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Assembly California Legislature

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AB 926- Family Time

PURPOSE

This bill seeks to support meaningful family interactions and improve outcomes for children in foster care by changing the presumption for court ordered family time from monitored to unmonitored unless contraindicated for the child's safety. This will reduce the trauma of family separation and support reunification while maintaining strict safety standards.

BACKGROUND

Currently, child welfare agencies require supervised visits by default, even when unnecessary. Many children in foster care are removed due to unsafe home conditions, not parental misconduct, yet still face restricted contact with their parents.

Supervised visits can be difficult to schedule, delayed by background checks for monitors, and limited to business hours, conflicting with parents' work and children's school schedules.

Without mandated visit frequency or proper visitation settings, families often face uncertainty and inadequate bonding time. The Court of Appeal has emphasized that parental visitation is critical to reunification, but current law leaves many families with insufficient contact, deepening the trauma of separation.

EXISTING LAW

- Requires social workers to report reasons for a child's removal and recommendations for reunification. (WIC 319, 364, 366.21)
- Mandates court review before detaining a child, requiring justification for removal. (WIC 300, 319)

- Ensures visitation between parents and children unless it compromises safety. (WIC 362.1)
- Directs courts to review permanency within 18-24 months, ordering reunification unless safety risks exist. (WIC 366.22-366.25)

SUMMARY

This bill promotes visitation orders that are effective and family friendly. This bill creates a rebuttable presumption that visits shall be unsupervised, except for circumstances where the child's safety at risk. In cases where the court determines that supervision is necessary, this bill requires bench officers to set a frequency and duration for visitation. It also ensures that visits take place in the least restrictive setting that is most conducive to quality family time and that social workers liberalize the visitation when safe to do so.

SUPPORT

- Children's Law Center (Co-Sponsor)
- Dependency Advocacy Center (Co-Sponsor)
- Dependency Legal Services (Co-Sponsor)
- Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (Co-Sponsor)

CONTACTS

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