



Office of the Governor

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Governor Schwarzenegger Signs Legislation to Improve California's Foster Care System

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed legislation aimed at improving the lives of children and youth in California's foster care system by making it easier for caregivers and providers to access the resources they need to protect one of the state's most vulnerable populations. The legislation makes it easier for caregivers who receive CalWORKS grants to reapply after relocating within the state, increases access to the alternative foster care programs for youth in need of additional support, and provides for the continuation of federal child welfare funding.

"Our foster care youth deserve every opportunity to succeed in a safe, stable and caring environment, and by ensuring that foster care providers and caregivers have access to the vital resources they need, they can help make that a reality," Governor Schwarzenegger said. "This legislation improves foster care programs and expands access to financial resources to build brighter futures for our youth and children in foster care."

The Governor announced today that he has signed the following five bills:

- SB 1160 by Senator Elaine Alquist (D-San Jose) helps relative caregivers of foster children maintain their CalWORKS benefits when they move to a new county. This bill ensures that foster caregivers would be exempt from submitting new fingerprints and the face-to-face interview, allowing the reapplication interview to be conducted over the telephone.
- SB 1341 by Senator Alex Padilla (D-Pacoima) permits families currently enrolled in CalWORKS to save money in a "restricted savings account" for payment of first and last month rents, and deposits in order to facilitate a successful transition out of homelessness.
- SB 1380 by Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) expands eligibility and revises operational, reporting and training requirements of the Intensive Treatment Foster Care program which provides an alternative to group-home placement for those foster children who could profit from placement in a home but require additional therapeutic support. The bill also extends rate classification adjustments for certain group home programs.
- AB 2070 by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) allows the juvenile court to extend reunification services to parents or guardians with children who are dependents of the court, as a result of a parent's incarceration, institutionalization or stay in residential substance abuse treatment, to increase the opportunity for parents or guardians to reunite with their children.
- AB 2096 by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) allows foster care group home providers to use a reasonable and prudent parent standard and to take reasonable steps to determine the appropriateness of an activity when determining whether to give permission for a ward or a dependent in foster care to participate in extracurricular activities.

This year, Governor Schwarzenegger also signed AB 2310 and AB 2483 to ensure that youth aging out of the foster care system are as equipped as possible to access resources and services, including financial aid, career services and other benefits.

In addition, the Governor's Department of Social Services worked in conjunction with the United States Social Security Administration to quickly adopt a federal provision this year that will ensure implementation of AB 1331 by Assemblymember Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa), signed last year by the Governor. It will allow eligible disabled foster youth to apply for Supplemental Security Income benefits months before they turn 18, making it possible for them to leave foster care with approved benefits in place rather than waiting months to receive them.

Last year, the Governor signed a series of bills to further enhance foster care services in California. And in 2006, the Governor signed a package of legislation designed to improve California's foster care system and the safety of children entrusted to the state's care. Also in 2006, the Governor secured a first-of-its-kind federal waiver that provides unprecedented flexibility by allowing counties to use federal funds to support innovative strategies that keep children out of foster care and in safe, stable homes.