



AB 2189 – ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SERVICES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

SUMMARY

AB 2189 supports the successful transition to adulthood of young people by ensuring that foster youth retain access to benefits regardless of their housing status and allowing courts to extend enrollment in Extended Foster Care beyond age 21 until the county has fulfilled its obligation to ensure that the youth have the necessary supports and services required under Welfare and Institutions Code §391.

BACKGROUND

California was one of the first states to opt in to the federal opportunity to create an Extended Foster Youth (EFC) Program. The EFC Program was created by AB 12 (Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010) and represented a historic expansion of services to foster youth, intended to improve outcomes for youth, who often faced enormous challenges as they emancipated from the foster care system at age 18 prior to the creation of EFC, often leading to poverty, homelessness and incarceration.

Chapin Hall's recent CalYouth study on the EFC Program has shown numerous benefits for participating young adults, including improvements in education, employment, housing, and social support, as well as reductions in pregnancy and criminal justice system involvement. However, that same study revealed that over 35 percent of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care.

While a minor or nonminor is eligible for certain services and supports while in foster care, including supplemental support for pregnant individuals, and a clothing allowance if provided by the county, the additional payments are tied to the minor or nonminor residing in an approved placement setting.

Additionally, both federal and state law provide protections to ensure that young people leave foster care with a concrete plan for discharge that provides safety, stability, and an opportunity to thrive. For example, state law requires county child welfare agencies, at the last scheduled review hearing held before a dependent child turns 18 years old, and at every review hearing thereafter, to submit a report verifying that certain documents, information, and services have been provided to the minor or non-minor, including:

- Certain essential documents, such as a Social Security card, birth certificate, and a valid ID;
- Information on financial literacy programs and state internships; and,
- Services such as assistance with applying for public benefits, applying for college or vocational training, and securing housing.

However, the law is unclear regarding whether a court can maintain jurisdiction over a youth once they turn 21 when the county child welfare agency has not met the requirements of the EFC program to support youth in successfully transitioning to independence with critical documents which enable them to secure education, employment, and most importantly, housing.

When a county fails to provide assistance to secure housing, youth are exiting the foster care system to homelessness. Appropriate enforcement mechanisms, including keeping a court case open past age 21, will ensure that the necessary discharge planning begins early.

AB 2189

AB 2189 will ensure that foster youth retain access to services and supports regardless of their housing status and ensure accountability with current law and successful discharge planning by:

- Ensuring that foster youth, including expectant and parenting youth, receive critical benefits like the clothing allowance and infant supplement regardless of their placement.
- Clarifying that the court may keep a case open past age 21 if the requirements to terminate jurisdiction have not been satisfactorily met; and,
- Requiring the county welfare department to make intensive and ongoing efforts to ensure youth have housing stability before exiting the system.

SUPPORT

Children's Law Center of California (Co-Sponsor)
Alliance for Children's Rights (Co-Sponsor)
Public Counsel (Co-Sponsor)
Youth Law Center (Co-Sponsor)

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