



Legislation Text

File #: 24-1031, **Version:** 1

Child Support Services (CSS) recommending the Board authorize the Director of Child Support Services to negotiate an agreement between the County of El Dorado CSS and the County of Tehama CSS, where the County of Tehama will compensate the County of El Dorado for the provision of legal attorney services to the County of Tehama CSS and return to the Board for approval of the agreement.

FUNDING: State and Federal Child Support Funding.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

Family Code Section 17304(a) mandates that the Director of the Department negotiate and enter into cooperative agreements with county and state agencies to fulfill the requirements of the state plan for administering the Title IV-D child support program. Family Code 17304(a) also states, "The director, in consultation with the impacted counties, may consolidate the local child support agencies, or any function of the agencies, in more than one county into a single local child support agency, if the director determines that the consolidation will increase the efficiency of the state Title IV-D program and each county has at least one local child support office accessible to the public."

El Dorado CSS was approached by the Tehama County Local Child Support Agency with a request to provide legal services through a contractual agreement. Under this agreement, Tehama County would compensate El Dorado County on a monthly basis for legal services. El Dorado CSS currently employs three attorneys. As caseloads continue to decrease across California, more small counties are seeking such agreements to facilitate the administration of the Title IV-D program statewide. These agreements help the state Department of Child Support Services promote cost-effectiveness and ensure continuity of legal access and full services for the families we serve. The intent of the agreement would be to ensure that Tehama County CSS can effectively manage child support cases within their jurisdiction, while allowing El Dorado County to supplement its allocation and minimize adverse impacts on each jurisdiction's cost-effectiveness measures. Similar agreements exist throughout the child support program. Given the current size of El Dorado CSS's caseload, the current three attorneys can effectively assist Tehama County CSS without compromising the level of service provided to El Dorado County's staff and clients. The impact on El Dorado CSS would be minimal to none.

In Fiscal Year 2022-23, the State reduced the allocation of State Funding to the El Dorado CSS. The County purchased the Ponderosa building with Child Support Services sharing space with the Health and Human Services Agency and Elections Office, significantly lowering lease costs. These cost-saving measures resulted in Child Support Services being able to maintain the Net County Cost of \$5,000 in the FY 2024-25 Recommended Budget. The fiscal year 2024-25 state budget proposal includes a \$10 million reduction in funding to local child support agencies, which if approved would impact El Dorado CSS. The additional funds from this agreement would allow CSS to retain current staff and allocate resources for special projects, outreach, and building improvements, without relying on General Fund monies.

The department is seeking conceptual approval of the pursuit of shared legal attorney services with the County of Tehama CSS. If approved, the department will negotiate an agreement with County of Tehama CSS and return to the Board for approval of the agreement.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board could decline to authorize the Director of CSS to negotiate the revenue generating agreement with Tehama County CSS, thereby stopping CSS from engaging in collaboration with another local child support agency as requested, and the ability to acquire additional funds to prevent any CSS from needing additional General Fund support.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

N/A

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

N/A

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

Approve as recommended.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from authorizing the CSS Director to negotiate an agreement, except for the staff time associated with the negotiations.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

N/A

CONTACT

Ron Ladage, Director of Child Support Services