

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

CSA1 Bill Id:AB 896 Author:(Elhawary)

As Amended Ver:August 29, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires each county to adopt a placement transition planning policy and requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to issue guidance to county child welfare agencies to describe best practices and strategies for successful placement transition planning.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Specify that these provisions apply to Indian children and their tribes.
- 2) Make technical and clarifying changes.

COMMENTS

Child Welfare Services. California's child welfare services programs are administered by the 58 individual counties with each county organizing and operating its own program of child protection based on local needs while adhering to state and federal regulations. When a child welfare case is open, counties are the primary governmental entity interacting with children and families when addressing issues of child abuse and neglect and are responsible, either directly or through providers, for obtaining or providing the interventions and relevant services to protect children and assist families with issues related to child abuse and neglect.

CDSS secures federal funding to support child welfare services programs, provides statewide best practices training for social workers, conducts program regulatory oversight and administration, and is responsible for the development of policy, while also providing direct services such as adoption placements.

This bill would require CDSS to provide funding to counties to develop their placement transition planning policies, to be submitted to CDSS one year after issuing guidance to county child welfare agencies to describe best practices and strategies for successful placement transition planning.

As of January 1, 2025, there were 38,894 youth from birth up to 21 years of age in foster care, representing the lowest number of foster youth in the last decade: there were 57,382 foster youth in 2015.

Placement Changes for Foster Youth. While the number of foster youth has decreased steadily since 2022, according to data from the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, there were nearly 10,000 placement moves for children in foster care for at least a week in the year for which data is available (Jan 2024-Dec 2024), and some children were moved multiple times. These placement changes include positive moves like children returning home or being adopted, as well as moves to remedy problematic situations.

Proponents of this bill report that there is no statewide policy ensuring foster children have a formal role in these decisions, nor a consultation with their most recent caregiver required prior to a placement change. Additionally, the proponents note that a lack of policy on transitions to

reunification fails to account for the unique needs of each child. As such, *this bill* requires each county to adopt a placement transition planning policy for supporting foster children who are transitioning between placement settings and who are transitioning from foster care to reunification. The policy is designed to ensure that foster children are provided the opportunity to provide input on their placement transition, as developmentally and age-appropriate, and ensure that the child's current or most recent caregiver also has input into the transition needs of the child.

Foster children frequently experience multiple home placement changes, disrupting their daily lives and potentially causing trauma for both the children and their caregivers. These transitions can lead to the loss of important relationships with family and friends. Currently, foster children have no input in the transition process, and there are no policies ensuring proper transportation, possession retention, or guidelines for managing the timing and communication between care providers. *This bill* would add the right for foster youth to be involved in their placement transition planning to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and would require that the foster youth's current or most recent caregiver also has input into their transition needs.

In 2008, a literature review compiled by the University of California, Davis's Center for Human Services stated that, "Frequent placement moves not only compounds the issue of being separated from one's parents, but can also result in separation from siblings, relocating to a new geographical area, and experiencing a sense of not belonging; all of which can lead to distress and have a profound negative emotional impact...Children who are removed from their homes and then who experience placement disruption can lead to them experiencing profound distress and a sense of loss and not belonging, all of which can lead to distrust and a fear of forming secure healthy relationships."

Research on child development confirms that these disruptions can have a long-term impact on children. Poorly planned or improperly timed transitions can adversely impact a child's healthy development as well as the child's continuing capacity to trust, attach to others, and build relationships in the future. Poorly planned placement changes can also have a negative impact on children's mental health, behavior, and even intellectual development. *This bill* attempts to mitigate some of these concerns by requiring each county to adopt a policy for supporting foster children who are transitioning between placement settings or to reunification, thereby diminishing some of the negative effects of a placement change.

According to the Author

"[This bill] ensures foster children have a voice in their placement transitions by requiring counties to establish clear policies that prioritize stability and individual needs. Currently, no statewide guidelines exist to manage these transitions, leading to frequent disruptions, emotional distress, and loss of important relationships. This bill mandates that counties develop transition policies with input from foster children (or their representatives) and include current caregivers in the decision-making process. By standardizing and personalizing transitions, [this bill] aims to reduce trauma, improve stability, and create a more supportive foster care system"

Arguments in Support

The County of San Diego states, "By formally supporting [this bill], the County is uplifting the importance of trauma-informed, youth-centric transition planning. The passage of [this bill] would also ensure the County's policy aligns with state-recognized best practices, further

promoting the long-term well-being of children and families serviced by the County of San Diego's foster care system.

Arguments in Opposition

No opposition on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 29, 2025:

- 1) Unknown one-time General Fund costs, likely low hundreds of thousands, for the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for state administration.
- 2) Unknown General Fund costs to fund counties to adopt policies required under the bill. 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.

VOTES:

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 7-0-0

YES: Lee, Castillo, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Celeste Rodriguez, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Sanchez, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0-10

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

UPDATED

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