



AB 867 – ENSURING YOUTH EXITING FOSTER CARE CAN SUCCEED

SUMMARY

AB 867 assists foster youth in their transition to adulthood by authorizing courts to extend their enrollment in Extended Foster Care (EFC) beyond age 21 until the county has fulfilled its obligation to ensure that the youth has the necessary documents, information, and services needed for their transition, as required by the Welfare and Institutions Code §391.

BACKGROUND

California was one of the first states to opt in to the federal opportunity to create an 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. The program was 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.

The EFC program has been an effective program for participating youth as studies have shown improvements in education, employment, housing, and social support, as well as reductions in the number of youth entering the criminal justice system.¹

In addition to the EFC program, 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.

PROBLEM

The law is unclear regarding the court's authority to maintain jurisdiction over youth once they turn 21, when the county child welfare agency has not complied with the requirements of WIC §391 to provide the necessary documents and services that enable youth to secure education, employment, and most importantly, housing. This is critical as over 35 percent of youth in foster care reported experiencing homelessness while actively enrolled in EFC.²

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 and that youth successfully transition to independence.

Solution: AB 867

AB 867 will ensure accountability with current law and successful discharge planning by:

- Clarifying that the court may keep a case open past age 21 if the requirements to terminate jurisdiction have not been satisfactorily met

¹ Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., & Park, S. (2021). *Report from CalYOUTH: Findings on the relationship between extended foster care and youth's outcomes at age 23*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

² Courtney, M. E., Okpych, N. J., & Park, S. (2021). *Report from CalYOUTH: Findings on the relationship between extended foster care and youth's outcomes at age 23*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

SUPPORT

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