



Senator Melissa Hurtado

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 14

Senate Bill 1091

Family Finding and Engagement

As Introduced February 16, 2022

SUMMARY

SB 1091 requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to fund contracts with community-based organization (CBOs) or provide local assistance allocations to counties and Indian tribes, or both, to support new or expanded family finding and engagement programs. SB 1091 further requires funds appropriated by the Legislature for the purpose of this bill be available to fund family finding and engagement techniques to find permanent families and relationships for foster children. There is a co-occurring budget request asking for State General Funds to be allocated over a three year period for this purpose.

BACKGROUND

Every child in foster care should be connected with family and other adults who care about them. Research has found children in foster care placed with relatives experience greater placement stability and have better mental health and behavioral outcomes than children placed with non-relatives. Additionally, children placed with relatives continue to reach permanency (reunification, guardianship or adoption), and have lower rates of re-entry than children placed with non-relatives.¹ Children engaged in family finding also benefit from emotional permanency, wherein supportive

lifelong connections with family can be identified and maintained.

These placements and connections align with the ongoing efforts of the Continuum of Care Reform, which draws together a series of existing and new reforms to our child welfare services program designed out of an understanding that children who must live apart from their biological parents do best when they are cared for in committed nurturing family homes.

Existing law recognizes the importance of family finding by requiring counties to make reasonable efforts to identify, locate, and notify relatives of a child who has been removed from his or her home within 30 days of the child's removal.

PROBLEM

California does not have a statewide coordinated effort or dedicated statewide funding stream to implement Family Finding and Engagement. Frequently, extended family have lost contact with the child and are unaware that a relative child or youth is in foster care with significant needs. Moreover, Family Finding and Engagement is necessary to offset the historical and ongoing negative

¹ Winokur et al, 2018; Wheeler & Vollet, 2017.



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experiences of children and youth of color and youth who identify as LGBTQ+.

There are approximately 60,000 children and youth in foster care on any given day in California. According to CDSS, there are 12,237 children and youth in foster care who are 17 years of age or younger, have been in foster care for 24 months or more, are not living with a relative, reunification is no longer the case plan and they are not with a family in the process of adopting or taking them into guardianship. This number represents 20% of all youth in foster care.

SOLUTION

Given this problem, now is the time for state investment in Family Finding and Engagement. This bill would require CDSS to fund contracts with CBOs or provide local assistance allocations to counties and Indian tribes, or both, to support new or expanded family finding and engagement programs. These efforts focus on children and youth who have been in care for 24 months, thus focusing on family finding efforts that occur well after the initial 30 days in care.

SB 1091 also provides a variety of activities that may be funded as family finding and engagement programs, but does not limit funding to those activities listed. Additionally, there is an active budget request seeking an investment of State General Funds to be allocated over three years for intensive Family Finding and Engagement. This funding would be overseen by CDSS for the purpose of funding the contracts or assistance allocations described through SB 1091.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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