

Social Services Working Group

Additional Issues for Discussion

1. Legal Representation

Question: Following up on the conversation at the last meeting, would SSWG like to add this recommendation to Section V as an “additional recommendation”?

Each county social services agency has legal representation for both administrative and program responsibilities. Each county meets these needs differently. Some have staff attorneys who are part of the agency staff, some rely on attorneys in the county attorney’s office, some contract with private attorneys, and many use a combination of these three models. With respect to representation related to programs, especially child welfare and adult services, there is some concern about consistency of practice and interpretation across counties. The SSWG did not focus on this issue during Stage One but may explore it further in Stage Two in the context of improving coordination between counties. **The SSWG recommends that DHHS and the legislature also consider this issue further. It is possible that changes to state supervision of legal representation could improve services to the public, increase support for the counties, maximize federal funding through consistent and accurate court order language, and avoid liability for the state under agency theory.**

2. Accountability of Regional Offices

Question: Legislation directed SSWG to make recommendations for holding regional offices accountable for performance and responsiveness. What recommendations would the SSWG like to include on this topic?