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**Media Contact:** Joshua Busch, [jbusch@publiccounsel.org](mailto:jbusch@publiccounsel.org), 310-991-2503

## **Discrimination Continues to Plague California's System of Services for Children with Developmental Disabilities**

### ***Report Shows Bleak Disparities in Service Delivery for Latino and Spanish-Speaking Children***

**Los Angeles, June 4, 2019** – Despite recent increased attention to addressing funding inequities within California's system of services for children with developmental disabilities, a new report by Public Counsel finds that discrimination continues to plague the system. The report sheds light on staggering disparities in funding between White and Hispanic clientele and between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking clientele. The data confirms a long-term trend of inequalities that have dogged the system for more than 25 years, despite ongoing pleas for change from advocates and promises of reform from the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) leadership.

The report investigated the state's 21 social service agencies – known as regional centers – charged with providing support to children with developmental disabilities. Some of the findings included:

- **Hispanic children on average receive significantly less funding**
  - White children had at least \$5,000 per capita more spent on services than Hispanic children in four regional centers – in another eleven regional centers the gap was at least \$3,000
  - Even at the most equitable regional center under this analysis, White children still averaged over \$1,000 per capita more in expenditures
  - Hispanic children at one regional center received only 47% of what White children received in per capita expenditures
  
- **Significant gaps exist in services between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children**
  - Nineteen out of the 21 regional centers offered more funding for services for their English-speaking consumers, with the largest funding gap of \$3,856 per capita higher for English-speaking clients
  - Eleven regional centers had at least a \$1,000 per capita difference in service authorizations between English and Spanish speaking consumers

“This type of rampant discrimination is unacceptable anywhere, but it is especially harmful for a system that currently serves over 330,000 individuals, with a client population that continues to grow and become more diverse each year,” said Brian Capra, report author and senior staff attorney at Public Counsel. “For at least 40 years, the Department of Developmental Services has failed to meet its legal obligations to regulate the regional centers to prevent discrimination based on race, national origin, and ethnic group identification – and children of color with developmental disabilities and their parents bear the costs of this negligence.”

The report identifies that state anti-discrimination law specifically requires regional centers to provide information to consumers and their families “in a culturally and linguistically appropriate” manner, but the report notes, “there appears to be little compliance with existing law.”

“Other state-funded agencies figured out how to meet this requirement years ago,” said Capra. “You can walk into any hospital in this state and see a sign advertising translation services in a dozen languages. Regional centers have done nothing of the sort, and because of the lack of committed leadership from DDS, this archaic approach to serving the children of California is allowed to continue.”

“It is inexcusable that in 2019, we still have a public system of separate and unequal services for children with disabilities,” said Sharon Balmer Cartagena, director of Public Counsel’s Children Right’s Project. “It is long past time for a total overhaul of how funding and services are delivered for children with disabilities in California. Services should be allocated based on client needs, and should not be influenced by irrelevant factors such as race and language.”

Full and abridged copies of this report, as well as a fact sheet, are available on Public Counsel’s website at: <http://www.publiccounsel.org/stories?id=0273>.

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