

Policy Brief

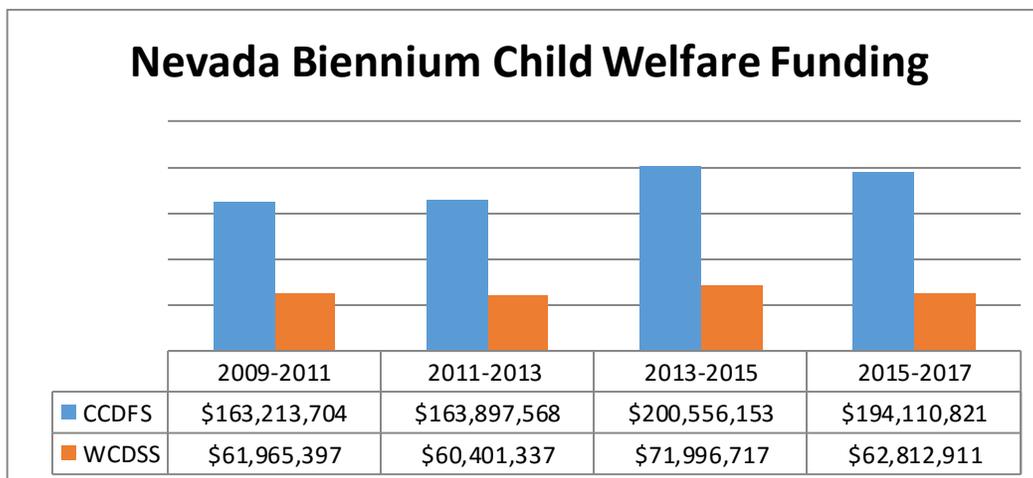
SAFETY

Child Welfare Funding 2017

In 2011, Nevada revised the child welfare funding structure for the two urban county child welfare agencies, Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS) and Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS)¹. The new structure provides the counties with an annual capped block grant which de-categorized the General Fund appropriation for the purpose of child welfare integration. The purpose of the change was to provide flexible funding to allow agencies to redirect child welfare funding to meet the needs of the children and families in their communities.² The block grant is divided into two allocations:

- (1) A base allocation for the biennium which is based on the total state General Fund appropriated for the previous biennium.
- (2) The second allocation would include the estimated cost attributable to projected caseload growth for the adoption assistance program.

Overall, grant funding is supported by federal, state, and local funds. During the 2015-2017 biennium, Nevada allocated over \$256.9 million to CCDFS and WCDSS; more than half of which – \$132.2 million – came from the Nevada General Fund.³



¹ SB 447 <http://leg.state.nv.us/Session/76th2011/Reports/history.cfm?ID=1086>

² <http://budget.nv.gov>

³ Child Welfare for CCDFS and WCDSS for the 2009-2011 and 2011-2013 Biennium only include Integration Funding. Integration Funding was provided to CCDFS and WCDSS to support child welfare services in Clark County and Washoe County that were transferred to DFS as part of the child welfare integration. This budget supports child welfare services that include substitute care, foster care, licensing services, adoption services, Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), and Intensive Family Services.

The intent is for child welfare agencies to use these funds to provide a complete system of care to children and families. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, “this approach is based upon the principles of interagency collaboration; individualized, strengths-based care practices; cultural competence; community-based services; accountability; and full participation of families and youth at all levels of the system. A centralized focus of systems of care is building the infrastructure needed to result in positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.”⁴ To provide this type of care, CCDFS and WCDSS need appropriate funding to ensure adequate investigations, case management, family supports and other related services.

In 2012, just one year after the revision of the funding structure, Nevada ranked 38th in the nation in per capita spending on child welfare at \$22.09.⁵ This overall spending has remained relatively flat since 2012 – largely due to the block grant structure. In a review of federal block grant programs, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that “a block grants’ basic structure makes them especially vulnerable to funding reductions over time... As a result, the funds are used in diffuse ways and their impact is hard to document. Often, it is difficult even to track in detail how the money is used. That, in turn, makes it easier for policymakers seeking resources for their own priorities to look to block grants for savings, and has made block grants particularly vulnerable to funding freezes for years on end.”⁶

Recommendations:

To ensure that Nevada is funding CCDFS and WCDSS at appropriate levels to provide effective and efficient child welfare services, a study should be conducted to provide an analysis of:

- The current block grant structure to the local child welfare agencies. Specifically, asking if this structure is appropriate/sufficient to support the needs of the child welfare agencies and if there are other structures that may be more appropriate.
- Potential funding sources to support child welfare. Determining what other sources of funding are available to support child welfare that NV is not currently receiving.
- All funding sources (local, state, federal, and potentially private) that support the broad child welfare system. Besides funding specifically directed toward child welfare agencies, the system itself is reliant upon many other social programs and systems including funding for medical, mental health, substance abuse, education, juvenile justice, child care and other social service/welfare programs. The study should review how these systems are aligned to ensure appropriate support services for children and families.



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⁴ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/soc.pdf>

⁵ Calculated from comparing the 2012 Casey Child Welfare Financing Survey with 2012 Census population estimates.
<http://www.childwelfarepolicy.org/maps/single?id=345> <https://www.census.gov/popest/data/state/totals/2012/>

⁶ <http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/11-19-15bud.pdf>