



Child Care for Foster Children: An Overview

When children are removed from their parents due to abuse and neglect, they are in crisis and need a safe, loving family environment. But for our youngest children, one of the top barriers to finding a placement is the lack of access to child care. Young children are facing instability and uncertainty because the families that want to care for them work outside of their homes and cannot access child care. Increasing access to child care would enable a larger pool of families to become foster parents, providing a stable home for more children in need. Furthermore, we know that for all the benefits that high quality child care has on children ages 0 to 5, the impact can be even more dramatic for young children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes.



The Access Barrier

Immediately following a child's removal, foster parents, including relative caregivers, struggle to access child care because state-funded child care programs usually operate at full capacity. Many of these programs sign up children during short enrollment windows that may not align with a child's placement into foster care. While other families get nine months to navigate the complicated child care landscape and arrange for child care, foster parents (especially kin caregivers) often get less than 24 hours. This means that caregivers who work or are in school cannot take in a child without significantly disrupting their lives or putting their family in financial jeopardy.



LOS ANGELES AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Solution: Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children & Parenting Foster Youth

The Legislature adopted the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children and Parenting Foster Youth in 2017 to *help foster families and parenting foster youth by building a bridge to long-term child care*. This was a comprehensive statewide program providing integrated support to ensure foster children can access high-quality child care by:

- Providing foster families and parenting foster youth with an emergency, time-limited voucher to help them pay for child care for up to six months following a child's placement in their home. This voucher pays for care while the foster parent is at work, school, or fulfilling training and home approval requirements.
- Providing foster families and parenting foster youth with child care navigation support. Navigators help families use their vouchers to facilitate immediate access to child care and work continuously with the families to transition or stabilize the children in long-term, high quality child development settings through the larger, ongoing state subsidy system. The navigators help foster families and parenting foster youth develop a long-term child care plan and effectively access the complex child care landscape.
- Providing training for the child care workforce in trauma-responsive best practices to better meet the unique needs of abused and neglected children.



2020 Request

While implementation of the Bridge Program has been an incredible success impacting the lives of hundreds of vulnerable children and youth and building upon last year's additional augmentation, current funding and timelines are not fully meeting the needs of this population. We request minor amendments to allow the vouchers to be used beyond the initial 6 months if long-term child care has not been identified and additional resources to provide more vouchers to support additional foster families and parenting foster youth with timely access to child care, additional navigation support to help them transition to long-term child care and additional trauma-training for child care providers.



Children
Now

Support and More Information

Supported by a broad coalition of private, non-profit, philanthropic and public agencies, please reach out to any of the following partners for additional information:

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