
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 562
Author: Solache (D) and Bryan (D)
Amended: 8/29/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 6/16/25
AYES: Arreguín, Ochoa Bogh, Becker, Limón, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/12/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Foster care: placement: family finding

SOURCE: California Youth Connection, Children's Advocacy Institute

DIGEST: This bill creates the Justice through Placing Foster Children with Families Act, which requires counties to review statewide average rates of placing children with relatives and take various actions if their county's numbers are below the statewide average.

ANALYSIS:

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes a state and local system of child welfare services, including foster care, for children who have been adjudged by the court to be at risk of abuse and neglect or have been abused or neglected, as specified. (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section 202)
- 2) States that the purpose of foster care law is to provide maximum safety and protection for children who are currently being physically, sexually, emotionally abused, neglected, or exploited, and to ensure the safety, protection, and physical and emotional well-being of children who are at risk of harm. (WIC section 300.2)
- 3) States the intent of the Legislature to preserve and strengthen a child's family ties whenever possible, and to reunify a foster youth with their biological family

whenever possible, or to provide a permanent placement alternative, such as adoption or guardianship. (WIC section 16000)

- 4) Requires, if a child is removed, the social worker 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. (WIC section 309(e)(1))
- 5) Requires a social worker to use due diligence in investigating the names and locations of the relatives, as well as any parent and alleged parents, and requires each county welfare department to do both of the following:
 - a. 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 requires the county welfare department to provide parents and relatives with specified notices; and,
 - b. Notify California Department of Social Services (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 and, generally, whether the practice has been implemented. Requires, if a county welfare department has not adopted one of the suggested practices for family finding, 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. (WIC section 309(e)(3))
- 6) 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. If it is known or there is reason to know that the child is an Indian child, as defined, “family finding” also includes contacting the Indian child’s tribe to identify relatives and kin. (WIC section 309(e)(3)(B))
- 7) Requires preferential consideration be given to a request by a relative to have the child placed with the relative if the child has been removed from the physical custody of the child’s parent(s). (WIC section 361.3(a))

- 8) Requires, when placing a child in the home of a relative, an extended family member, or nonrelative extended family member (NREFM) on a temporary basis, the court to consider the recommendations of the social worker based on the assessment required by current law, including the results of a criminal records check and prior child abuse allegations, if any, before ordering that the child be placed with a relative or NREFM. (WIC section 319(h)(3))

This Bill:

- 1) Creates the Justice through Placing Foster Children with Families Act and makes legislative findings and declarations about the racial disparities in children in foster care and the benefits of kinship care.
- 2) Provides, 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 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.
 - 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 (Center for Excellence) to identify best practices that may be adopted by the county to improve its average rate of placing children with relatives.
 - c. 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 for Excellence at least three more times on a quarterly basis. For purposes of this requirement, communication includes email, video conference, or phone call.

Comments

According to the author. "Children in the foster system deserve our best efforts to ensure safety, placement stability, and to keep families together when possible. In light of our unique moral responsibility to our foster children, one of the best things we can do for them is to connect and place them with family that is capable of providing a safe and supportive environment. This legislation will help improve outcomes and ease the foster youth placement transition for children and families."

Child Welfare Services (CWS) The CWS system is an essential component of the state's safety net. Social workers in each county who receive reports of abuse or neglect, investigate and resolve those reports. When a case is substantiated, a family is either provided with services to ensure a child's well-being and avoid court involvement, or a child is removed and placed into foster care. In 2024, the state's child welfare agencies received 417,513 reports of abuse or neglect. Of these, 46,457 reports contained allegations that were substantiated and 17,390 children were removed from their homes and placed into foster care via the CWS system.

Children Have Better Outcomes When Placed With Family. Kinship care refers to care of a child by relatives. Research has shown that children placed with their own relatives and extended family members have greater placement stability, fewer emotional and behavioral problems, and more connections to their biological families and social-cultural communities. According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway¹, a government organization providing information and tools for improving child welfare practice, kinship care is the preferred option in most U.S. child welfare systems because it is the least restrictive, most family like placement for children. They further note that children in kinship care environments have fewer disruptions and overall better permanency outcomes than children in non-familial placements.

The Juvenile Law Center writes, "Kinship care must be sought more frequently and be a top priority for Black and Native families and other communities in the child welfare system that have been historically disenfranchised, ripped apart, and devalued throughout American history. The child welfare system must prioritize the kinship care model to ensure the care of children, promote equity among families, sustain family/familial relationships, and to protect, and preserve the culture and history of these communities."²

The Center for Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support at UC Davis (Center for Excellence). The Budget Act of 2022 allocated \$150 million from the General Fund in one-time funding, available for expenditure through June 30, 2027, for the purposes of participation in the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support Program and to support implementation through the establishment of the Center for Excellence. CDSS has contracted with University of California, Davis to launch the Center for Excellence to support efforts to keep children and youth connected to their biological and extended families and will

¹ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/kinship-care/?top=123>

² <https://jlc.org/news/family-preservation-matters-why-kinship-care-black-families-native-american-families-and-other>

provide multi-tiered, culturally appropriate training and technical assistance such as conducting evidence-based, organization-specific assessments of implementation activities, and strengthening trauma informed practices and programs related to family finding and engagement. The Center for Excellence will provide training and technical assistance for counties and tribes that have opted to participate in the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support program. Specialized trainings and support will be available to county welfare agencies, probation departments, participating tribes, and foster care providers to enhance their practices, policies, and efforts for family finding, support, and engagement. The Center for Excellence will also provide training on how to engage children and young people in the family finding process. All trainings will utilize family finding and engagement, and permanency subject matter experts.

Family Placement Rates Vary By County. California's 58 counties are each unique, with small and large populations, small and large geographic districts, and rural and urban settings. Across these 58 counties, rates of family placement vary. The California Child Welfare Indicators Project³ provides a comprehensive source of child welfare administrative data. According to the data available on their website, county placement rates, as determined by the percentage of foster children currently placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members at the point in time of January 1, 2025, vary from 10.9% in Mendocino County to 64.7% in Inyo County. The state average is 35.5%, with 16 counties having a family placement rate at or above the state average. This bill would require those counties below the state average to communicate with the Center for Excellence to identify best practices that may be adopted by the county to improve its average rate of placing children with relatives.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 3217 (Bryan, 2024) was substantially similar to this bill and was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 448 (Juan Carrillo, 2023) was similar to this bill, but had an additional requirement for the social worker to conduct immediately, 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. AB 448 was vetoed.

³ <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/t/ab636/1>

SB 384 (Cortese, Chapter 811, Statutes of 2022) required each county welfare and probation department 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. Includes “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, 2022) would have required that funds, appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose, be available to fund new or expanded family finding and engagement techniques and would have required CDSS to fund contracts with community-based organizations or to provide local assistance allocations to counties or Indian tribes, or both. SB 1091 would have further required CDSS to convene a leadership team to develop recommendations relating to family finding and engagement as provided. SB 1091 was set to be heard by the Assembly Appropriations Committee but the hearing was cancelled by the author.

AB 2579 (Bennet, 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. The bill would have further required counties to submit a plan to CDSS as a condition of receiving funding for these purposes. AB 2579 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis:

Unknown General Fund cost pressures to fund counties for administration. Proposition 30 of 2012 provides that any legislation enacted after September 30, 2012 that has an overall effect of increasing the costs already borne by a local agency for realigned services applies to local agencies only to the extent that the State provides annual funding for the cost increase. Local agencies are not be obligated to provide programs or levels of service required by legislation above the level for which funding has been provided.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

California Youth Connection (co-sponsor)
Children’s Advocacy Institute (co-sponsor)

Alliance for Children's Rights
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Family Resource Association
Child Abuse Prevention Center
Children Now
City of Long Beach
Justice2jobs Coalition
Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Pale Blue
Western Center on Law & Poverty

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/12/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Stefani

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