

July, 25, 2024

Supervisors: Bohn, Bushnell, Wilson, Arroyo, Madrone;

My name is Steve Volow. From October 1999 to March 2020, I was the 'Executive Director of CASA of Humboldt. From May 1993 to October 1999, I was the Executive Director of NorthCoast Substance Abuse Council; CROSSROADS. I am writing to you as I am deeply concerned about the following situation.

SITUATION

The Humboldt County Grand jury 2023 -2024 report conclusion is that CWS has an Office of the Ombudsperson in name only.

This is an easily solvable situation that will improve the lives of foster children / youth and the families that support them. Your attention is the only way to correct this situation.

DATA

In 2005, I was invited to participate in a working group by the Department of Social Services to create a grievance / complaint process. After two years we came up with a workable process that was rejected by the Department of Social Services. To my knowledge, new efforts to create a grievance / complaint process through an Ombudsperson did not occur until on February 13, 2018. A stipulation for entry of final judgment and permanent injunction was filed in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Humboldt by the Justice Office of the Attorney General. The stipulation partially focused on a legally agreed-upon corrective actions plan that required CWS to create a complaint system. A community working group was created to address this and the results again were a failure as stated in the grand jury report.

SOLUTION

- Create a new job description for the Humboldt County Ombudsperson as an

employee of Humboldt
County but not an employee of DHHS.

- The Ombudsperson will have access to all relevant complaint / grievance information.
- The Ombudsman will work independently, and be supervised by the Board or delegate who will maintain the independence of the Ombudsperson.
- The job description will instruct the position to respond to each complaint, collect complaint data, verify and categorize the complaints.

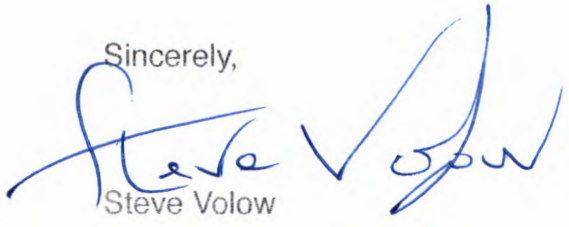
Examples of categories:

- social worker
 - child's access to services
 - foster parent issues / relative placement issues
 - Parents
 - To be determined
- The job description will mandate a data driven system to create systemic changes to CWS so that the issues are remedied.
 - The system will use complaints over time and severity to initiate the creation of a remedy.
 - Example:
 - Over a period of time (perhaps six months) there are fifty verified complaints categorized as social worker.
 - Or over a period of time, (perhaps one month) as few as one verified complaint designated as in need of immediate attention.
 - - These complaints would necessitate a remedy (such as a training improvement for social workers) created by the Ombudsperson with input from the Department of Social Services and approved by the Board or delegate to ensure independence.
 - Ombudsperson will send a copy of remedy's to the California Director of Social Services for possible consideration statewide.

The solution of a new job description may be revenue neutral depending on if the existing salary matches the skill set for the new position and what the workload will be.

History tells us that you, the Board of Supervisors only can fix this issue.

Sincerely,



Steve Volow

Cc:

Attorney General's Office. California Department of Justice.

Attn: Public Inquiry Unit.

P.O. Box 944255.

Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

Office of the Ombudsperson for Foster Care. 744 P Street – MS 9-025. Sacramento, CA 95814

The Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury 825 5th Street, Eureka, CA 95501

The Honorable Judge Kelly L. Neel Humboldt County Superior Court 825 5th Street,
Eureka, CA 95501

Steve Vidow
111 Dana Lane
Eureka, CA.
95503

Re: rpt. 23-24
#9 CWS ombudsperson

EUREKA CA 955

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JUL 29 2024

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Hum. Co. Grand Jury
825 Fifth St.
Eureka, CA. 95501

95501-110725

