



# Caregiver Perspectives on the Permanent Foster Care Rates Proposal Child Welfare Policy Roundtable April 5, 2024

[www.cacaregivers.org](http://www.cacaregivers.org)

# Who is California Alliance of Caregivers?

California Alliance of Caregivers represents the voice of relative and non-relative caregivers to promote the well-being of children in foster care.



[www.cacaregivers.org](http://www.cacaregivers.org)





# **GATHER THE VOICE OF FOSTER/KINSHIP/ ADOPTIVE/GUARDIAN/RESOURCE FAMILIES**

## **WE GATHER INPUT THROUGH:**

- California Alliance of Caregivers Ambassadors
- Resource Family Forums
- Parents & Caregivers for Wellness
- Coffee with Caregivers



## **COMMUNICATE THE VOICE OF CAREGIVERS**

### **WE SHARE INPUT THROUGH:**

- Caregiver Day at the Capitol
- Child Welfare Advocates Meetings
- Monthly Capitol Roundtable
- Statewide Caregiver Policy Agenda
- Meetings with Agencies
- Implementation Workgroups



# IMPROVE FOSTER CARE FOR CHILDREN

## WE IMPROVE THE SYSTEM BY:

- Advocating for access, support, and services for children
- Advocating for support that will lead to placement stability in high quality foster homes

## Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**Investing in families with significantly higher rates to caregivers, reflects the true need for greater support and services in family-based settings than is currently provided. The proposed rates recognize that 19% or 8,000 children and youth in foster care should currently qualify for Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC).**

- *Comparatively, only 3.5% or 1,400 of all youth in foster care currently receive ISFC support and services*
- **Thousands of children and youth are not receiving the necessary support and services right now - *causing more trauma and placement instability***

**Rates following the child and not the placement type will increase stability.**

- *By increasing the rates and support in family-based placements, the proposed rate structure will keep youth connected to their relatives and communities of origin*

# Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**Using a Validated Functional Assessment Tool (CANS) for the first time ever, and replacing the Level of Care Protocol Assessment (LOCP), will increase the opportunities that a child or youth receives the correct support and services.**

- *The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) tool identifies the needs and strengths of a child and youth helping the caregiver and the entire Child/Family Team identify what social and behavioral healthcare support, activities and services should be provided*
- *The current LOCP it is not a validated functional assessment tool and is inconsistently and unequally implemented throughout California*

**Initially entering foster care at a Tier 2 rate for all children and youth, including “emergency relative caregivers,” reverses historical inequity experienced by relatives and reflects the reality that it is critical to provide substantial support upfront, regardless of where the child/youth are living.**

- *Currently many children and youth start at the Basic rate and remain at the Basic rate even if their needs require a higher rate*
- *Currently, emergency relative caregivers cannot receive higher rates until they have completed the Resource Family Approval process. Unexpected costs relating to suddenly providing for children and youth, including a possible temporary loss of a job, warrant a higher initial rate*

## Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**The Strengths Building and Maintenance allocation for every child, youth, and nonminor dependent (NMD) in every placement (including SILPs and THP NMD programs) will have a positive impact and deepen connections to community and overall well-being.**

- *Extracurricular and enrichment activities are essential to improving and maintaining wellness because they can provide positive childhood experiences which can help **mitigate the effects of trauma***
- *We celebrate this significant and unprecedented step in supporting children and youth in foster care that will empower children and youth to explore their interests and build life skills*
- *We recommend that a list be developed that helps children and youth think about activities that they may not have thought of – the list should include but not be limited to all types of sports, school activities, field trips, mentoring, theme parks, travel, music lessons, peer support, tutoring, respite, gym memberships, computers, pets, hobbies, collections, transportation, etc.*
- *It makes sense that the amount rolls over during the fiscal year so the funds do not have to be spent in any given month (which allows for a youth to save for something bigger than the monthly allocation – might be for summer camp, college campus tours, travel, musical instruments, sports equipment, etc.)*



## Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**Having a third party that is the Spending Plan Manager contracted by the state to manage the Strengths Building Allocation on behalf of the child allows the child, youth and family to have more autonomy as they can directly communicate with the Spending Plan Manager entity.**

- *Self-Determination Model/Youth Voice and Choice empowers the child and family to make decisions with support from the Child/Family Team about what is best needed to support the child and youth*

**In a county administered child welfare system, it is expected and common to have inconsistencies in service delivery, varying levels of support for children and families, and gaps in oversight and accountability.**

- *Ensuring accountability with outcome data, a model contract with standards of care, and state oversight over this unprecedented infusion of new funding and innovative programs, will help children, youth and families receive consistent support statewide*

# Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**The Immediate Needs allocation represents a once in a generation infusion of funding and innovative thinking to provide an array of integrated services and support to ensure that children and youth are supported in family-based care, connected to natural supports and kin whenever possible.**

- *It is a game changer because it allows providers to serve children and youth in all settings including county approved non-relatives, approved relatives and emergency relative caregivers*
- *We recommend that a list be developed that illuminates how these funds can be used – the list should include but not be limited to innovative interventions, therapy methods including art, drama, yoga, nature models, Neurofeedback, trauma related strategies, in-home support help, mindfulness-based stress reduction programs, self-care, coaching, peer support, mentoring, childhood classes, respite, transportation, etc.*
- *It makes sense that the amount rolls over during the fiscal year so the funds do not have to be spent in any given month (allows for more costly needs to be met over time if necessary)*

**Data and outcome measures, and a model contract aligning with standards of care, will provide consistency, and help provide equitable support and services in all counties to children, youth and families.**

## Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**All Tiers apply to NMDs, including the Strength Building and Immediate Needs funds depending on the Tier. Nonminor dependents in SILPS will have access to Strength Building and Maintenance Funds.**

- *Plus higher rates in Tier 1 compared to Basic*

**Counties can still use their Wraparound funds allocated in Realignment.**

- *Wraparound is on top of the Tier rates, the new Strength Building and Maintenance allocations and the Immediate Needs allocations*

**Child Specific Funds continue to be annually allocated to counties.**

**Counties can still use their Specialized Care Increment (SCI) funding where applicable.**

**Counties can contract with the State or Community Based Organizations to administer the Immediate Needs funds.**

## Reasons Caregivers Strongly Support Proposed Foster Care Rates Framework

**All Tiers apply to NMDs, including the Strength Building and Immediate Needs funds depending on the Tier. Nonminor dependents in SILPS will have access to Strength Building and Maintenance Funds.**

- *Plus higher rates in Tier 1 compared to Basic*

**Counties can still use their Wraparound funds allocated in Realignment.**

- *Wraparound is on top of the Tier rates, the new Strength Building and Maintenance allocations and the Immediate Needs allocations*

**Child Specific Funds continue to be annually allocated to counties.**

**Counties can still use their Specialized Care Increment (SCI) funding where applicable.**

**Counties can contract with the State or Community Based Organizations to administer the Immediate Needs funds.**

## **AAP De-Linking Funds Could be Used for Post Permanency Supports and Services**

**AAP De-Linking Program provides \$75 million annually in savings to counties to be used for new or expanded services to support and sustain positive, permanent outcomes for children who otherwise might enter into foster care, and for other foster care and adoption services programs.**

- These allocated savings have more than doubled since 2021 when it was \$31 million **20% of the savings must be used for new or expanded post adoption and post guardianship programs.**

**These AAP De-Linking Savings are predicted to rise again next year because children 2 years and younger will be phased into the program in 2024 pulling down additional savings to counties.**

- *CFL 22-24-54 AAP De-Linking for County Allocations*

## **AAP De-Linking Funds Could be Used for Post Permanency Supports and Services**

**The AAP De-Link “adoption savings” funds cannot replace state and local spending on child welfare services but must result in greater investment into the child welfare system.**

**States and counties are prohibited from shifting costs and cannot use the savings to supplant existing programs. In addition, states must document how the De-Link savings were reinvested.**

**The savings are predicted to continue at over \$70 million annually because 6,300 children and youth exit to adoption each year even with the decline in the number of youth in foster care.**

- *Currently, there are at least 45,000 children and youth in foster care inclusive of 7,400 Nonminor Dependents 18-21 years old*

## **Support Due Process and Transparency when the New Foster Care Rates are Implemented**

**Currently, many caregivers do not receive a copy of the LOCP completed matrix or scores.**

**Due Process does mandate that caregivers receive the completed copies, but the implementation is inconsistent throughout the state.**

**It is important that when the new rate system is implemented, the process is transparent to caregivers.**

## **Important to Continue to Use the Level of Care Protocol Tool (LOCP) While Waiting for New Rates Implementation**

**The LOCP should continue to be used to assess children and youth, especially for Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC).**

**Only 3.5% of children and youth currently are assessed for ISFC – when the Latent Class Analysis determined it was 19%.**

**Too many children, youth, and families are not receiving the support and services they need right now and we need to ensure that they are supported during these next few years while the new rate system is implemented.**





## Contact Us

Jenn Rexroad

[jrexroad@cacaregivers.org](mailto:jrexroad@cacaregivers.org)

Jackie Rutheiser

[jrutheiser@cacaregivers.org](mailto:jrutheiser@cacaregivers.org)

Judy Mandolfo

[jmandolfo@cacaregivers.org](mailto:jmandolfo@cacaregivers.org)

Kelli Sedgewick

[ksedgewick@cacaregivers.org](mailto:ksedgewick@cacaregivers.org)

[www.cacaregivers.org](http://www.cacaregivers.org)

