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Intolerable Inequities Fester within California's System of Services for Children with Developmental Disabilities

Report Shows Bleak Disparities in Service Delivery Are Only Worsening for Hispanic, Asian and Spanish-Speaking Children; Provides Recommendations for Moving Forward

Los Angeles, June 1, 2020 – Despite recent state efforts to address funding inequities within California's system of services for children with developmental disabilities, a new report by Public Counsel finds that discrimination in services funding among most racial and ethnic groups is only getting worse.

The report documents staggering disparities in funding for White children versus Hispanic and Asian children and between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children.

These findings come at a time when the state is proposing a $300 million cut to the developmental services system due to the economic fallout caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This proposed budget reduction threatens to aggravate these inequities further.

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**
- In 2018-2019, each Hispanic child received 69% of the funding that each White child received. Disparity between these two groups grew by 60% in four years.
- Comparing data from 2018-2019 with 2015-2016, disparities in service authorizations between White and Hispanic children decreased in only three regional centers and grew in the other eighteen regional centers.

**Asian children on average receive significantly less funding**
- In 2018-2019, each Asian child received 84% of the funding that each White child received. Disparity between these two groups grew by 68% in just the past year.

**Spanish-speaking children on average receive significantly less funding**
- In 2018-2019, each Spanish-speaking child received 82% of the funding that each English-speaking child received. Disparity between these two groups grew by 46% in four years.
- Comparing data from 2018-2019 with 2015-2016, disparities in service authorizations between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children have been reduced in only four regional centers and have grown among the other seventeen.
Improvement goals set by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the state agency that oversees the regional centers, largely have not been met by the regional centers.

“Although the state has sponsored dozens of disparity reduction projects over the past four years, it is clear that these efforts are not enough on their own,” said Brian Capra, report author and senior staff attorney at Public Counsel. “The state needs to overhaul 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 and discriminatory factors based on race and language.”

“It is inexcusable that, in 2020, we continue to 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. “At a time when we should be investing more to meet the needs of our underserved communities, the state instead is proposing additional program cuts that may end up driving the wedge further between the have and have nots.”

A copy of this report and a fact sheet are available on Public Counsel’s website at:
http://www.publiccounsel.org/stories?id=0306

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