



AB 1846

Prioritizing Kinship Placement in Foster Care

SUMMARY

AB 1846 would improve California's existing kin-first policy framework by ensuring that foster youth placements with a relative extend across the full dependency case. This approach is consistent with the substantial body of research demonstrating the long-term benefits of kinship care. This clarification will provide dependency court judges with clear authority to order placement with approved kin caregivers when placement with a relative is in the child's best interests.

BACKGROUND

As of October 2025, there are over 37,000 children in California's foster care system. However, only 33% of these children are placed with relatives or non-related extended family members.ⁱ Research shows that when a foster child is under care by relatives, they experience increased placement stability, improved educational outcomes, strengthened cultural identity, and overall better mental health outcomes.ⁱⁱ

In recognition of these benefits, California has made significant investments to promote kin-based care. This includes the creation of the Center of Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support and the adoption of Kin-First Resource Family Approval standards designed to reduce non-safety barriers for relatives seeking placement.

Under current law, social workers are required to identify and search for relatives of a foster

child and assess their suitability for placement prior to the dispositional hearing, which is typically within the first 30 days. During this period, existing statute affords relatives preferential consideration for placement, requiring that they be the first placement option to be considered and assessed. Following the dispositional hearing, relatives may continue to request placement and be assessed by the child welfare agency. However, the statute does not clearly specify how the relative placement preference should be applied when a relative becomes available after disposition and the child is already placed. This statutory ambiguity can be especially challenging when relatives are identified or approved later in the dependency case. This may limit the court's ability to fully consider kinship placement, even when such placement is in the child's long-term best interest.

By affirming that the relative placement preference continues throughout the dependency case, California reinforces its commitment to a kin-first culture, supports relative caregivers, reduces unnecessary trauma caused by delayed family connections, and improves outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

THIS BILL

AB 1846 would clarify that the relative placement preference applies throughout the entire time the child is in foster care, while the child remains under the jurisdiction of the dependency court.

AB 1846

Prioritizing Kinship Placement in Foster Care



ASSEMBLYMEMBER _____ DISTRICT 19

Catherine Stefani

By clarifying that this preference extends across the full dependency case, it aligns with California's existing kin-first policy framework and the substantial body of research demonstrating the long-term benefits of kinship care.

AB 1846 would provide dependency court judges with clear authority to order placement with approved kin caregivers on a non-emergency basis, based on the recommendation of the county social worker and input from children's attorneys and other parties, when placement with a relative is in the child's best interests.

SUPPORT

**California Welfare Directors Association
(Sponsor)**

STAFF CONTACT

Marisol.Prieto-Valle@asm.ca.gov
916-319-2019

ⁱ See: California Child Welfare Indicators Project, Oct. 2025 ccwip.berkeley.edu

ⁱⁱ See: "Kinship Care and the Child Welfare System." Factsheets for Families (May 2022). Child Welfare Information Gateway. Retrieved on 9/3/2025 from [Kinship Care and the Child Welfare System | Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) and "Is Kinship Care Good for Kids?" Center for Law and Social Policy (March 2, 2007). Tiffany Conway and Rutledge Q. Hutson. Retrieved on 8/11/16 from <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/0347.pdf>