SB 1083 & AB2183: New Legislation to Improve California’s Continuum of Care Reform

March 8, 2018
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Today’s Presenters

• Angie Schwartz
  Policy Director at Alliance for Children’s Rights

• Susanna Kniffen
  Child Welfare Policy Senior Director at Children Now

• Amy Lemley
  Executive Director at John Burton Advocates for Youth

• Luciana Svidler
  Policy Associate at Children’s Law Center of CA

• Lori Nolan
  Caregiver

• Alexis Barries
  Youth Advocate at John Burton Advocates for Youth
In 2015, Governor Brown signed AB 403 into law to initiate a comprehensive reform effort, known as the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), of California’s child welfare system. The vision of CCR including the following:

- All children live with a committed, permanent and nurturing family with strong community connections
- Services and supports should be individualized and coordinated across systems and children shouldn’t need to change placements to get services
- When needed, congregate care is a short-term, high quality, intensive intervention that is just one part of a continuum of care available for children, youth and young adults
- Effective accountability and transparency drives continuous quality improvement for state, county and providers
Key Strategies of CCR

• Child and Family Teams (CFTs) drive case planning, placement decisions and care coordination

• New licensing requirements for FFAs and STRTPs:
  – Limit use of residential care to when an Interagency Placement Committee finds child requires short-term intensive services
  – Ensures STRTPs and FFAs have an identified ability to meet the varied needs of children (i.e. “core services”) including mental health services
  – Ensures STRTPs and FFAs are nationally accredited and have engaged placing agencies in program development

• New approval requirements and restructured rate system for caregivers provides for a single residential rate and a varied “level of care” home-based rate

• Local collaboration between Child Welfare, Mental Health, Probation, and Education to provide integrated services
A family-friendly and child-centered caregiver approval process

Streamlines and eliminates duplication of existing processes

Unifies approval standard for all caregivers

Prepares families to meet the needs of children in foster care

Allows seamless transition to permanency
All **prospective relative, non-related extended family & foster families** after 1/1/2017 must go through the RFA process.

**Current caregivers** with a child in placement at some point during 2017 have until 12/31/2019 to begin the RFA process.

- Current caregivers with an approved adoptive home study completed before 01/01/18 are automatically deemed approved.
- Approval can continue after December 31, 2019 as long as RFA initiated by that date.

*WIC § 16519.5(p)*
Approval - is a process in which DCFS is making sure generally that you can provide a safe home for a child by meeting preset criteria
  o Funding begins at the date of RFA approval

Placement - occurs when DCFS or the court places a specific child into your home after the required home walkthrough and background check
  o Emergency placement can happen before full approval but eventually you must go through the full RFA process
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Overview of RFA Process

- Receive a RFA orientation
- Undergo criminal clearances and background checks
- Undergo home environment assessment
- Participate in 12 hours preapproval training and 8 additional hours within the first year (some counties/FFAs may require additional training)
- Provide health questionnaire or screening for applicants
- Participate in a family evaluation (previously called Psychological Assessment)
- Receive a written report of the resource family
An assessment of the home and grounds, outdoor activity space, and storage areas of the applicant’s home

Criminal background check (and any necessary exemptions) of each applicant and all adults residing in, or regularly present in, the home.

Total number of children cannot be more than family can properly care for – and shall not exceed 6 children.

*Exception:* Exceptional circumstances including but not limited to the need to place siblings together *WIC § 16519.5(d)(2)*
• Verification that an applicant completed pre-approval training—minimum of **12** hours (**8** post-approval hours annually)

• A Family Evaluation which is a comprehensive inquiry into the applicant(s) will include:

  • Risk Assessment
  • Motivation
  • Applicant’s past and present experiences
  • Understanding of the needs of children in care and ability to meet those needs

NOTE: When the applicant is a relative/NREFM, the family evaluation shall consider nature of relationship between the applicant and the child. *WIC § 16519.5(d)(3)*

NOTE #2: The applicant’s preference to provide a specific level of permanency shall not be a basis to deny an application. *WIC § 16519.5(g)(5)(A)(i)(II)*
Additional RFA requirements

- Health Questionnaire or Screening
- First Aid and CPR certification - to be completed within 90 days post-approval
- 1 face to face interview with all other residents in the home including children
- 2 personal references
- DMV check on applicant and all adults in the home

RFA must be updated annually or more often if “significant changes”
- Must begin 60 days prior to approval anniversary and be completed no later than 30 days after
Systemic Issues with RFA

RFA is taking several months to complete. This is detrimental because caregivers do not receive sufficient funding until they are approved and that funding is not retroactive to the date of placement.

Thousands of existing caregivers will have to complete the "conversion process." This is and will continue to hamper retention efforts.

A caregiver’s application can be withdrawn without any documentation of the reasons for the withdrawal forcing caregiver’s to start the process over again.

Permanency can be delayed in some instances because (1) the RFA process is lengthy and (2) legal guardians have to be resource families prior to accepting guardianship to receive Kin-GAP funding.
Policy Fixes: SB1083 & AB2183

Proposed Legislation to Improve CCR and Make RFA work for Families

SB 1083 (Mitchell): Reducing Barriers for Families

AB 2183 (Rubio): Providing Critical Resources at Time of Placement (Urgency Bill)
SB 1083 Bill Author: Senator Holly Mitchell

- Represents the 30th district
- Authored dozens of landmark laws around:
  - Improving human services
  - Expanding healthcare access
  - Ensuring all children and families can thrive
  - Reforms around the juvenile justice system
  - Civil rights of minorities and the undocumented
- First African American to chair the powerful Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee in December 2016
SB 1083
Provisions

Requires counties to complete RFA within 90-days for all applicants and provides for court oversight when timelines are not complied with for relatives or Non-Related Extended Family Members who are seeking placement.

Grandfathers-in families who were approved as caregivers prior to RFA.

Requires documentation in the court record regarding the amount and source of financial support a youth is receiving.
SB 1083 Provisions

Clarifies that a family that withdraws an RFA application can pick up where they left off within 12 months of withdrawal.

Clarifies that a youth can be placed with a relative or extended family member through a Voluntarily Placement Agreement (VPA) prior to Resource Family Approval when that relative or extended family member meets the standards of in WIC 361.4.

Clarifies that the months spent with a prospective legal guardian prior to full resource family approval can satisfy the six month eligibility rule to receive Kin-GAP funding to ensure that exits to permanence are not delayed.
What issues does SB1083 help fix

- Delays in placements with caregivers relatives
- Disincentives for signing up as foster families or remaining as families within the system
- Unnecessary work and redundancy of approving families again who have had a good track record
- Ensuring families are receiving appropriate funding
- Delays in transitioning children to permanency
- Confusion navigating through approval process
- RFA approval taking significantly longer than intended
Resource Family Approval: A Caregiver’s Perspective

- Delays in Approval
- Financial Hardship
- Reflection
• Represents the 48th district
• Authored dozens of landmark laws around:
  • Supporting victims of domestic violence
  • Creating opportunities for children in the foster care system
  • Supporting immigrant communities
  • Women’s rights
  • Student Support
• Had all six of her bills that made the Governor’s desk signed in her first year of Assembly
Requires counties to secure short-term funding for individuals who accept emergency placement while they work to complete the RFA requirements through either the ARC program or the Emergency Assistance program.

Permits counties to waive any approval requirements that are not related to health and safety, on a case-by-case basis, based on extraordinary circumstances.

Initiates School of Origin (SOO) funding at the time of placement, regardless of whether the family has been approved as a resource family and ensures that Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) can access SOO funds.
What issues does AB2183 help fix?

- Families that take in children prior to approval do not receive foster care benefits until they are approved and the funding is not retroactive to the date of placement. This is causing:
  - Placement disruptions due to lack of funding
  - Relatives and extended family members enduring months of financial stress and hardship while simultaneously attempting to navigate a bureaucratic maze and care for traumatized children
  - Discouragement from becoming foster parents or remaining as families within the system
Short-Term Relief for Families May Be Available Through June 30, 2018

- AB 110 and SB 120 were recently approved by the Assembly and Senate Budget Committees as urgency measures.
- **IF signed into law**, families who currently have placements prior to approval will receive support equal to the basic foster care payment as of the date that CDSS releases an All County Letter implementing the program OR as of the date of placement, whichever is later.
- Funding will ONLY continue through June 30, 2018. The Legislature needs to enact further legislation in order to continue support beyond June 30, 2018.
Resource Family Approval: A Former Foster Youth’s Perspective

- Personal experience
- Emotional Impact
- Reflection
Both SB 1083 & AB 2183 faces considerable challenges

- Both SB 1083 & AB 2183 will help streamline the RFA approval process and improve on CCR.

- **BUT** they both face challenges for passage:
  - Worthy, competing priorities
  - AB 2183 is a urgency bill and requires 2/3 vote for passage
Legislative Timeline for SB 1083 & AB 2183

**SB 1083:**
- Senate HS Committee: April 10th
- Assembly HS Committee
- Bill goes to Governor
- If not vetoed, bill becomes law effective January 1, 2019

**Feb 14:** SB 1083 & AB 2183 introduced

**June 1:** Last Day for 1st house to pass bills

**August 31:** Last Day for 2nd house to pass bills

**October 15:** Last Day for Governor to sign or veto

**AB 2183:**
- Assembly HS Committee
- Senate HS Committee
- Bill goes to Governor. If not vetoed, bill becomes law as soon as it is signed.
Parallel Budget Process

- Governor’s budget proposal released Jan 10
- Senate and Assembly hold budget hearings: (April 11 & 12 for CCR)
- Governor releases revised budget proposal in May
- Legislative budget bill finalized by June 15
- Budget signed by Governor
How can you help make SB 1083 and AB 2183 a reality?

- Send in a support letter
  [sample letters SB1083 & AB2183]
- Attend and testify at Committee hearings
- Meet with legislators in the district
- Encourage foster youth and caregivers to get involved
- Stay tuned for more work over the spring and summer
To submit live questions, click on the “Questions” panel, type your question, and click “Send”

or contact:

Angie Schwartz, Alliance for Children’s Rights, a.schwartz@kids-alliance.org

Susanna Kniffen, Children Now skniffen@childrennow.org

Amy Lemley, John Burton Advocates for Youth, Amy@jbay.org

Luciana Svidler, Children’s Law Center of CA svidlerl@clcla.org