



## AB 2929 – Advancing Foster Youth Family Finding Efforts

### PURPOSE

Assembly Bill 2929 seeks to build upon the work being done in California to connect youth in the child welfare system with family. Promoting equal access to updates on family finding efforts from social workers will improve the overall well-being of children in foster care.

### BACKGROUND

It is estimated that in California there are over 45,000 children in foster care, and nearly 55% of them are Latino<sup>1</sup>. Studies have shown that children in the child welfare system who are placed with relatives rather than strangers in foster homes or group care benefit significantly.

A 2008 study in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine found that children placed into kinship care had fewer behavioral problems three years after placement than children who were placed into foster care<sup>2</sup>. This study also noted that a large body of research acknowledges the evidence that children in kinship care are less likely to change placements, benefiting from increased placement stability and better outcomes.

Researchers also found that children placed with relatives were more likely to remain in the same neighborhood, be placed with siblings, and have consistent contact with their birth parents than other children in foster care.

By requiring already existing documentation of family finding efforts in court reports for review hearings, all parties involved in a child welfare case (attorneys, judicial officers, etc.) will have the information necessary to facilitate meaningful connections for foster youth and their families.

<sup>1</sup><https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/r/ab636/1>

### EXISTING LAW

Sections 309, 319, and 358.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) require the juvenile court to make a finding, during the initial and dispositional hearings, that the child's social worker has exercised due diligence in identifying, locating, and notifying the child's relatives.

### PROBLEM

Reporting family finding efforts is required for initial and dispositional hearings, but not for subsequent review hearings. Since family finding efforts are not required to be documented after the disposition hearing, the Court and counsel do not receive this information consistently. As this information is not always provided, minor's counsel are not able to conduct follow-up or independent investigation into relative placement as required by law. Currently, in order for the Court and counsel to have a full and complete understanding of the family finding efforts undertaken by the social worker an updated report needs to be provided. This process leads to delays and wastes resources that the courts and counties could allocate elsewhere.

### SOLUTION

AB 2929 would require social workers to include existing documentation of any continuing efforts to identify and locate adult relatives in review hearing court reports only for children who have been removed from the custody of their parent(s) or guardian(s) and who are not placed with relatives.

### SUPPORT

Children's Law Center of California (Sponsor)

### CONTACT

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<sup>2</sup><https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/379638>