



AB 680: Foster Care Benefits

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 680 mandates evaluations of foster care benefits to avoid financial disruptions. It sets clear standards and timelines for assessing eligibility, ensuring children receive their entitled benefits without delays.

BACKGROUND

As of October 1, 2024, **40,156 children and youth** are in foster care in California.ⁱ State law mandates that counties secure all eligible aid for children in foster care. However, many foster youth experience delays or incomplete evaluations of available funding sources. Often, counties assess eligibility under only a single program—such as federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) — without determining eligibility for other, often equivalent, aid sources. This fragmented approach leads to:

- **Placement instability** – Youth may lose placements when caregivers lack financial support.
- **Financial hardship** – Families and caregivers may struggle to cover essential costs.
- **Increased administrative burden** – Caregivers are forced to navigate appeals to secure the benefits a child is legally entitled to receive.

Frequent changes in foster homes or caregivers have severe consequences for children’s well-being and development. Research shows that instability negatively impacts:

- **Mental health** – Increased risk of anxiety, depression, and behavioral challenges.
- **Education** – Frequent school changes hinder academic progress and achievement.

- **Permanency outcomes** – The longer a child remains in foster care, the less likely they are to achieve reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

Stable, supportive placements are critical for children in foster care. Secure attachments to consistent caregivers help mitigate the trauma associated with removal from their homes and increase the likelihood of achieving permanent, long-term placements.ⁱⁱ Moreover, the trauma that accompanies placement changes puts children at risk for negative outcomes such as aggression, delinquency, and depression.ⁱⁱⁱ

SOLUTION

AB 680 seeks to ensure timely and thorough benefits assessments, aiming to reduce placement instability, minimize unnecessary appeals, and provide financial security for children and youth in foster care to thrive by:

1. Mandating counties to evaluate eligibility for all available foster care aid programs during initial placement and re-evaluations, ensuring existing benefits continue until all options are assessed.
2. Establishing a 30-day deadline for counties to determine benefit eligibility after the juvenile court’s initial placement order.
3. Increasing transparency by requiring Notices of Action to include the funding program for benefits, an explanation for any ineligibility, and information on the right to an administrative hearing.

SUPPORT

Alliance for Children’s Rights (SPONSOR)

ⁱⁱ CCWIP Reports. Retrieved Feb 13, 2025, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL:
<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/r/a/b636/l>

ⁱⁱ Placement Stability Impacts: [Placement stability impacts - Casey Family Programs](#)

ⁱⁱ Mishra, A. A., Schwab-Reese, L. M., & Murfree, L. V. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences associated with children's patterns of out of home placement over time and subsequent negative outcomes during adolescence. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 49(2), 247–263. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-019-09526-4>