

CWS CARES – Vimeo Video published by Riverside County

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Video Link

<https://vimeo.com/1215486276/18e3e6b1f7?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

Transcript

In Riverside County, we operate one of the busiest child welfare agencies in California. Each year, our staff respond to more than

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65,000 hotline calls and conduct more than 22,000 investigations. Every day, thousands of children depend on our workers to make timely, accurate

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decisions that directly affect their safety, stability, and wellbeing. We support the long-term vision of CWS Cares and its promise to modernize California's child welfare

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system by improving data quality, integrating assessments, and streamlining statewide workflows to strengthen families and protect children. But with the scheduled launch quickly approaching, there

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is no realistic path for the platform to be ready for child protection work by that deadline. We are asking you to intervene and delay

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implementation until CWS Cares is proven reliable, safe, fully functional, and staff are fully trained. Child safety cannot be placed at risk to meet

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a launch date. As a child protection intake specialist with more than 25 years on the child abuse hotline, I have been serving as a super user and tester for the new

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CWS Cares platform. I want a modern system, and I know firsthand that CWSCMS is slow, outdated, fragmented, and difficult to use.

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We do not want to remain on it any longer than necessary. However, today, CWSCMS is still the more predictable and functional system for urgent child protection work, and it

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remains the safer temporary bridge until CWS Cares is fully ready. CWS Cares in its current state is not the system

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we were promised. For example, the same call that takes me under 30 minutes to process in CWSCMS takes me two to three

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times as long in the CWS Care system. That delay might not seem big for just one hotline call, but in Riverside

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County, we receive more than 65,000 hotline calls a year. On a busy hotline, those extra minutes do not happen in

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isolation. They stack up across thousands of calls, slowing screening decisions, delaying supervisor review, delaying emergency response assignment, and keeping children in unsafe situations longer.

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An example of how this can happen is the following scenario. The report involved a four-year-old child with bruises on her arms and back who

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said, "Daddy hit me because I was bad." The father had a domestic violence history, and the family's address was unclear.

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That's exactly the kind of call where every minute matters. But in CWS Cares, the screener must move through unnecessary screens,

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irrelevant details, slow-loading pages, and error messages before reaching the information needed to assess safety. If the system freezes, misroutes the worker, or blocks submission,

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that call can stretch even longer. This is not just inefficient, it creates risk. Callers may hang up before the report is complete.

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Prior abuse or domestic violence history may be harder to find. The wrong person may be selected from hundreds of search results.

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A referral may sit unfinished while a child remains in danger. When a child tells someone, "Daddy hit me," the system should help us move

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faster, not slow us down. Timing for the planned launch of the CWS Cares at the beginning of the new school

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year heightens our challenges and the risks. In September and October, when school gets into full swing, our hotline experiences a significant surge with an 18% increase in

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calls, representing approximately 1,000 additional calls per month. My colleagues and I already manage overwhelming caseloads and nonstop crisis calls. A slow, unstable, complicated

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system makes our work harder and less safe for the children we are committed to serving and protecting. What workers are experiencing on the front line is consistent with what we're

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seeing from the technical side. CWS Cares is not yet ready for live child protection work. The platform still shows instability, incomplete or missing data,

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slow-loading screens, and navigation issues that can interfere with timely safety decisions. Key functions needed for investigations, emergency assessments, placement

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coordination, court reporting, and caregiver payments are not expected to be fully ready by the October launch. Some fixes may extend into next year.

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Without a clear contingency plan for the cut-over weekend, counties could face 48 hours or more of heightened operational risk at

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the exact moment children and families still need uninterrupted support. We recognize the complexity of replacing a statewide system, but

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completing development, resolving defects, converting and validating 30 years of case records, redesigning workflows, and training all at the same time is not a

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safe implementation plan for child welfare. When technology is not ready, critical information can be missed, responses can be delayed, and safety decisions can be

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compromised. These are risks we cannot accept. Our message to state lawmakers and leaders across California is clear: support modernization, but delay the October launch of

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CWS Cares until readiness is proven. Riverside County wants a faster, stronger, and more reliable system for children, families, and staff.

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We support the direction of a modern statewide platform, but moving an unfinished system into live child protection work will not

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strengthen safety. It will place unresolved problems directly into the hands of the workers making urgent decisions for children. CWS Cares should go live only when it's been thoroughly

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tested, proven reliable, fully functional, and workers are trained to use it safely. We're asking state leaders to act now. Delay implementation until the system is

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ready and child safety can be protected. The deadline must never come at the expense of a child's safety, not

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in Riverside County, not anywhere in California. Not now, not ever.

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