



CHILD WELFARE SERVICES – HOUSING AND RELATED SUPPORTS IN THE EXTENDED FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Nearly a decade ago, California was among the first states to opt into a federal opportunity to create an Extended Foster Care (EFC) program, serving foster youth ages 18 through 21. The EFC Program was created by AB 12 (Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010) and represented a historic expansion of services to foster youth, who often faced enormous challenges as they emancipated from the foster care system at age 18. Emancipated foster youth, prior to the creation of EFC and the help it provides, often had poor outcomes including poverty, homelessness and incarceration.

Research on the EFC Program has found numerous benefits for participating young adults, including improvements in education, employment, housing, social supports, reductions in pregnancy and parenting, as well as less criminal justice system involvement.

This research, part of the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH), found that each additional year in EFC increased the probability of foster youth enrolling in college by 10-11% and increased the number of quarters that foster youth were employed between their 18th and 21st birthdays.

The CalYOUTH study also found that most foster youth under age 18 chose to take advantage and remain in foster care, with three-quarters entering the EFC Program after age 18, and two-thirds remaining in care up to age 21. This demonstrates that the services and supports of the EFC Program are valued and needed by these young adults as they exit the foster care system.

THE PROBLEM

Nine years after the passage of AB 12, the vision of the EFC Program is yet to be fully realized. The CalYOUTH Study also acknowledged that many young adults still fare poorly when compared to their same-

age peers across many domains, including economic self-sufficiency, physical and mental health, and educational attainment. The study noted that more work can and should be done to support transition-aged youth.

THE SOLUTION

Nearly ten years into implementation of the EFC Program, it is clear that we must invest in increased child welfare worker capacity and housing availability and supports to ensure that all of young people that want to participate in the EFC program can take full advantage of the program in order to improve outcomes and set them on a path to a positive transition out of foster care. Specifically, the following are necessary:

- 1) Caseload Reduction: A \$32.9 million GF investment in child welfare worker capacity will allow social workers to attend to the individual and complex needs of the high number of young adults participating in the EFC Program. These young adults have often been in foster care for many years and continue to struggle on their own path to healing as adults. Research shows that lower caseloads allow social workers to give additional time and attention to supporting youth in care, and lead to improved outcomes for foster youth.
- 2) Housing Navigators and Financial Assistance: A total of \$12.2 million GF (including \$10.2 million for Housing Navigators and \$2 million for limited-term financial assistance) will link transition-aged foster youth and non-minor dependents in the EFC Program to housing including Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs), Transitional Housing, and placements with resource families, as determined appropriate and based on an assessment of the youth. These housing navigators will work with case managers to identify available housing units, match youth

with other foster youth, assist young adults with lease agreements, help resolve disputes with landlords, and provide other services as needed. In addition, time-limited housing assistance will be available for expenses such as security deposits and some basic furnishings.

- 3) Increasing Foster Care Capacity: An additional \$4.9 million GF will enable foster youth who are living in a foster home to maintain placement with the resource family, by creating a path for the resource family to transition seamlessly to a “host family,” a type of transitional housing provider authorized under the Transitional Housing Provider (THP) Plus-FC Program.

BUDGET REQUEST

This Budget Request is for a \$50 million General Fund (GF) investment to support transition-aged foster youth and young adults participating in the Extended Foster Care Program. The request includes the following components:

- \$32.9 million GF to enable county caseworkers to better support the high number of youth who opt into the EFC program.
- \$10.2 million GF for Housing Navigators to help young adults in EFC find and keep housing.
- \$2 million GF for housing-related financial assistance such as security deposits and utility payments.
- \$4.9 million GF to support foster homes transitioning to become host families for youth in EFC.

SUPPORT

CO-SPONSORS:

Alliance for Children’s rights

Children NOW

County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)

Service Employees International Union – California (SEIU-CA)

National Association of Social Workers, California
