

Letter: Del Norte Must Help its Children

December 11, 2024



For the last 24 years, I've served Del Norte County as a program coordinator for our Department of Child Support Services.

The work hits close to home for me. My mom, a single mother, juggled up to five part-time jobs just to make ends meet. Growing up, my family depended on TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) to stay afloat.

That's why 24 years into my career it's so painful to watch as Del Norte fails its children. Because of the County's chronic short-staffing and lack of investment, since June 2023 our Department has had to close our doors on Fridays. We should have 15 staff. Instead we have nine- and it's an endlessly revolving door. In the last two years, we've hired and lost five staff to other counties and employers. Keep in mind it takes two years to fully train and develop someone in our field.

What does this mean practically? Imagine you are a struggling Del Norte family as the Holidays roll in. You come into the office during a crisis. Unfortunately, it's Friday, so that means your ability to speak to someone in person about funds for your newborn baby's diapers formula is delayed. You're panicked and you're rightfully frustrated. As you fret over the well-being of your newborn kid, you know that the situation would be entirely avoidable if only Del Norte County could adequately staff its public services.

As your public servants, we love our jobs- and we know Del Norte's children deserve better. We work tirelessly, even as many of us are struggling and burnt out. Many of us even choose to forfeit vacation time to get our critical work done.

Del Norte must properly invest in adequate staffing and resources to care for its children.

Eva Lopez

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