



## **AB 937 (McKinnor) Family Reunification FACT SHEET**

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### **ISSUE**

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When a child is removed from their parents' custody, parents are typically entitled to receive reunification services in order to stabilize and regain custody. During this reunification period, a social worker must provide reasonable services to a parent that are specifically tailored to remedy the problems that led to family separation.

Many parents within the dependency system are victims of poverty, homelessness, and physical or mental disabilities. Due to these hardships, parents rely on social workers to administer appropriately tailored services that can be used to stabilize and reunite with their children. Without access to such services, most parents would be unable to reunify with their children within an eighteen month timeframe required by law.

Currently, if a child is removed from the custody of their parents, the parent is entitled to receive tailored services that will enable them to stabilize and reunite with their children. A parent whose child has been out of their custody for eighteen months is not guaranteed further reunification services even if reasonable services were not provided to parents during the eighteen month period. Unfortunately, current law does not provide leeway to parents if they have not received services to stabilize, resulting in family separation after the eighteen month window expires. The California Supreme Court has recently called on the Legislature to resolve this dilemma as it is virtually impossible for families to reunify within the allotted amount of time without receiving proper assistance.

### **SOLUTION**

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AB 937 will ensure that parents are given a fair opportunity to reunify with their children by providing the parent with an additional six months of reunification services. The child welfare system is designed to return children to safe homes, not to permanently separate children from parents. AB 937 will provide a reasonable timeframe to support family reunification efforts across California.

### **SUPPORT**

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Children's Law Center of California (Sponsor)  
Dependency Legal Services (Co-Sponsor)  
A New Way of Life (Co-Sponsor)  
Dependency Legal Services (Co-Sponsor)  
Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (Co-Sponsor)

