



FAMILY URGENT RESPONSE SYSTEM (FURS)

ISSUE

Children and youth in the foster care system have been removed from their homes and placed in new environments with caregivers that are often unfamiliar to them. Adapting to a new home can be challenging, especially for youth who are struggling to process their entry into foster care and can make bonding difficult.

As a result of their maltreatment, trauma, and loss, both children and youth in foster care and their caregivers may not be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will allow them to adapt to their new living situation. Children, youth and caregivers may quickly feel alone, confused and overwhelmed. This threatens the family unit and presents a barrier to providing loving care for traumatized youth. A placement disruption would have profound, negative consequences for the child or youth, resulting in feelings of abandonment and deepening the trauma. Moreover, in critical moments, caregivers may contact law enforcement because they lack other, more appropriate options for immediate help, resulting in the inappropriate criminalization of traumatized youth.

EXISTING LAW

AB 403 (Stone), Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015, enacted Continuum of Care Reform, which effectively ends the placement of foster youth in group homes. This reform effort builds on years of policy changes made to improve outcomes for youth in foster care and expectations for providing more services to children and families in their homes.

FAMILY URGENT RESPONSE SYSTEM SUMMARY

The Family Urgent Response System would provide current and former foster youth and their caregivers with immediate supports, by: (1) establishing a statewide hotline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for caregivers and youth who are experiencing emotional, behavior or other difficulties and need immediate help. The hotline will be staffed with

operators who are trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation and can provide immediate assistance to preserve the family unit and determine whether mobile, in-home support is needed; and (2) requiring counties to establish mobile response teams to provide face-to-face, in-home response on a 24/7 basis to help stabilize the living situation, assess the caregiver's and child's needs, and develop a plan of action. Counties will then link the family with ongoing services through the existing local network of care.

BUDGET REQUEST

The purpose of this Response System is to provide foster youth and their caregivers with the immediate trauma-informed support they need when issues arise, in order to preserve the family unit and link youth and families to longer-term, community-based supports and services needed to support them and foster a healing environment.

This Response System supports the goals of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) to provide timely, in-home supports and services to help families thrive.

- The Family Urgent Response System is a \$15 million State General Fund (SGF) budget proposal in 2019-20.
- \$30 million SGF ongoing, to support foster youth and their caregivers and strengthen their relationships.

SUPPORT

CO-SPONSORS:

Children NOW

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County Welfare Directors Association of California

Service Employees International Union – California

National Association of Social Workers, California

Chapter