

APPROVED RELATIVE CAREGIVER (ARC) FUNDING OPTION PROGRAM

The ARC Program enacted by Senate Bill (SB) 855 (Chapter 29, Statutes of 2014), effective January 1, 2015, increases payments to children placed in foster care with relative caregivers when the children are not eligible for federal foster care benefits, which are higher than the CalWORKs¹ benefits these children typically receive. This county-optional program provides funding for participating counties to make per-child, per-month payments to approved relative caregivers on behalf of eligible children in an amount equal to the basic foster care rate paid to Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) providers. Many approved relative caregivers now receive CalWORKs, which is less than AFDC-FC.

Eligibility

- Eligible relative caregivers must be approved and live in California. Caregivers who are approved meet health and safety standards that mirror those for licensed foster parents.
- Eligible children must be under the jurisdiction of the California juvenile court in a county that has opted in; not be federally eligible under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act; and live in California.

Funding:

- There are three funding sources for ARC payments: 1) CalWORKs funds; 2) an ARC ongoing state general fund appropriation; and 3) county funds if the other two funding sources are insufficient to fund ARC payments. Counties must also pay the county share of costs associated with the CalWORKs portion of the ARC payment. However, counties may seek reimbursement for any county funds used to make eligible ARC payments if in any given calendar year the entire amount of the ARC ongoing state general fund appropriation has not been fully expended.
- The ARC ongoing state general fund appropriation is intended to fully fund the base caseload of approved relative caregivers as of July 1, 2014, and will be adjusted annually by the California Necessities Index. There is a one-time opportunity to adjust the current \$30 million ARC ongoing state general fund appropriation to ensure that the base caseload of approved relative caregivers as of July 1, 2014, is fully funded. This “true-up” must occur on or before October 1, 2015.
- ARC state general funds will be allocated to participating counties based on the number of approved relative caregiver placements in the county as of July 1, 2014.
- A county may “opt-out” of the program at any time, but must meet notification and other requirements.

Implementation Status:

- Program implementation instructions have been issued via All County Letter (14-89). There has been a state general fund allocation of approximately \$15 million for the period January through June 2015; those funds are now available for ARC payments. Data will be collected from the counties to inform the “true-up” process.
- Fifty-six counties submitted non-binding letters of interest. Seven counties have opted-in (Colusa, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma and Yolo) and two more are currently in process (Yuba and San Benito).

¹ California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)-is California’s welfare program to assist eligible needy families. The program is partially funded through a block grant from the federal government.