



FOSTER YOUTH ENRICHMENT STIPEND PILOT PROGRAM

New County Based Policy Proposal

I. Background

Currently, California law requires that youth in foster care have regular opportunities to participate in extracurricular and enrichment activities,¹ but there is no accountability for this obligation and no annual funding investment attached, and therefore no guarantees to ensure that youth and their caregivers are able to actually participate in these activities. For youth in the juvenile justice system, the State has no obligation to provide opportunities for extracurriculars, despite the fact that this critical intervention is similarly necessary and beneficial.

State law has eliminated some barriers to participation by allowing caregivers to consent to participation. However, the law did *not* address the significant barrier of cost. While all families are encouraged to leverage free and low cost activities, the majority of enrichment activities have a financial cost, which can include enrollment and participation fees, equipment, uniforms, and transportation, among others. Despite the importance of enrichment participation, current foster care payment rates do not account for the cost of these activities.² Nor is there any statewide program providing recurring financial support for extracurriculars for youth in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

With the implementation of the Flexible Family Funds, we are seeing the acknowledgement of the importance of ensuring foster youth have access to enrichment programs. As an organization we are concerned that without continuous funding, foster youth will begin to get connected to activities that are healing just to have them taken away once the funding ends. It is our goal to gather data that supports a Statewide annual funding stream so that foster youth do not need to question if their stability has an expiration date.

¹ Welf. and Inst. Code § 362.05.

² Welf. and Inst. Code § 11460(a) and (b).



II. Proposed Policy

Establishment of a county based Foster Youth Enrichment Stipend Pilot Program to be funded by the Flexible Family Support Funds. This program would include:

1. That \$100 per month is provided as a supplement to the existing foster care payment for enrichment and extracurricular activities.
 - a. This payment should be given directly to the foster youth, if they have access to banking services and have identified financial literacy as a case plan goal.
2. At the monthly required case work visit, the caseworker discusses with the youth the purpose of the funds and helps them develop a plan for the use of the funds. This process should include engagement of the youth's caregiver.
3. That each child and youth's case plan document: a. How the enrichment funds will be used for the young person and b. How the young person was involved in determining how the funds are used.
4. Stipend recipients would participate in data collection led in partnership with the county agency and California Youth Connection.

III. Funding Allocation

With the limited budget allocations per county, we know that the Flexible Family Funds doesn't have a large enough funding allocation to provide a stipend for each foster youth in the county. We encourage participating counties to work alongside CYC members to establish the participation numbers for each pilot program, based on the number of youth in care.



IV. Supplemental Information

California Youth Connection is looking to partner with a minimum of one county in each region to establish a 12 month long Foster Youth Enrichment Stipend Pilot Program. The regions we would like to partner with include Northern California, Bay Area, Central Valley, Southern California, and Los Angeles.

Since 2016, CYC members have been pressuring legislators to establish a statewide enrichment stipend program, with no success. It is our goal to establish these pilot programs at the local level to obtain the qualitative and quantitative data that legislators need to see in order to make this a reality for all foster youth in California.

In these county based pilot programs, we would like to see the following foster youth demographics prioritized:

- *Black and Brown Foster Youth*
- *Indigenous Foster Youth*
- *Dual Status Youth (Juvenile Justice Youth with a open foster care placement order)*
- *LGBTQ+ youth*
- *Youth currently residing in STRTP placements*
- *Extended Foster Care participants*
- *Pregnant and Parenting Youth*

V. Contact Information

If your county is interested in utilizing the Flexible Family Support Funds to establish a Foster Youth Enrichment Stipend Pilot Program, please contact CYC's Policy Team.

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