

GOAL 1: Creating a child-centered, family-first child welfare System, by ensuring that children are supported in family placements immediately with full access to funding and services.

Background: Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), a set of laws that took effect in 2017, is intended to support children in family settings and limit the use of congregate care (group homes). Group homes as we have known them will no longer exist. Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) will be available as short-term interventions for youth with identified mental health needs. However, STRTPs are not meant to serve as a long-term placement or a solution for a shortage of family homes.

As CCR mandates that children only be placed in families, we must support families immediately upon placement to achieve the vision of CCR. Caregivers who step up to take in a child on an emergency basis before being approved through the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process are going six or more months with no support and services. This issue affects relatives and non-related extended family members in particular, as they are more likely to be contacted at the time that a child is detained and needs emergency placement, and less likely to have already sought RFA approval.

The Alliance is focused on:

- Education to help agencies, legislators and other stakeholders remember that ALL kids in the child welfare system have sustained trauma and therefore require supports to help them recover;
- Policies and practices to support kids and families immediately at time of placement;
- Preventing the immediate cost of stabilizing services from becoming a deterrent to supporting families, as up-front investment in a child in a family placement reduces the long-term costs of instability, including the expenses of more intensive services, homelessness, incarceration, major health crises, and other costly outcomes, and;
- Overcoming delays and confusion around the RFA process, to ensure that the intentions of CCR are not undermined by delaying stabilizing supports for children that can help them thrive in a family setting.

Policy Statement: The Alliance supports a comprehensive solution that ensures funding at the time of a child's placement; reduces barriers to approval by requiring RFA to be completed in 90 days; allows families licensed prior to implementation of RFA to be grandfathered into RFA approval, and clarifying parts of the law that would ensure a child's best chance at permanency in a loving home.

The Alliance State and Local Policy Action Plan Includes:

- Co-sponsoring AB 2183 (Rubio), which will secure critical funding for individuals who accept foster children into their care prior to completing the RFA process;
- Co-sponsoring SB 1083 (Mitchell), which seeks to strengthen the intent of the CCR by addressing implementation hurdles in the RFA process causing delays and difficulties in the recruitment and retention of caregivers and to the timely completion of the family approval process;
- Working with County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to improve RFA policies through regulatory actions including All County Letters (ACLs), All County Information Notices (ACINs), and revisions to CDSS written directives, and

- Facilitating the Los Angeles CCR Steering Committee and working with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department to implement effectively RFA policies and improve practices.