

Background

Children and youth who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers need specialized support navigating the unique challenges they face as they seek to build relationships and find healing. Without tailored support available whenever and wherever needed, difficult situations can escalate and disrupt growing family relationships and nurturing homes, potentially leaving youth further traumatized and facing another relationship disruption, a change in living situation, hospitalization, institutionalization, or even re-entry into foster care for young people who have exited care to adoption, reunification, or guardianship. Even worse, without other options, the police may be called during difficult situations, leading to the inappropriate criminalization of young people in foster care.

Enacted in 2019, the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) provides children and youth currently or formerly in foster care and their caregivers with the immediate trauma-informed support they need whenever and wherever any challenges, big or small, arise. FURS consists of a 24/7 statewide hotline and county mobile response teams in all 58 counties that provide an in-person response typically within one hour. FURS services are provided by specially trained staff who understand the unique needs of young people in foster care and their families. This coordinated state and community-based solution is critical to helping preserve relationships, link youth and families to longer-term supports and services, promote healing, and prevent the unnecessary criminalization of youth. FURS is also a critical resource to promote stability for older youth (up to age 21) currently or formerly in foster care who are living on their own. The [Cal-FURS statewide hotline](#) launched in March 2021 and all counties launched their mobile response systems by July 2021. FURS receives approximately 5,000 requests for support annually. Many of these calls result in an in-person response from a county mobile response team, and initial data shows that the vast majority of these calls have resulted in stabilized placements and ongoing supports for the child, youth, and/or caregiver. Moreover, there are hundreds of stories about how FURS has:

- Helped new relationships develop and grow when a child first becomes part of the family.
- Supported caregivers and youth as they work through disagreements.
- Connected youth to community-based resources and supports to meet their unique needs.
- Resolved barriers students in foster care experience to attending and thriving in school.
- Ensured caregivers had the supports needed to assure the wellbeing of young people in their care.

Despite the critical need within the foster care community, the 2024-25 January Budget proposes to eliminate FURS. Eliminating FURS will place children and youth currently or formerly in foster care at greater risk of instability, disrupted relationships, loss, and re-traumatization.

Next Steps

The Legislature must reject the proposal to eliminate funding for FURS and uphold the State's moral and legal responsibility to children and youth who have spent time in foster care. Once FURS is restored, it will be important to ensure:

1. Youth currently or formerly in foster care, caregivers, and other stakeholders continue to be informed about FURS and how it differs from other resources and are utilizing this valuable resource;
2. Youth and caregiver feedback is gathered and used to inform FURS quality improvement efforts; and
3. Implementation is closely monitored and data on FURS utilization and outcomes is made publicly available consistently for quality assurance purposes.

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