

Background

In California, there are more than 45,000 children and youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect and placed in foster care.ⁱ Stable placements in nurturing family homes are foundational to helping them heal from the trauma they have experienced and thrive. Research shows children and youth in stable placements experience improved emotional well-being, health, and educational outcomes. They have a greater likelihood of building enduring relationships with caring adults. Children and youth in stable placements are also more likely to experience continuity in services, which is important as abuse and neglect can lead to complex physical and mental health challenges that can persist into adulthood.ⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, placement stability remains elusive for children and youth in care, with nearly 40% of youth in care for 2 or more years experiencing multiple placements.ⁱⁱⁱ Stable placements in family homes do not just happen. Caregivers, children, and youth must have access to critical resources and supports that are designed to reduce trauma and strengthen relationships.

The Home-Based Family Care rate provided to support children and youth in family homes is an important component of ensuring their needs are met and caregivers have the resources needed to create stability. California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) implemented interim rates in 2017 based on the current level of care rate structure. However, per statute, a permanent rate structure must be developed by January 1, 2025. The Governor's budget signals the intent to create a rate structure that is based on the child's individual needs and strengths, as identified by the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment tool (CANS), rather than the placement type. This new structure seeks to ensure more children and youth remain connected to their families and communities by investing in family-based placements so youth don't have to enter congregate care to receive services. The new framework is structured with a care and supervision component, a strength building and maintenance component, and an immediate needs component.

Next Steps

Moving forward, it will be important to reform the Home-Based Family Care rate structure to ensure:

1. Foster families have timely access to adequate resources to meet the unique needs of the children and youth in their care;
2. Rates are determined based on the needs and strengths of the child as determined by the CANS;
3. Access to the additional training, support and guidance of the current Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC) program is considered;
4. Critical supports such as extracurricular activities, respite care, and school transportation are funded appropriately and easily accessed as needs arise; and
5. Additional resources are provided to support children and youth who are facing natural disasters, stay-at-home orders, or required home-based learning.

For more information, contact Susanna Kniffen at skniffen@childrennow.org.

ⁱ Webster, D., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Wiegmann, W., Saika, G., Courtney, M., Eastman, A.L., Hammond, I., Gomez, A., Sunaryo, E., Guo, S., Agarwal, A., Berwick, H., Hoerl, C., Yee, H., Gonzalez, A., Ensele, P., Nevin, J., & Guinan, B. (2023).

CCWIP reports. Retrieved January 31, 2024, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL: <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu>

ⁱⁱ 2022 California Children's Report Card: A Survey of Kids' Well-Being and Roadmap for the Future, available at <https://www.childrennow.org/portfolio-posts/2022-california-childrens-report-card/>

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