

**Joint Oversight Hearing:  
Senate Human Services Committee and Senate Select Committee on Mental Health**

**Misuse of Psychotropic Medication in Foster Care: Improving Child Welfare Oversight and Outcomes within the Continuum of Care**

**Hearing Agenda:** <http://shum.senate.ca.gov/sites/shum.senate.ca.gov/files/02-24-2015agenda.pdf>

**Hearing Background Paper:** [http://shum.senate.ca.gov/sites/shum.senate.ca.gov/files/02-24-2015background\\_paper.pdf](http://shum.senate.ca.gov/sites/shum.senate.ca.gov/files/02-24-2015background_paper.pdf)

**NCYL's overview of the hearing:**

Panelists conveyed a sense of urgency stating 10 years since the first legislative hearings has been long enough to take action on the issue. There was overall agreement that what is in place is not enough to ensure safe care along a normal continuum of care. While some children benefit from medications, we have to do more now to protect children from dangerous prescribing. Fortunately, there has been a wave of support for this work by federal agencies and the president as well as mature and promising practices to draw upon from other states.

Our approach to treating trauma needs an overhaul and state agencies are working on long-term solutions to this. There were a lot of comments about relationships, trusting mentors and providers, and normal healthy programs to meet the developmental and mental health needs of children and youth in foster care. It was apparent from testimony that the current service approach takes away the agency and voice of the child in their treatment. It is imperative that kids and young adults have involvement and say in any type of treatment.

As the continuum of care reform and other initiatives progress it is important that controls be put in place for approval of prescriptions and medical monitoring for all children on meds. We need review of children's treatments for those children who are experiencing polypharmacy and high dosages of meds as indicated in our initial data set. We need the data completed so we can alert counties which children will need a review, a hearing, or child and family team meeting to ensure unsafe treatment ends now and safe appropriate treatments are put in place.

While a timeframe was presented by the agencies, honoring those timeframes has proven difficult, and we have not yet seen the final documents and agreements that are now past due. We will need legislative action and champions to usher the changes forward at a pace that protects the wellbeing of children in foster care now, while continuing to collaborate with agency staff and QIP stakeholders for the long-term systems change that is desired.

NCYL is working with legislators and agency administration on four bills this legislative cycle to address the concerns and challenges identified in this hearing. Those bills are SB 238, SB 253, SB 319, and SB 484.