

Statement on Data Sharing **California's Child Welfare Council**

The California Child Welfare Council ("Council") acknowledges the importance of legal protections concerning confidentiality for children, families, and caregivers served by state agencies, the courts, and other public and private entities. The Council further acknowledges that these entities deal with extremely personal and sensitive information in attempting to provide an array of services and resources to meet the complex needs of children, families, and caregivers.

Given this complexity and the vast number of programs and services involved, the Council further acknowledges that children, families, and caregivers are best served in a system that allows for fully informed decisions and timely access to information to meet the needs of this population.

Therefore, the Council enthusiastically affirms its continued commitment to the exchange of child welfare information between federal and state government, tribes and tribal organizations, local public entities, the courts, and authorized child-serving private entities. The Council acknowledges the vital need to share information between these entities to ensure that children and families assisted by the child welfare system are fully informed, acquire timely access to comprehensive information, and are effectively served by an integrated system of care. The Council is further committed to research and analysis of such data to achieve continuous improvement across systems—further enhancing informed public policy decision making.

The Council notes the ongoing development of new case management systems for child welfare services and the California courts, and joins the Blue Ribbon Commission in endorsing that these systems be jointly planned to allow for appropriate data exchange that maximizes the information available regarding how the courts and the child welfare system are serving children and families and meeting the federal outcome measures specified in the Child and Family Services Reviews and the state's Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System as implemented in AB 636. As additional case management systems are developed, they should also be planned to permit appropriate data exchange.

The Council envisions comprehensive information linkages within workplaces dedicated to routine and systemic sharing across jurisdictional boundaries while ensuring confidentiality and legal protections for children, families, and caregivers with respect to personal and sensitive information.

Therefore, the Council urges collaborative and cooperative efforts by federal and state government, local public agencies, the courts, tribes and tribal organizations, and authorized child-serving private entities in undertaking and implementing information sharing initiatives and transforming the way we share information with each other. The

Council also urges that these entities reinforce the central attributes of its information sharing policy—to ensure that child welfare information is shared comprehensively and routinely; to provide information responsive to the needs of each other; and to present that information in forms useful to children, families, and caregivers.

Furthermore, the Council recommends moving forward aggressively to *document*, *develop new*, and *expand existing* information gathering and sharing capabilities to permit each entity to participate more fully and uniformly in information sharing efforts and to draw upon existing relationships and agreements whenever possible to lend leadership and assistance to implementation. The Council encourages the leadership of all child- and family-serving systems to advance the ability to share data across those systems.