



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Celebrating 35 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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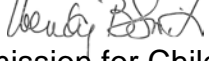
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May 13, 2019

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
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FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Chair 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT FOR DCFS PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUDGET REQUEST**

On behalf of the Commission for Children and Families (Commission), I respectfully urge the Board of Supervisors (Board) to support approval of the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 budget request for staffing of its Public Affairs Division.

The budget request, currently under review by the Chief Executive Office, includes seven (7) new positions for the Public Affairs Division, four (4) of which have been identified as priority. These priority positions are:

Children's Services Administrator III
Children's Services Administrator II
Children's Services Administrator I
Assistant Graphic Arts Coordinator

The Commission recently received a presentation on DCFS' communications plan, and was impressed by the progress made on the comprehensive and thoughtful strategy. Research has shown that effective internal and external communication by a public child welfare agency is essential not only to the functioning of the organization itself, but to that of the entire child welfare system that it leads. An efficacious communications strategy raises awareness about important issues, informs and educates diverse constituencies, supports collaboration among key stakeholders, and most importantly, improves service delivery to clients. All of these activities contribute to child safety and well-being.

Recent DCFS stakeholder engagement efforts have revealed that several critical stakeholder groups, including birth parents trying to navigate the system to reunify with their child(ren), relative caregivers who are in need of support, transition-aged youth attempting to access services, and prospective resource families seeking information, routinely face difficulty accessing relevant and reliable information and generally lack awareness about the mission and services of the Department. Communication barriers may hinder supports and services provided to children and families involved in the system; resource parent recruitment and retention; interested volunteers and mentors; and legislative policies aimed at fixing what some perceive as a “broken system.” Further, a landscape analysis conducted on behalf of the Department found that despite its size relative to other such departments, DCFS’ communications program is significantly smaller and less well-equipped than the other municipalities surveyed.

We are home to the largest public child welfare agency in the nation; an effective and robust departmental communications strategy is essential to the safety and well-being of the vulnerable children, youth, and families in Los Angeles County. The Department’s ability to launch such a strategy requires a fully staffed and resourced Public Affairs Division. For these reasons, the Commission for Children and Families strongly encourages your support of approval of DCFS’ FY 2019-20 Public Affairs Division budget request, and suggests that the work of this unit be reviewed to determine if additional items to further this important work merit consideration going forward. Please contact me at wsmith@usc.edu or Executive Director, Dr. Tamara Hunter at huntet@dcsf.lacounty.gov if you have any questions.

WS:th

c: Chief Executive Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Children’s Deputies, Board of Supervisors

Our Mission

The Commission for Children and Families advises the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County’s at-risk children and their families.