

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Family First Act Introduced in Senate](#)

[Child Care for Foster Children](#)

[Importance of Normalcy for Foster Youth](#)

Family First Act Introduced in Senate

A new bill, The Family First Act introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Ron Wyden (D-OR), would broaden states' access to federal dollars for preventative and supportive services to keep children in family homes. It would also restrict federal foster care funds for group home placements so that these restrictive placements are only used when a child is in need of short-term intensive treatment. The Families First Act is an important step to increasing supports for foster youth. We look forward to engaging in the development of the Families First Act over the coming months. [Read More>](#)



Importance of Normalcy for Foster Youth

A critical aspect of healthy development for any youth is a sense of normalcy. The Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative recently released a report addressing this issue with help from youth.

The report identifies barriers to ensuring normalcy for foster youth including things like having to get background checks on their friend's family in order to have a sleepover. Even youth in legal guardianships are often prevented from accompanying their guardian on family trips and engaging in other family activities. The report recommends several policy changes in order to promote a foster youth's sense of normalcy including things like increased inclusion of the foster youth in case planning and implementation of the reasonable and prudent parent standard in order to allow caregivers to make more decisions for youth in their care. [Read More>](#)



Child Care for Foster Children

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, a reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Significant changes regarding children in foster care include provisions relating to the educational needs of foster children and an early childhood education grant program. Our nation's foster children need access to high quality early childhood education programs that can help them heal from the trauma they experience, and these provisions provide an opportunity to connect the dots between our education and child welfare systems.



In California, foster children have priority access to state subsidized child care and early education programs. However, foster families still struggle to access these resources. Reasons include a shortage of openings as well as bad timing. State child care programs are almost always full and many have short enrollment windows that may not align with the moment of a child's placement into foster care. Enrollment is also complicated, and foster families often struggle to navigate the system.

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act should prompt us to provide foster children with access to high quality early childhood education programs. Further, federal funding for child care for foster children is available through our Title IV-E foster care benefits program, which could help ease the cost burden of ensuring that our foster children gain access to these programs. As California moves forward to implement the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act, it is critical that we take full advantage of available federal dollars, like Title IV-E, in order to ensure that all foster children have meaningful access to programs. In the short-term, the state needs to solve the timing gap that prevents foster children from using their priority enrollment. [Read More>](#)