



AFSCME Legislative Agenda 2017 Protecting Children

Help Counties Hire, Train and Retain Child Protection Workers

AFSCME represents child protection workers in Minnesota's largest counties. We're so short-staffed that we can't respond to reports of child abuse in the time required by law. Our caseloads are so heavy that we live in constant fear that a child will slip through our safety net.

The increase in caseloads follows sweeping legislative reforms in the past two years that directed counties to more aggressively intervene to safeguard children from abuse and neglect. Spikes in abuse reports are now overwhelming screeners, investigators and caseworkers.

Though the Legislature appropriated \$52 million in 2015 to help counties hire more child protection workers, it was not enough to lower caseloads. Due to the influx of cases, workloads and turnover have gotten worse, not better.

Child protection workers report high turnover and low morale. Many workers are quitting or voluntarily taking lower-level jobs with less stress. Costs are rising as counties struggle to fill vacancies and train new workers.

The rise in reported child abuse is also filling up foster homes and shelter beds, and in extreme cases is forcing children to stay with abusive parents. We need more safe homes for children who require protective custody.

The Legislature must invest in child protection and foster care. Reasonable caseloads will keep more child protection workers on the job, leading to improvements in child wellbeing and cost savings for agencies.

Action – Ask your legislators to:

- **Provide funding to help counties hire, train and retain child protection workers (Support House File 1699 and Senate File 1704).**