

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

AB 2767 (Ahrens) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Juveniles: family finding

SUMMARY: Expand family finding and engagement obligations by extending the requirement to identify, locate, and notify relatives and kin to include any case in which a child is accepted for services, including substantiated referrals, voluntary agreements, diversion cases, and prevention cases. Authorizes counties to disclose specified information to relatives and kin for family finding purposes, and directs the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to issue guidance, the develop training and standardize tools. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a social worker upon the initiation of child welfare services when a child is accepted for services, to conduct, within 30 days, an investigation in order to identify and locate all grandparents, parents of a sibling of the child, if the parent has legal custody of the sibling, adult siblings, other adult relatives of the child, including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents, and, if it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, any extended family members.
- 2) Requires the social worker to provide to all adult relatives who are located, except when that relative's history of family or domestic violence makes notification inappropriate, within 30 days of removal of the child, written notification, and to also, whenever appropriate, provide oral notification, in person or by telephone, of all the following information:
 - a) The child has been removed from the custody of their parent or parents, guardian or guardians, or Indian custodian;
 - b) An explanation of the various options to participate in the care and placement of the child and support for the child's family, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond. Requires the notice to provide information about providing care for the child while the family receives reunification services with the goal of returning the child to the parent or guardian, how to become a resource family, and additional services and support that are available in out-of-home placements, and, if it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, the option of obtaining approval for placement through the tribe's license or approval procedure. Requires the notice to also include information regarding the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) Program, the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program for approved relative caregivers, adoption, and adoption assistance as well as other options for contact with the child, including, but not limited to, visitation. Requires CDSS, in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) and other interested stakeholders to develop the written notice;
 - c) Requires the social worker to also provide the adult relatives notified upon the initiation of child welfare services, with a relative information form to provide information to the social worker and the court regarding the needs of the child. Requires the form to include a provision whereby the relative may request the permission of the court to address the

court, if the relative so chooses. Requires the Judicial Council, in consultation with the CDSS and CWDA to develop the form;

- d) Requires the social worker to use due diligence in investigating the names and locations of the relatives, as well as any parent and alleged parent, including, but not limited to, asking the child in an age-appropriate manner about any parent, alleged parent, and relatives important to the child, consistent with the child's best interest, and obtaining information regarding the location of the child's parents, alleged parents, and adult relatives. Requires each county welfare department to do all of the following:
- i) Create and make public a procedure by which a parent and relatives of a child who has been removed from their parents or guardians may identify themselves to the county welfare department and the county welfare department shall provide parents and relatives with the required notices;
 - ii) Notify CDSS, on or before January 1, 2024, in an email or other correspondence, whether it has adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding described in All-County Letter (ACL) 18-42 and, generally, whether the practice has been implemented through training, memoranda, manuals, or comparable documents. Requires, if a county welfare department has not adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding described in ACL 18-42, the county welfare department to provide a copy to CDSS of its existing family finding policies and practices, as reflected in memoranda, handbooks, manuals, training manuals, or any other document, that are in existence prior to January 1, 2022;
 - iii) Requires each county to, beginning January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, each county to review publicly available data, including data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, comparing the statewide average rate of placing children with relatives and, in the case of Indian children, the statewide average rate of placing children according to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) placement preferences, as, with the county's average rate of placement, as follows:
 - A) By October 1, the county shall review data for a one-year period ending July 1 of the prior calendar year; and,
 - B) If the county's average rate is less than the statewide average, the county welfare director, or their designee, shall communicate with the Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support (CFE) to identify best practices that may be adopted by the county to improve its average rate of placing children with relatives. By no later than December 1 of the year of the review, the county shall begin communications with the center, and shall communicate with the center at least three more times on a quarterly basis. For purposes of this requirement, communication includes email, video conference, or phone call;
- e) Requires the due diligence required under d) above, to include family finding. For purposes of these provisions, defines "family finding" to mean conducting an investigation, including, but not limited to, through a computer-based search engine, to identify relatives and kin and to connect a child or youth, who may be disconnected from

their parents, with those relatives and kin in an effort to provide family support and possible placement;

- f) Requires “family finding activities” to include both of the following:
 - i) Conducting outreach to identified relatives and kin using multiple modalities, including, but not limited to, telephone contact, written notice, electronic communication, home visits, and appropriate use of social media and internet-based resources, subject to the information-sharing requirements; and,
 - ii) Notifying relatives and kin of all of the following:
 - A) That the child is or may be entering foster care or receiving child welfare services;
 - B) Available options to participate in the care and placement of the child;
 - C) Services and supports available to relatives and kin and if it is known or there is reason to know that the child is an Indian child, “family finding” also includes contacting the Indian child’s tribe to identify relatives and kin.; and,
 - D) Requirements to become a foster family home or approved placement.
- g) Requires the family finding activities required by these provisions to be initiated within 30 calendar days of either the child’s removal from physical custody or when a child is accepted for services, whichever occurs first;
- h) Requires family finding activities to be ongoing throughout the life of the case unless discontinued as specified; and,
- i) Defines “child is accepted for services” to mean the decision by a county child welfare or probation department, based on the needs and problems of the child or family, to admit or receive the child or family as clients of the agency. This includes, but is not limited to, the following situations:
 - i) An emergency response referral is substantiated or determined by the child welfare agency to require services;
 - ii) The child receives services through a diversion program, or is under court supervision but is still living at home, and is determined by the probation or child welfare agency to be at risk of removal from parents;
 - iii) The family enters into a voluntary family maintenance or family reunification services agreement;
 - iv) The child is placed in voluntary out-of-home care;
 - v) A prevention services case is opened;
 - vi) The child is detained or removed from parental custody; or,

- vii) The court orders the provision of services.
- 3) Specifies, notwithstanding confidentiality provisions in existing law, county child welfare and probation departments are explicitly authorized to disclose the following information to relatives and kin for the purposes of family finding activities and requires the following information to be provided to all identified relatives and kin:
- a) The fact that a child has entered or may enter foster care or is receiving child welfare services;
 - b) General information about options to participate in the care and placement of the child;
 - c) Available services, supports, and resources for relatives and kin;
 - d) Requirements and process to become a foster family home or approved placement;
 - e) Contact information for the assigned social worker or other county personnel; and,
 - f) Authorizes the following information to be provided to all identified relatives and kin after verification of relationship and determination that sharing the information services the best interests of the child:
 - i) The child's first name only, unless using the full name is necessary to identify which child is involved and doing so serves the child's best interests;
 - ii) The approximate location where services are being provided by city or region, not by specific address;
 - iii) The general nature of the safety concerns that led to agency involvement, for example, "neglect," "physical abuse," or "substance abuse," without disclosing specific details that would violate privacy or compromise safety;
 - iv) The child's general well-being and current placement setting type; and,
 - v) Opportunities to visit or have contact with the child, subject to court orders or safety assessments.
- 4) Prohibits the following information from being provided to identified relatives and kin unless authorized by court order or consent from the family of origin, with consideration of the child's wishes when age and developmentally appropriate:
- a) Specific addresses of placements, parents, or other protected locations;
 - b) Detailed case file contents, reports, or assessments;
 - c) Mental health records protected under current state law;
 - d) Substance abuse treatment records protected under federal law;

- e) Medical records protected under federal law;
 - f) Information that would compromise child's safety or the safety of others; and,
 - g) Information about parents or other parties beyond what is necessary for family finding purposes.
- 5) Requires county personnel, before making disclosures, to do all of the following:
- a) Take reasonable steps to verify the claimed relationship;
 - b) Assess whether sharing information with that individual serves the child's best interests;
 - c) Consider any safety concerns, protective orders, or prior findings of abuse or neglect involving the individual to whom the information is to be disclosed; and,
 - d) Document the verification and assessment in the case file.
- 6) Authorizes county personnel to use social media platforms, internet search engines, public record databases, and other electronic resources to identify and locate relatives and kin and requires, and when using social media for outreach, requires county personnel to do all of the following:
- a) Use private messaging only and shall not make public posts about the child or case;
 - b) Limit identifying information about the child;
 - c) Not post photographs or videos of the child;
 - d) Document all social media contacts in the case file; and,
 - e) Requires information obtained through social media research to be verified through traditional means before being relied upon for placement decisions;
- 7) Requires CDSS, within 180 days of the effective date to develop training for county personnel on the information sharing authorizations and limitations, the verification and assessment requirements, the social media and electronic resource standards, and best practices for balancing transparency with privacy protection. Requires CDSS to make this training available to all counties and requires all county child welfare and probation personnel who conduct family finding activities to complete the training within 180 days of the training becoming available or within 60 days of assignment to family finding duties, whichever is later.
- 8) Permits a county agency to discontinue active family finding activities for a child under the following circumstances:
- a) A court has made a specific determination that continued family finding no longer serves the best interests of the child or poses a threat to the child's safety based on credible evidence of a specific safety threat;

- b) For a child not under court jurisdiction, but who is accepted for services, the county agency has determined that continued family finding poses a threat to the child's safety based on credible, documented evidence. The county shall document the specific reasons for this determination in the case file;
 - i) The child is in a preadoptive placement and adoption proceedings have been commenced; or
 - ii) The child has reached 21 years of age and is no longer in foster care or receiving extended foster care services.
 - c) Requires the decision to discontinue family finding to be documented in the case file and reviewed at each case plan update;
 - d) Authorizes family finding activities to be resumed at any time if circumstances change or if previously unavailable relatives or kin become available;
- 9) Requires CDSS, within 180 days of the effective date of the act to do all of the following:
- a) Issue an ACL or all-county information notice providing comprehensive guidance on implementing the family finding authorization and information sharing standards established by these provisions;
 - b) Develop and distribute standardized consent forms for use at child and family team meetings;
 - c) Create training materials and curricula for county child welfare personnel; and,
 - d) Establish quality assurance mechanisms to monitor implementation across counties.
- 10) Requires counties, within 270 days of the effective date of the act to review and update their policies and procedures to conform to these provisions.
- 11) Provides that CDSS is authorized and directed to adopt emergency regulations to implement these provisions, including standards for verification of relationships, procedures for information sharing assessment, and guidelines for appropriate use of social media and electronic resources in family finding.
- 12) Adds county child welfare and probation department personnel to the list of those who are authorized to inspect a juvenile case file for the purposes of conducting family finding activities authorized by existing law. Specifies that access and disclosure of information shall be limited to the information specified due to the determination to discontinue active family finding activities.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires a social worker to immediately investigate the circumstances of the child and the facts surrounding the child being taken into custody and attempt to maintain the child with the child's family through the provision of services. Requires the social worker to

immediately release the child to the custody of the child's parent, guardian, Indian custodian, (parent) or relative, regardless of the parent's, immigration status, unless one or more of the following conditions exist:

- a) The child has no parent, or relative willing to provide care for the child;
 - b) Continued detention of the child is a matter of immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of the child and there are no reasonable means by which the child can be protected in their home or the home of a relative;
 - c) If it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, the child has been physically removed from the custody of a parent or parents or an Indian custodian, continued detention of the child continues to be necessary to prevent imminent physical damage or harm to the child, and there are no reasonable means by which the child can be protected if maintained in the physical custody of their parent or parents or Indian custodian;
 - d) There is substantial evidence that a parent, guardian, or Indian custodian of the child is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court, and, in the case of an Indian child, fleeing the jurisdiction will place the child at risk of imminent physical damage or harm;
 - e) The child has left a placement in which the child was placed by the juvenile court; or,
 - f) The parent or other person having lawful custody of the child voluntarily surrendered physical custody of the child and did not reclaim the child within the 14-day period, as specified. (Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] § 309(a))
- 2) Requires the social worker, if the child is removed, to conduct within 30 days, an investigation in order to identify and locate all grandparents, parents of a sibling of the child, if the parent has legal custody of the sibling, adult siblings, other adult relatives of the child, as defined, including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents, and, if it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, any extended family members, as defined. Requires the social worker to provide to all adult relatives who are located, except when that relative's history of family or domestic violence makes notification inappropriate, within 30 days of removal of the child, written notification and shall also, whenever appropriate, provide oral notification, in person or by telephone, of all the following information:
- a) The child has been removed from the custody of their parent;
 - b) An explanation of the various options to participate in the care and placement of the child and support for the child's family, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond. Requires the notice to provide information about providing care for the child while the family receives reunification services with the goal of returning the child to the parent, how to become a resource family, and additional services and support that are available in out-of-home placements, and, if it is known or there is reason to know the child is an Indian child, the option of obtaining approval for placement through the tribe's license or approval procedure. The notice shall also include information regarding the Kin-GAP Program, the CalWORKs program for approved relative caregivers, adoption,

and adoption, as well as other options for contact with the child, including, but not limited to, visitation.

- c) Requires the social worker to use due diligence in investigating the names and locations of the relatives, as well as any parent and alleged parent, including, but not limited to, asking the child in an age-appropriate manner about any parent, alleged parent, and relatives important to the child, consistent with the child's best interest, and obtaining information regarding the location of the child's parents, alleged parents, and adult relatives. Each county welfare department shall do all of the following:
- i) Create and make public a procedure by which a parent and relatives of a child who has been removed from their parents may identify themselves to the county welfare department and the county welfare department shall provide parents and relatives with the required notices;
 - ii) Notify CDSS, on or before January 1, 2024, in an email or other correspondence, whether it has adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding described in ACL 18-42 and, generally, whether the practice has been implemented through training, memoranda, manuals, or comparable documents. If a county welfare department has not adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding described in ACL 18-42, the county welfare department shall provide a copy to CDSS of its existing family finding policies and practices, as reflected in memoranda, handbooks, manuals, training manuals, or any other document, that are in existence prior to January 1, 2022; and,
 - iii) Beginning January 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, each county shall review publicly available data, including data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, comparing the statewide average rate of placing children with relatives and, in the case of Indian children, the statewide average rate of placing children according to ICWA placement preferences, with the county's average rate of placement, as follows: By October 1, the county shall review data for a one-year period ending July 1 of the prior calendar year; and, if the county's average rate is less than the statewide average, the county welfare director, or their designee, shall communicate with the CFE to identify best practices that may be adopted by the county to improve its average rate of placing children with relatives. By no later than December 1 of the year of the review, the county shall begin communications with the center, and shall communicate with the center at least three more times on a quarterly basis. For purposes of this requirement, communication includes email, video conference, or phone call.
- d) Specifies that the due diligence required shall include family finding. For purposes of this section, "family finding" means conducting an investigation, including, but not limited to, through a computer-based search engine, to identify relatives and kin and to connect a child or youth, who may be disconnected from their parents, with those relatives and kin in an effort to provide family support and possible placement. If it is known or there is reason to know that the child is an Indian child, "family finding" also includes contacting the Indian child's tribe to identify relatives and kin. (WIC 309(e))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, this bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS: This analysis only discusses policy issues germane to the Assembly Committee on Human Services.

Background: *Child Welfare Services.* California law establishes a comprehensive system of child welfare services designed to protect children from abuse and neglect, strengthen and support families, and promote the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in the state's care. The system encompasses a continuum of activities from prevention and early intervention through family maintenance, family reunification, and permanent placement with the overarching goals of keeping children safely at home when possible, reunifying families when removal has occurred, and achieving timely permanency for children who cannot safely return home.

County child welfare agencies, and in the juvenile justice context county probation departments, are the primary entities responsible for conducting investigations, delivering services, and managing cases. Counties operate under state oversight by CDSS, which issues policy guidance through ACLs. Because of this structure, county practice varies considerably in how specific activities including family finding are carried out.

Case Plans. When a child becomes involved in the child welfare system, whether through a family maintenance arrangement allowing the child to remain at home under agency supervision or through an out-of-home placement following removal, the county is required to develop a written, individualized case plan for that child. The case plan identifies the child's needs, the services to be provided, the goals of agency involvement, and the roles and responsibilities of all parties, including parents, caregivers, and the child where age-appropriate.

Case plans must be developed with meaningful input from the family and updated at regular intervals. They serve as the primary planning and accountability tool throughout the child's involvement with the system and are subject to review by the juvenile court. For children in foster care, the case plan must address placement, educational stability, health and mental health needs, and the permanency goal toward which the county is working. Documentation of family finding efforts including identification of relatives and the extent to which kin were engaged, is expected to be reflected in the case plan.

Family Finding is a structured practice model designed to identify, locate, and engage relatives and other significant adults connected to a child involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. The goal is to build or rebuild a network of committed adults around the child who can provide placement, support, and lifelong connections regardless of whether those individuals ultimately serve as caregivers. Family finding draws on a range of tools, including computer-based search engines, public records, and direct inquiry, to locate family members who may have lost contact with the child.

Research consistently shows that children placed with relatives experience better outcomes than those placed with non-relatives, including greater placement stability, higher rates of permanency, and lower rates of re-entry into foster care. Counties with higher kinship placement rates tend to rely less on emergency shelter and congregate care.

Over the past fifteen years, CDSS has issued a series of ACLs and all county information notices building out the legal and operational framework for family finding and engagement in child welfare cases. This guidance spans relative notification requirements enacted through state

and federal law, recommended practices for building durable connections for children in care, and, most recently, the establishment of a dedicated state infrastructure the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support (EFFES) Program and the CFE to support county implementation.

ACL 18-42 is the most comprehensive CDSS guidance document on family finding and engagement practice to date. Issued in the context of Continuum of Care Reform, the ACL framed family finding and engagement as an essential component of California's effort to move children out of congregate care and into home-based settings. It reiterated all prior statutory requirements and then went further to outline a suite of suggested practices counties may find useful. The ACL also noted that family finding and engagement practice should begin at the front end of a case including prior to removal when circumstances permit and indicated that additional guidance on upfront family finding and engagement would follow in a subsequent ACL.

ACL 23-12 was issued in February 2023 and discussed both the EFFES Program and the CFE, funded through the Budget Act of 2022, AB 207 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 573, Statutes of 2022, which allocated \$150 million General Fund monies in one-time funding available through June 30, 2027, plus \$750,000 in ongoing funding for the Center. The EFFES program is voluntary and requires counties and tribes to opt in. Allowable uses of EFFES funds include staff training on family finding and engagement models, hiring and tools for identification and location of relatives and kin, outreach and engagement of child and family team members, plan development and case management to address barriers, and implementation of CDSS-approved model programs or promising practices.

Existing law requires a social worker, upon a child's removal, to conduct an investigation within 30 days to identify and locate adult relatives of the child including grandparents, parents of a sibling with legal custody of that sibling, adult siblings, and other adult relatives as well as extended family members if the child is, or may be, an Indian child.

The social worker is required to provide written and oral notification where appropriate to all located adult relatives, unless a relative's history of family or domestic violence makes notification inappropriate. That notification must inform relatives that the child has been removed, explain options to participate in the child's care and placement, describe how to become a resource family, and provide information about programs including Kin-GAP, CalWORKs for approved relative caregivers, and adoption assistance.

Under existing law, family finding requirements attach upon a child's removal. Current statute does not explicitly authorize county agencies to begin formal family finding activities at the earlier stage when a family first comes into contact with the child welfare or probation system, before a removal or petition occurs. In practice, county approaches vary: some counties begin engaging kin immediately upon first contact with a family at risk, while others delay family finding until a petition is filed or a court order is issued. This inconsistency has been identified as a barrier by child welfare and probation staff and the sponsors of this bill.

This bill would expand the trigger for family finding investigations to include not only a child's removal, but also the point at which a child is accepted for services by a county child welfare or probation department, and would require the investigation to be initiated within 30 calendar days of whichever event occurs first.

This bill would expand the definition of family finding activities to explicitly include conducting outreach to identified relatives and kin using multiple modalities such as telephone, written notice, electronic communication, home visits, and appropriate use of social media and internet-based resources and notifying relatives and kin of the child's entry into child welfare services with options to participate in the child's care and placement, available services and supports, and requirements to become a foster family home or approved placement.

This bill would authorize, for families receiving child welfare services, county child welfare and probation departments, to disclose specified information to relatives and kin for family finding purposes to all identified relatives and kin regarding the family's involvement with child welfare services, options for participation, available supports and resources, placement requirements, and social worker contact information. *This bill* would also permit disclosure, after verification of the relationship and a best-interest determination, of the child's first name, approximate service location by city or region, the general nature of safety concerns without specific details, the child's general well-being and current placement setting type, and opportunities for contact subject to court orders or safety assessments.

A 2011 study by Child Trends, *Family Finding: Does Implementation Differ When Serving Different Child Welfare Populations?*¹ examined the implementation of family finding across child welfare populations and found that the model can be meaningfully adapted to serve both youth in foster care and those receiving pre-placement services, though specific practices and goals differ. The study found that upstream engagement was particularly effective in building long-term support networks for children.

Confidentiality of Child Welfare Records. Existing law provides broad confidentiality protections for records relating to children involved in the juvenile court system. Access to juvenile case files is limited to an enumerated list of individuals and entities, including court personnel, attorneys for the parties, probation officers, law enforcement, CDSS, and members of children's multidisciplinary teams, among others specifically identified in statute.

Records and applications made or kept by public officers or agencies in connection with the administration of public social services including child welfare services, are generally confidential and may not be examined for purposes not directly connected to the administration of the relevant program. Disclosure of information identifying applicants or recipients to legislative bodies is prohibited except as specified. Knowingly securing or possessing a list of persons receiving public social services in violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor.

Existing law provides a limited exception to the existing confidentiality provisions, permitting information sharing between employees of a county's adult protective services agency and a county's child welfare agency for purposes of multidisciplinary teamwork in the prevention, intervention, management, or treatment of child abuse or neglect, or abuse or neglect of an elder or dependent adult.

Author's Statement: According to the Author, "As someone who has personally faced homelessness, hunger, and needed to rely on state support growing up, I am living proof of the

¹ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/family-finding-does-implementation-differ-when-serving-different-child-welfare-populations>

importance of these supports to help some of California's most vulnerable kids create a successful future and positively contribute to society."

"As someone who has personally gone through the child welfare system, the priority of the system must remain committed to the welfare of our most vulnerable children. It is common sense that family finding should begin as soon as possible when children are removed from their parents, and the scientific evidence backs it up. [This bill] establishes statewide guidelines so that no matter the location a child is from, they receive the most rapid family finding services possible."

Equity Implications: Black and Native American youth are significantly overrepresented in California's foster care population relative to their share of the general population. According to data reported by the Legislative Analyst's Office, Black and Native youth in foster care are represented at approximately four times their proportion in the California population overall. Early and effective family finding and kin engagement have been identified as one mechanism for reducing unnecessary out-of-home placements, with potential equity implications for populations most heavily affected by system involvement.

Policy Considerations: The provisions of *this bill* extend family finding obligations, including the investigation and notification requirements currently triggered by removal of a child from their home, to all cases in which a child is "accepted for services." This would be a newly defined category that encompasses substantiated referrals, voluntary agreements, diversion cases, and prevention cases where no removal has occurred. While the intent to surface kin connections early and build support networks before a family reaches crisis is well-founded, *the bill* does not meaningfully distinguish between family finding activities conducted in a voluntary services context and those conducted once a child has been removed from parental custody.

The purposes served by family finding during the provision of child welfare services are fundamentally preventive and aimed at identifying informal supports who can stabilize a household, reduce isolation, or help a parent access services. Post-removal family finding goals are in service in finding a suitable placement, among other goals. When the state has assumed custody of a child, the 30-day notification requirements apply, and relatives are being evaluated for placement suitability. Conflating the two risks chilling the informal engagement that makes family finding child welfare services effective.

Should this bill move forward, the Author may wish to consider whether the notification, information-sharing, and documentation requirements established by this bill should be expressly distinct from family finding conducted during the provision of child welfare services.

Proposed Committee Amendments:

The Committee proposes amendments to address policy considerations stated above to do the following:

WIC §16501

- Expand the definition of child welfare services to specify the scope of services that can be provided based on the needs and problems of the child or family

- Require the development of a case plan to improve conditions in the home to prevent out-of-home placement upon the provision of child welfare services
- Define “family finding and engagement” to mean a broad range of efforts for the limited purposes of supporting the goals identified in the case plan.

WIC § 309

- Strike additions related to post-removal activities
- Clarify that the family finding activities in this subdivision only apply upon the removal of a child from their home and that counties are not prohibited from conducting family finding and engagement activities authorized under WIC § 16501

WIC § 827

- Strike additions related to juvenile case file access

WIC § 10850

- Clarify that information from public social services records regarding child for whom child welfare services are provided may be disclosed to relatives and kin without consent to the extent necessary to conduct the limited family finding and engagement activities authorized pursuant to §16501 and when it serves the purpose of identifying support care or resources for the child.

Double referral: This bill was previously heard by the Assembly Committee on Judiciary on April 21, 2026, and was approved on a 12-0 vote.

Arguments in Support: The Youth Law Center, the sponsor of this bill writes, “This bill ensures that family finding efforts begin as early as possible and continue throughout a young person’s involvement in the system. It also clarifies that these efforts apply to both child welfare and probation youth who are at risk of out-of-home placement, helping to close gaps that currently leave some young people without meaningful connection to family.

“Importantly, [this bill] aligns with current practice and federal expectations by emphasizing continuity rather than creating duplicative or burdensome new timelines. By reinforcing ongoing engagement with relatives and supportive adults, the bill supports better placement outcomes, reduces reliance on congregate care, and increases the likelihood of stable, permanent connections.”

Arguments in Opposition: None on file.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 562 (Solache), Chapter 436, Statutes of 2025, added to the requirements for county welfare departments when investigating the names and locations of relatives of a child who has been removed from their home due to abuse or neglect, to include an annual review of data comparing the statewide average rate of placing children with relatives, and mandatory communication with the CFE if the county's average is less than the statewide average

AB 2929 (Juan Carrillo), Chapter 845, Statutes of 2024, required courts and social workers to consider, in status review hearings and supplemental reports, respectively, whether appropriate efforts have been made to locate family members who could support or accept placement of a foster child or non-minor dependent.

AB 448 (Juan Carrillo) of 2023, would have required a social worker and/or probation officer to immediately conduct, but no later than 30 days after the child has been removed, an investigation in order to identify and locate all relatives of the child, and to document their efforts to the court, and in the case of an Indian child, the active efforts and results of those efforts to locate relatives or kin. Would have added requirements for social workers and probation officers to document their efforts and results to locate any relatives or kin who could provide family support or possible placement of the child or nonminor dependent. *AB 448 was vetoed by Governor Newsom due to costs.*

AB 2579 (Bennett) of 2022, would have required county placing agencies to implement model practices for intensive family finding and support for foster children, children detained but not adjudicated, and candidates for foster care. Would have required counties to submit a plan to CDSS as a condition of receiving funding for these purposes. *AB 2579 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.*

SB 384 (Cortese), Chapter 811, Statutes of 2022, required each county to notify CDSS whether it has adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding, as described, and how the practice has been implemented. Required a county who has not adopted one of the suggested practices to provide a copy of its existing family finding policies and practices to CDSS. Included family finding activities within the due diligence required of a social worker and probation officer when investigating the names and locations of relatives.

SB 1091 (Hurtado) of 2022, would have required CDSS to use appropriated funds toward family finding and engagement techniques to find permanent families and relationships for foster children, focusing on those foster children under 17 years of age who have been in out-of-home foster care for 24 months or longer, who are not living with a relative, for whom reunification is no longer the case plan, and who have not been placed with a family who is in the process of adopting them or assuming guardianship over them. *SB 1091 was set for hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee but the hearing was canceled at the request of the Author.*

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Youth Law Center (Sponsor)
Alliance for Children's Rights
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Indivisible CA StateStrong

Opposition

None on file.

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