Additional harms of mandated reporting

- Fear of asking for support: fear of losing child
- Trauma and stigma: stigmatized even if allegation unfounded
- CWS system overburdened: reduce the number of reports that do not need to be investigated
- Notion of sustaining rather than detaining

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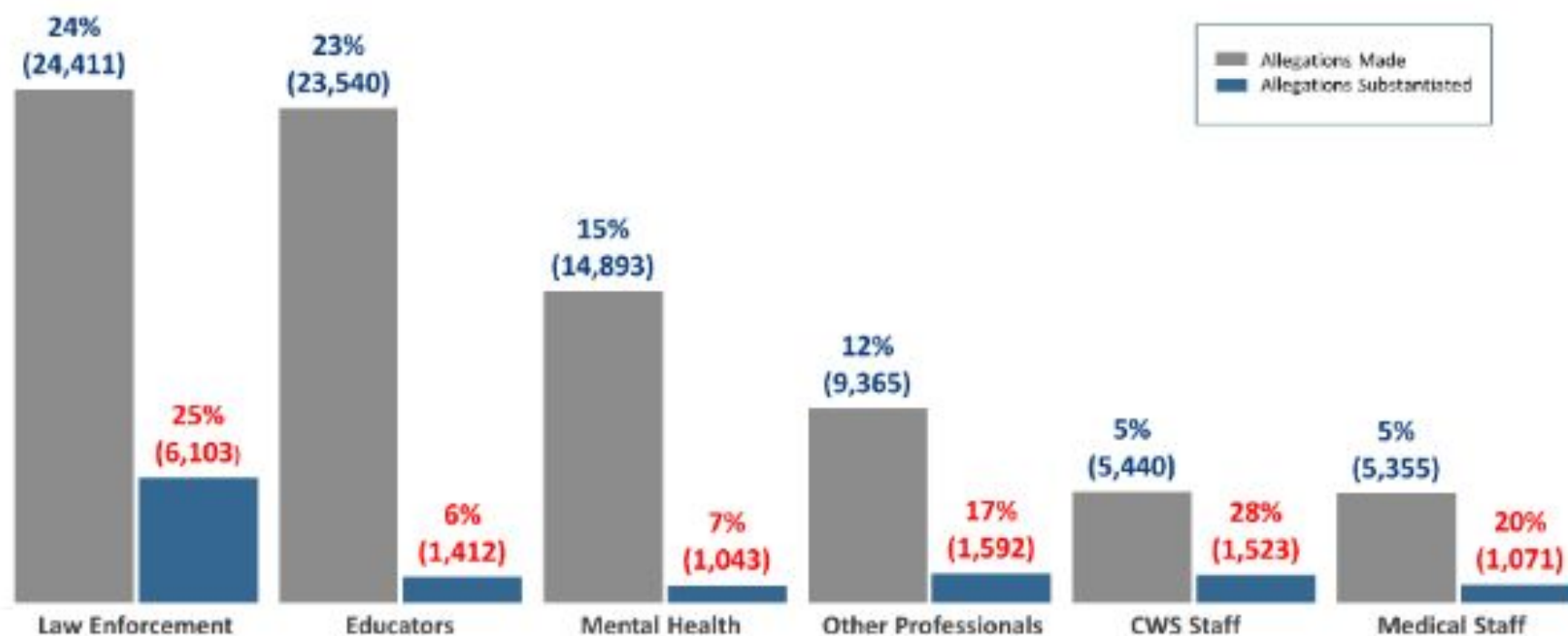
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Table 1. LA County DCFS Hotline Rates¹

Los Angeles County DCFS Hotline Rates (2022)





- **Assembly Bill No. 2085**

- **CHAPTER 770**

An act to amend Sections 11165.2, 11166, and 11167 of the Penal Code, relating to crimes.

[Approved by Governor September 29, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State September 29, 2022.]

- (b) “General neglect” means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred but the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness. “General neglect” does not include a parent’s economic disadvantage.

Neglect: Epidemiology

- NIS-4* Estimates (reviewed 2018)
 - All maltreatment 1,256,600
 - All neglect 771,700 (61.4%)
 - Physical neglect 295,300 (38.3%)



*NIS-4 National Incidence Study: Community professionals (sentinels) serve as lookouts for child abuse and neglect; report each decade; includes cases not reported to CPS; authorized by CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act)

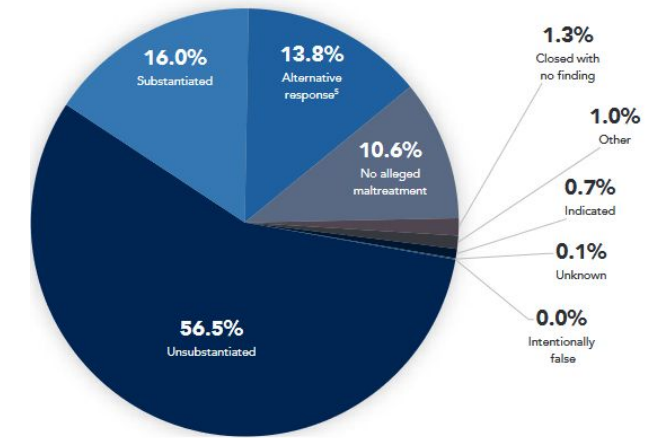
Neglect: Epidemiology

- NCANDS* (CPS reports [2019])
 - 4.4 million referrals
 - 7.9 million children
 - Substantiated: 656,000: 16.0%
 - 74.9% for neglect
 - 1/3 child maltreatment fatalities
2⁰ neglect
 - 2.3% for medical neglect

*CAPTA authorized HHS to establish National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System(NCANDS): all aspects of the reports (demographics; type of maltreatment; by state, etc)



FIGURE 1. INVESTIGATION DISPOSITIONS



Categories of Physical Neglect



- Food
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Hygiene
- Expulsion of the child from home
- Inadequate supervision
- Health care



Back to AB2085



- Section 11166.03
- (a) The County of Los Angeles may establish a two-year pilot project beginning January 1, 2026 to January 1, 2028, to test a new model of mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect
 - Better equip mandated reporters with training and decision support
 - LA County develop and disseminate comprehensive training
 - 49 categories of mandated reporters
 - Identify community-based supportive resources for families in need
 - As the mandated supporter, supply those resources to the families

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- [https://www.calltrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/MRCS-Task-Force-Report-for-09-04\[24\].pdf](https://www.calltrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/MRCS-Task-Force-Report-for-09-04[24].pdf)
- Approved by Child Welfare Council on 09/04/2024

Implementation of the Mandated Supporting Initiative (MSI)

- Development and implementation of an internet-based decision tool which takes into account relevant state and local laws and policies
- Recommendation (options):
 - A report to child protection hotline is required.
 - No report to the child protection hotline, **but the family would benefit from supportive services.***
 - No action is required.
- ***Provide mandated reporters/supporters with online information and referral system. Mandated reporting requirement satisfied by following this algorithm without calling CPS**



Can we implement the MSI and make sure children are safe?

Recommendations of the ICAN Workgroup on MSI

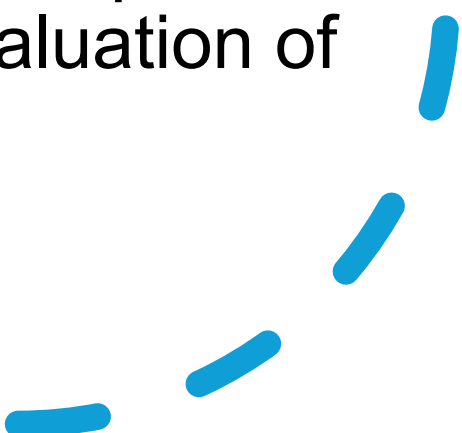
Interagency Council on Abuse and Neglect

Identified 6 concerns and proposed 6 recommendations

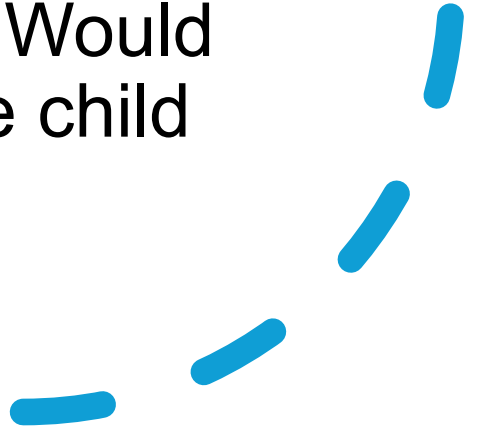
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CONCERN

The State of California specifies 49 categories of those defined as mandated reporters. There is overall concern about the feasibility of mandated **support** as opposed to **report** within such a large and diverse group. The undesired outcome may lead to a response that is unfocused on the recipient group or families' specific needs, and lack of an expert evaluation of the risk to the child.


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RECOMMENDATION

- In lieu of mandating **support** for all mandated supporters, more resources should be supplied at the Child Protection Hotline (CPH) and operations at DCFS. This would allow increased capacity to efficiently and appropriately assess every call made to the CPH, based on MSI principles. Need to follow up with families to be sure that families are able to access resources. Would completely avoid entry into the child welfare system.
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CONCERN

- Need to have a solid mechanism to monitor inability of family to access community resources. Beyond the scope of individual reporters. If providing resources is the first line of support, these agencies need to react expeditiously and appropriately. A child's situation may deteriorate into an unsafe environment.
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RECOMMENDATION

- There needs to be a separate system to create and monitor accountability for families and community agencies. Community organizations need to be vetted annually to be sure they can provide services as well as follow-up support in a timely manner. It would be important to monitor what resources were recommended and were accessed over time and update the list appropriately.



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CONCERN

- Having the reporter who may have limited experience recognizing abuse and neglect follow a simple decision tree is concerning for underreporting. There is concern that physical abuse may go underreported.
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RECOMMENDATION

- The MSI decision tree should be used by the CPH by individuals with longitudinal experience assessing child abuse and neglect. The decision tree is geared to recognize general neglect and the need for community support and resources rather than abuse.



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CONCERN

- Risk of liability for **mandated supporters** in the face of an adverse event regarding the child. “Failure to report” mandate:
 - 1. License may be suspended or revoked.
 - 2. Potential for civil/and/or criminal liability
 - 3. Harm that befalls the child.
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RECOMMENDATION

- Immunity at state and federal level if acting in good faith. This must be guaranteed .



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CONCERN

- Concern among first responders and health care providers: lack the bandwidth.
 - Clinician in a busy clinic
 - Fire battalion dealing with car crashes, house fire, etc
 - Law enforcement: DV, shootings
 - Emergency response workers should focus on what they have been trained to do and not identifying community agencies to provide support for families.
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RECOMMENDATION

- First responders shall report immediately to the CPH. CPH will assess what community resources are available for the family and make the appropriate referral and provide follow-up.



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CONCERN

- The group that developed MSI wasn't sufficiently diverse. It did not include law enforcement, health care providers with experience in child abuse and neglect or families or foster youth who had a positive experience with the system.
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RECOMMENDATION

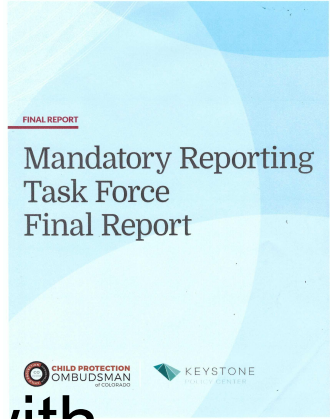
- Expand the workgroup to include families and professionals whose “lived experience” includes adult survivors of child abuse. There is a definite role for a careful evaluation of what a family needs.



What's happening around the country?



Colorado Mandatory Reporting Task Force



- Colorado Bill 22-1240; 34-member task force 5 members with “lived” experience
- 5 Themes
 - Disproportionate impact of MR*
 - Clarifying reporting processes/requirements
 - Mandatory reporter training
 - Requirements for specialized occupations
 - Improve data and information systems
- *Underresourced communities, communities of color, people with disabilities

Colorado Mandatory Reporting Task Force

- Recommendations and Directives:
 - General Assembly enact policies that implement the offering of consultations to mandatory reporters re concern sufficient to warrant a report
 - General Assembly create a warmline for families in need of assistance
 - There are 19 recommendations/directives

What are the next steps?

- Be attentive to all the concerns expressed by the ICAN MSI Workgroup
- Participate in webinars from other states to see what works and what doesn't
- Carefully collect data not just output but also outcomes
- But has the horse already left the barn???
- Are we jumping into something too quickly?



What does CPS Investigate as Neglect?

A Population –Based Study

Palmer et al, *Child Maltreatment* 2024;29:96-105

Common Types of Neglect

- Inadequate supervision
44%
- Failure to protect
29%
- Physical neglect
14%
 - Inadequate food, housing or hygiene

Common Risk Factors

- Parental substance use 41%
- Domestic violence 21%
- Mental illness 18%
- Co-reported physical/sexual abuse

What Does CPS Investigate as Neglect?

A Population-Based Study

Palmer et al, *Child Maltreatment* 2024;29:96-105

Note. Categories for neglect types and risk factors are not mutually exclusive.

Table 3. Types of Neglect by Identified Parental Risks.

Neglect Type	Documented Parental Risks					
	Substance Use	Domestic Violence	Mental Illness	Unmet Material Needs	Custodial Discord	Co-Reported Abuse
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Physical neglect	55 (22)	23 (9)	18 (7)	43 (17)	18 (7)	5 (2)
Inadequate supervision	49 (64)	14 (8)	21 (28)	15 (19)	14 (18)	23 (30)
Failure to protect	39 (33)	31 (26)	19 (16)	4 (3)	17 (14)	40 (34)
Absence or abandonment	54 (13)	11 (2)	22 (4)	17 (3)	0 (0)	22 (4)
Other	51 (26)	8 (4)	22 (11)	6 (3)	6 (3)	14 (7)



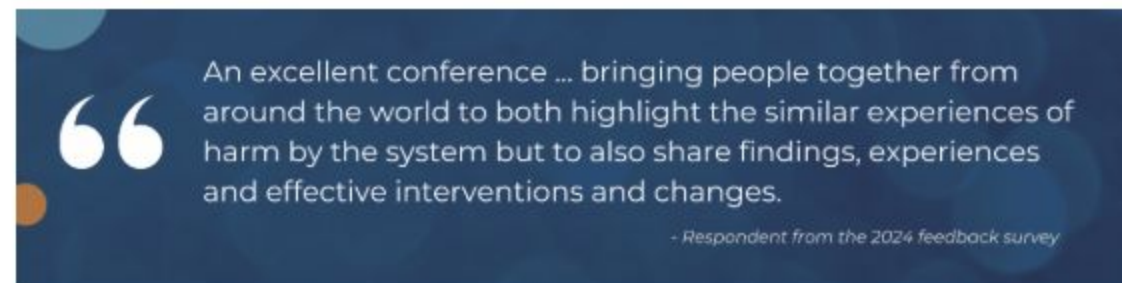
Our Call for Presentations Launches Today

The 2025 Virtual Call to Action to Change Child Welfare Conference launches its Call for Presentations **TODAY**. We are seeking ideas that drive tangible change for children, families, and communities—whether rooted in lived experience, practice, research, advocacy, or policy.

Last year, urgent conversations pushed beyond the surface, questioning long-standing policies and surfacing hard truths. The challenges ahead demand action, and this year, we press forward.

We welcome those who have experienced the system firsthand, those working to improve it every day, and those with bold, actionable ideas for what must come next. If you have a vision that reimagines child welfare and transforms the way systems support children, families, and communities, we invite you to join a global movement bringing together voices from across countries, disciplines, and lived realities to drive meaningful, lasting change.

[Click here to submit](#) your proposal by April 23, 2025.



California legislature—2025–26 regular session



ASSEMBLY BILL No. 601

Introduced by Assembly Member Jackson ***February 13, 2025***

An act to amend Sections 11165.7 and 11166 of, and to add and repeal Section 11173.5 of, the Penal Code, and to amend Sections 16504, 16587, and 16589 of, and to add Sections 10606.4, 16544.5, and 18950.1 to, and to add and repeal Section 10606.5 of, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to child abuse. legislative counsel's digest AB 601, as introduced, Jackson. Child abuse: reporting