

Family Urgent Response System Implementation



Background

At the time children and youth enter foster care, they have already experienced maltreatment, loss, and disrupted relationships. In order to heal from this trauma, they need stable placements where they can develop supportive, consistent, and loving relationships with at least one adult committed to them unconditionally. Efforts by caregivers and youth to build strong relationships can quickly derail when they face barriers accessing crucial community-based, trauma-informed supports during critical moments. Without immediate supports and services, even minor miscommunications and frustrations can intensify and have detrimental results, leaving youth feeling further traumatized and possibly facing another placement change, hospitalization, or institutionalization. Even worse, in many circumstances, caregivers call the police because they lack other, more appropriate options for immediate help, leading to the inappropriate criminalization of traumatized children.

California's foster children are at even greater risk of placement instability during the current pandemic, as caregivers struggle to meet their needs while balancing increasing responsibilities and stressors and coping with severely limited access to critical supports and services. The added isolation, uncertainty, and anxiety brought on by the pandemic, as well as disruptions to normal routines and visitation with family, are devastating to children and youth in foster care.

Enacted in 2019, the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is designed to provide children and youth currently or formerly in foster care and their caregivers with the immediate trauma-informed support they need when issues arise through a statewide hotline and county mobile response systems. This coordinated state and community-based solution is needed now more than ever to help preserve the family unit, link youth and families to longer-term supports and services, promote healing, and prevent calls to law enforcement and criminalization of traumatized youth.

Next Steps

In the coming year, Children Now will collaborate with the state, counties, and other stakeholders to ensure:

1. FURS is maintained in the state budget and prioritized as it is a critical resource to address the needs of current and former foster youth and their caregivers during the pandemic and in its aftermath; and
2. The statewide hotline and county mobile response systems launch in early 2021 and that FURS is effectively implemented to provide 24/7 trauma-informed support to preserve the family unit, prevent law enforcement contacts, promote healing, and stabilize placements.

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