



CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM

CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM & PROBATION YOUTH

When a child or youth who has been involved with the juvenile court due to delinquent behavior is unable to be safely returned home following the youths formal detention, the court may order the child or youth to be placed in foster care. These probation foster youth, referred to as “wards” of the court, largely remain under the jurisdiction of the county probation agency rather than the child welfare agency. While most dependent children supervised by a child welfare agency are placed in families (relatives or foster homes), in contrast almost 70 percent of probation youth in foster care are placed in group homes, with some placed in other states.

The Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) seeks to realize California’s longstanding goal of ensuring that all children live as members of committed, nurturing, and permanent families. Probation departments are required to serve youth in the least restrictive, most family-like environment necessary to meet their needs. The CCR seeks to ensure that the unique placement needs of probation foster youth are given special consideration to ensure that, whenever possible, they are placed in family settings that promote normal childhood experiences. Group care, when necessary, should be used on a short-term¹ basis and should provide high-quality, intensive treatment interventions, and services designed to transition them back home or to another permanent family as soon as possible, considering both the youth’s and the public’s safety.

Assembly Bill 403, the legislation implementing the CCR, recognizes that probation youth may have unique needs and that the system changes necessary to better serve more probation youth in family settings may take longer to put in place than for child welfare. Such changes will require collaboration with the California Department of Social Services, county probation departments, and providers. Some key efforts include:

- Better preparation and support for quality foster homes to parent probation youth, including more quickly identifying and engaging responsible relatives and non-relative kin to serve as caregivers for probation foster youth.
- Funding is provided to county probation departments to support the development of innovative strategies to recruit and retain quality foster parents for probation youth.
- Giving probation youth, their parents, and their caregivers a voice in defining their needs and placement plans.
- New training requirements for providers include such topics as trauma-informed care, child and adolescent development including sexual

¹ The California Department of Social Services recognizes for the certain probation youth, such as sex offenders, their stays in group care may be longer than short-term implies in order that youth is able to complete the treatment program and step down into a less restrictive setting.

CCR builds on California’s current reform efforts

Approved Relative Caregivers Program (ARC)

Participating counties support relative caregivers with a payment equal to the basic foster care rate.

Child and Family Teaming

An effective approach to coordinated care and case planning for all children and youth in the child welfare system.

Pathways to Mental Health

Originating from the Katie A. lawsuit settlement, Pathways is intended to improve the coordination between child welfare and mental health systems so that children in foster care receive timely, and effective individualized mental health services.

Quality Parenting Initiative

Will create new strategies and practices within child welfare for the recruitment and retention of quality caregivers, and support biological parents with reunification efforts.

Residentially-Based Services Reform (RBS)

A demonstration project begun in 2008 that tested a short-term residential program model with ongoing community-based services and support, and which serves as the foundation for STRTC.

Resource Family Approval (RFA) Program

A pilot program that provides upfront training and assessment of families seeking to parent children in foster care will expand statewide.



orientation, gender identity and expression, accessing local services, serving commercially sexually-exploited children, etc.

- Short-term Residential Therapeutic Centers (STRTCs) and Foster Family Agencies (FFA) tailor services to address the treatment needs of specific probation populations, including sex offenders, youth with gang affiliations, youth who currently are placed out-of-state, and youth with mental illness.
- Develop rate structures appropriate to support probation foster youth in family settings.
- Identify strategies to address the systemic challenges specific to small and rural counties in meeting the needs of probation foster youth in need of placement or treatment services.

The California Department of Social Services in partnership with the Chief Probation Officers of California, county probation departments, and the Legislature will be monitoring progress of these changes.

STATUTORY TIMELINES

- The current licensure and rate structures for group homes and foster family agencies will sunset January 1, 2017 unless an extension is granted.
- The California Department of Social Services will establish new licensure and rate systems for STRTCs and FFAs in 2016 that take effect on January 1, 2017.
- For the next two years, group homes at a county placing agency's request can receive an extension to operate for an additional two years. Statute provides for extensions at the request of county probation agencies.
- The national accreditation of STRTCs and FFAs will start in 2016 and is expected to take two to three years.

MORE INFORMATION AND QUESTIONS

- [CCR: A Report to the Legislature](#)
- [Assembly Bill 403 \(Chapter 773, Statutes of 2015\)](#)
- For additional information or questions, please contact: CCR@dss.ca.gov.