

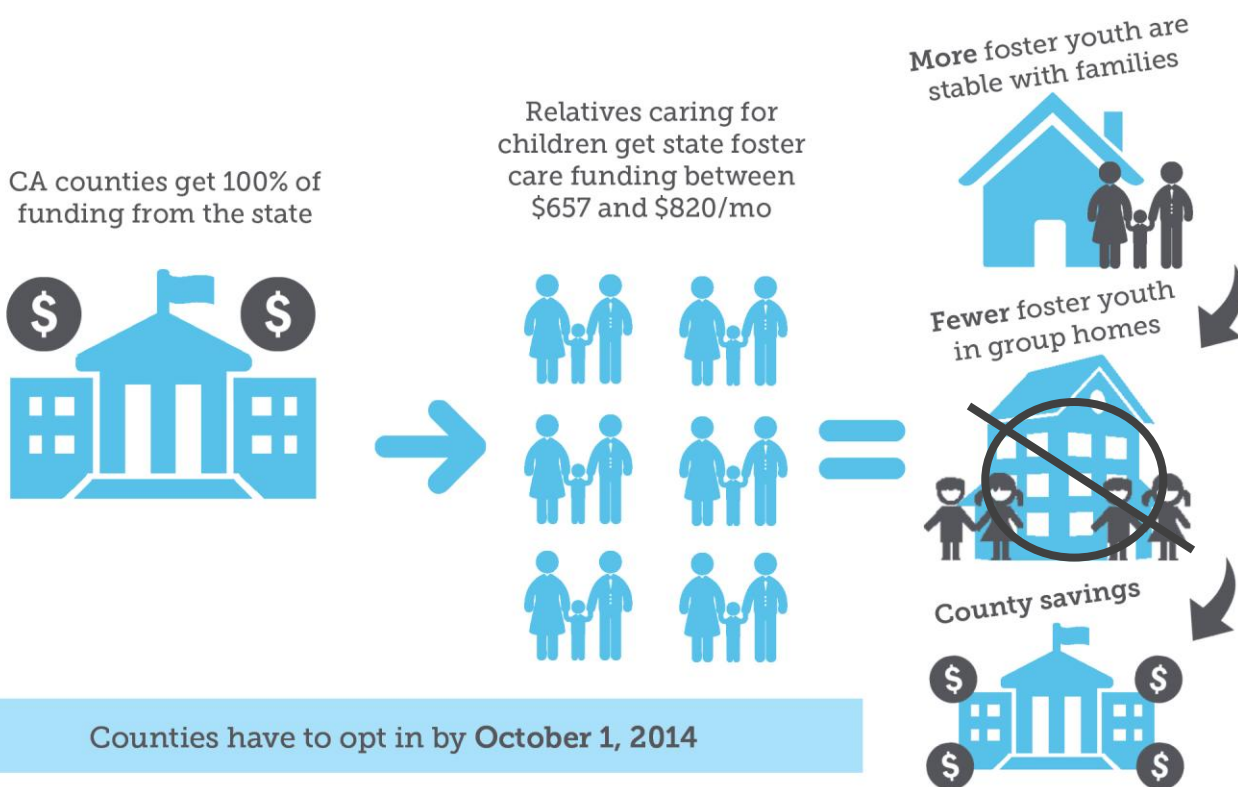


Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program

A giant step forward for foster children living with relatives

- On June 20, 2014, Governor Brown signed the budget and created the Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program in order to provide **new state funds** for foster children living with relatives.
- These funds will provide state foster care benefits to relatives currently only receiving CalWORKs for the foster children in their care because the children are not eligible for federal foster care benefits.¹
- This will make a huge difference in the lives of foster children who would currently be eligible for only CalWORKs. Instead of receiving a below-poverty CalWORKs benefit of around \$369 per month, these families will receive a state foster care benefit between \$657 (for a 0–4 year old) and up to \$820 per month (for a 15–20 year old), with rates increasing based on the age of the child.

Counties that Opt-in to the New Program



These Families Will Only Be Helped if Their County Opt in to the New Program

Counties must opt in by **October 1, 2014**. County agency leadership and community stakeholders must act soon to ensure that their county takes action in time.

Once counties opt in, the program will start **January 1, 2015**.

¹ Title IV-E federal foster care benefits are available only for children removed from families whose income is so low that they would have qualified for aid under the 1996 AFDC income limits.

The Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program Provides Fiscal Benefits to Counties

State funds will cover **100% of the cost** of the program, for each county's existing caseload of non-federally-eligible foster children placed with relatives.

Increased benefits to children placed with relatives will **save counties money** by:

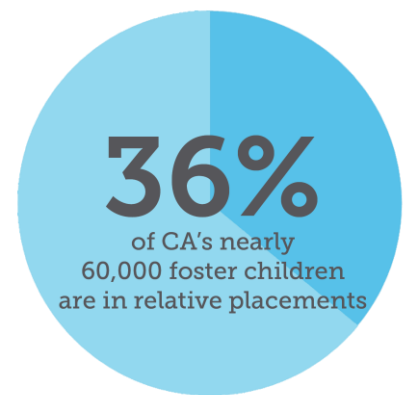
- Increasing placement stability
- Increasing permanency through legal guardianship
- Reducing the need for costly group home placements

These long-term cost savings will off-set counties' responsibility to cover the costs of future program growth. In fact, eliminating just one group home placement yields enough cost savings to support 10 children in relative placements. With savings from increased support of relative placements, counties may see net savings even if caseload growth occurs.

Approved Relative Caregiver Option Better Supports Kinship Families

Relative caregivers are the backbone of California's foster care system. Statewide, 36% of California's nearly 60,000 foster children live with a relative.

Many of these relatives do not receive even the basic foster care rate of \$657 to \$820 per month, which was found in a U.C. Davis study to be the minimum necessary to provide for a child's basic needs. Relatives caring for non-federally-eligible foster children receive only the CalWORKs rate of \$369/month.



Many of these caregivers are seniors on fixed incomes, or lower-wage workers. They can barely afford food and clothing for the foster children in their care – not to mention the 'extras' that are essential to children's development and well-being, such as sports uniforms, dance or music lessons, a bicycle, a laptop computer...

Opting in to the new program not only makes good fiscal sense for counties, but will increase child safety, permanence and well-being by better supporting foster children in the care of relatives.

"This is a strong statement that we value family members who want to provide a stable family situation for foster children. Sometimes this might be a grandparent on a fixed income or a brother or sister still in school and struggling themselves, but they still want to step up and give a stable home to these children in crisis. As a state, we need to support that. I am especially pleased that both my Democratic and Republican colleagues agreed and voted in favor of allocating resources to keep families together and to give children in foster care a better chance at a good home."

– **Assemblymember Shirley Weber**

Step Up is a campaign dedicated to ensuring that foster children placed with relatives receive the benefits, supports and services they need to thrive. Relatives step up for our state's foster children every day. It's time for California to step up for them. For more information, visit stepupforkin.org.